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ABSTRACT

A program was designed to improve the progress of average and below average readers in a first-grade, a second-grade, and a sixth-grade classroom in a multicultural, multi-social economic district located in a three-county area northwest of Chicago, Illinois. Classroom teachers noted that students were having difficulty making adequate progress in reading, as evidenced by continuing struggles with reading from year to year, difficulty in reading content area material, consistently low test scores, and low interest and frustration on the part of students. Administration of the MacMillan Placement test, reading placement scores, and reading grades confirmed the problem and described its extent. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that many readers lacked quality time spent practicing reading at home, and in school with teachers and other students. Although students reported valuing reading, poor attitudes and lack of motivation were apparent. These attitudes transferred to off-task behavior during silent reading, reading instruction, and assigned reading time. Solution strategies consisted of peer tutoring supported by social skill instruction designed to improve on-task time, allow for individual reading instruction, improve self-esteem, and improve attitudes toward reading. Results indicated that peer tutoring had a positive impact on all children. Reading abilities and attitudes were either maintained, or, in many cases, improved. Contains 25 references, 2 tables, and 4 figures of data. The peer tutor flyer, tutor tally sheets, a tutee evaluation sheet, and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey instrument are attached.) (RS)

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IMPROVING READING ABILITIES OF AVERAGE AND BELOW AVERAGE READERS THROUGH PEER TUTORING

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AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

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DATE: September 1993

TITLE: Improving Reading Abilities of Average and Below Average Readers Through Peer Tutoring

ABSTRACT: This report describes a program for improving the progress of average and below average readers in three classrooms, in a multi-cultural, multi-social economic district, located in a three-county area northwest of Chicago. The problem was originally noted by the classroom teachers, who found students having difficulty making adequate progress in reading, as evidenced by: continued struggles with reading from year to year, difficulty reading content area material, consistently low test scores, and teacher observation of low interest and frustration on the part of students. Administration of the MacMillan Placement Test, reading placement scores, and reading grades confirmed the problem and described its extent.

Analysis of the probable cause data revealed that many readers lacked quality time spent practicing reading at home, and in school with teachers and other students. Although students reported valuing reading, poor attitudes and lack of motivation were apparent. These attitudes transferred to off-task behavior during silent reading, reading instruction, and

assigned reading time.

Solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting and the review of current literature, resulted in the selection of one major intervention: peer tutoring, supported by social skill instruction. The strategic solutions were designed to improve on-task time, allow for individual reading instruction, improve self-esteem and improve attitudes toward reading.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

Low achieving readers in the elementary schools exhibit difficulty making adequate progress as evidenced by continued struggles with reading from year to year, inability to read content area material, consistently low test scores, and teacher observation of low interest and frustration on the part of the students.

Immediate Problem Context

Three schools were used in this study. One of the schools is located in a low to mid-income section of the central portion of a metropolitan community. Two of the schools are located in a middle class community in the eastern portion of the same district. All three schools are elementary schools within the U-46 school district.

Huff Elementary is ethnically and racially mixed, 28.8 percent Hispanic, 5.7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 5.9 percent Black, and 59.4 percent White non-Hispanic. Forty

three percent of the students are considered low income students, 28.7 percent are classified as limited-English-proficient. There is a 95.3 percent attendance rate and 36.3 percent student mobility rate. There has been only 1 chronic truancy problem.

Huff is considered a medium size building. The physical building is all one level (with a basement that is not used by students). It consists of one large gym, a multi-purpose room, 22 classrooms, and three small "special" rooms. Art and music teachers travel to the individual classrooms. The building houses 612 students, 25 classroom teachers, and one principal: of the 25 classroom teachers, one is a halftime kindergarten teacher, three are bilingual teachers, and three are teachers of the physically handicapped. There is a sizable support staff: two Chapter 1 specialists, one learning disabilities teacher, a full-time social worker, a full time nurse, a speech/language therapist, a vision itinerant, six teacher assistants, an orthopedic therapist, a physical therapist, a music teacher, an art teacher, two physical education teachers, one full-time secretary, one bilingual liaison, one librarian, and one clerical

aide.

Huff Elementary is in Elgin, Illinois. It is 38 miles west of Chicago. There has been rapid growth in population in the past decade. The 1990 census stated there were about 77,010 people living in the Elgin area, 70.2 percent White, 7.1 percent Black, 18.9 percent Hispanic, 3.3 percent Asian, and .3 percent other. The projected population for the year 2010 is 99,755.

Elgin is in the Fox River Valley area of Northern Illinois in both Cook and Kane County. Unemployment rates in 1990 were at 5.9 percent in Kane County and 6.3 percent in Cook County. The per capita income in 1987, was $12,060; this was significantly lower than the five surrounding communities.

Hanover Countryside's student population has an ethnic/racial mixture of 16.7 percent Hispanic, 5.8 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 5.4 percent Black, and 72.2 percent White non-Hispanic. Fifteen and eight-tenths are considered low income students, and 6.3 percent are classified as limited English proficient. There is a 96.3 percent attendance rate and a 45.5 percent student mobility rate (1993 School Report Card, Hanover Countryside School).

Hanover Countryside is also considered a medium-sized building. The physical building is multi-level, due to several additions built onto the original three room school. It consists of one large gym, a multi-purpose room, and 23 classrooms. Art and music teachers each have their own classroom. The building houses 539 students, 22 classroom teachers, two of which are half-time teachers, two are intermediate grade level learning disabilities teachers, and one teaches multiply handicapped pre-school students. The school's support staff includes: one full-time learning disabilities resource teacher, one teacher assistant, one full-time secretary, one half time secretary/clerical aide and one librarian paraprofessional. The nurse, social worker, speech/language therapist, art teacher, and music teacher work on an itinerant basis serving other schools as well as Hanover Countryside.

Hanover Countryside is in Streamwood, Illinois. It was the very first school built in Streamwood. It is 32 miles west of Chicago. The population has increased over the past decade from 23,456 in 1980, to 30,987 in 1990. The community is expected to reach 33,000 in the next three years. Of the

30,987, 86.1 percent are White, 1.4 percent Black, 7.4 percent Hispanic, and 5.1 percent are classified as other. Streamwood is located in Cook County. Unemployment reached 6.3 percent in 1990. The per capita income in 1990 was $14,000.

Bartlett Elementary School is located in a predominantly white (93 % white, 2 % Black, and 5% Asian) upper middle class community (population 24,284) located 31 miles northwest of Chicago. The school population is predominantly White as well (94.1% in 1992). Five percent of the students were classified as low-income, and 5.9% as limited-English-proficient. There is a 95.8% attendance rate and a 17.4% mobility rate. There were no reports of chronic truancy (1993 School Report Card, Bartlett School).

Bartlett School is a large building, consisting of 28 classrooms servicing regular education students (K-6), 2 self-contained special education classrooms, 3 classrooms for special education resource teachers (e.g., speech. learning disabilities, social worker), a gym, separate offices for art, music, and physical education teachers, a learning center/library containing a computer lab. The building houses

approximately 734 students, 30 classroom teachers, 3 teachers of "special" classes (art, music, and physical education), 25 support staff members (5 of whom serve Bartlett School solely-- the others are shared with other schools in the district), and 1 administrator. Of the 30 classroom teachers, one is a half-time kindergarten teacher, and 2 are teachers in self-contained special education classrooms. The building also has 6 full-time teacher's aides.

The Surrounding Community

The District U-46 educational facilities include: 44 public schools which consist of three high schools (grades 9-12), six middle schools (grades 7-8) , and 35 elementary schools (grades K-6); one parochial high school, eight parochial K-8 schools, three private schools, a two year community college, a four year Christian college, and a branch of National Louis University. School District U-46 covers parts of Elgin, Streamwood, Bartlett, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Wayne, and portions of Carol Stream, St. Charles, Schaumburg and West Chicago.

School District U-46 is the second largest school

district in Illinois, with an enrollment of 28,419 students. It services students from ten communities covering 90 square miles. The student-teacher ratio is 25:1. Over 17,000 students are bussed daily, and 60 percent of graduates go on to higher education.

School board members are elected officials of the community. The members meet bi-monthly for public input on financial matters, educational policies, staffing and facilities, and the curriculum. The district is experiencing a deficit in excess of $20 million this fiscal year. The district employs 1,700 teachers, 130 administrators and 1,440 full-time and part-time support staff. It is administered by an appointed superintendent of schools whose central office staff includes three area superintendents, an assistant superintendent of finance, an assistant superintendent of human resources, a director of curriculum, a director of instructional programs and a special education director.

Regional and National Context of Problem

The ability to read proficiently is the cornerstone of academic success. Unfortunately, reading also remains an area

of difficulty for a large portion of our society's youth. According to research conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Program (NAEP) in 1988, average reading proficiency scores (all on a scale from 0 to 100) were 38.1 for grade 3, 48.9 for grade 7, and 56.1 for grade 11. If a minority population is examined, the scores drop even lower--by five to seven percentage points. Socio-economic status is also related to lower reading achievement. Similar research by the NAEP reported in The Education Almanac: 1987-1988 stated: "Six percent of 9-year-olds in 1984 could not do rudimentary reading exercises and were in danger of future school failure. Forty percent of 13-year-old students and 16 percent of 17-year-old students had not acquired intermediate reading skills" (p.207). Further, "the majority (61 percent) of 17-year-old students are unable to perform at the adept level, and few (5 percent) have advanced reading skills" (p.207).

The existence and extent of the problem is also evidenced by the implementation of a federally-funded program targeted at at-risk children--known as Head Start. Since it began in 1965, it has served 9.6 million children

between three and six years of age (Goodman, 1987). In 1987 alone, Head Start served 452,000 children--the largest enrollment to that time. And yet, according to the Children's Defense Fund, this was only 18 percent of the children needing such assistance (Goodman, 1987).

Further signs of our nation's weak status as readers are found in high school drop-out and adult illiteracy rates, which can frequently be traced back to reading failure in the first years of school (Morris, et al., 1990). By third grade, if a student has failed one or more grades and is reading below grade level, they are unlikely to complete high school (Lloyd, 1978; Kelly et al., 1964). In 1987, Project Literacy, U.S., reported that more than 23 million Americans are unable to read and write proficiently and that some urban high schools experience a 50 percent or higher drop-out rate (Routman, 1988).

Countless heated debates over the best prevention and/or treatment of reading failure are also symptoms of the problem. In fact, in his book Why Johnny Still Can't Read: A New Look at the Scandal of Our Schools, Flesch (1981) goes so far as to say

"There's an 85 percent chance that your Johnny or Mary will never learn to read properly" (p. 1).

Jordan (1992) suggests early intervention and an emphasis on prevention. Brandt (1993) says, "rather than allowing students to fail and then offering remediation, it is far be .er to prevent failure in the first place" (p.3). A variety of programs have been created to do just this. Nonetheless, reading continues to be a source of frustration or even despair for far too large a segment of our population. The need for reform has not lessened. It is still needed at all levels of education. "All students need to start off with success, confidence and a firm foundation in reading" (Slavin, 1992).

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Background

"In a literate society, the most disempowered people are the illiterates, those who cannot read at all and those who turn away from print in frustration' (Boland-Willms, 1991, p. 13). As noted in Chapter 1, it is not unusual to find at least 25 percent of the children in a given classroom to be reading below grade level, at most grade levels in the elementary schools. To combat the problem, the state, and the district (along with classroom teachers) have taken initiative.

In 1991, the state of Illinois began working on a complex evaluation system that would upgrade educational standards (Chicago Tribune Article). This program has the "potential of business" (Banas, 1992) if academic performance (based on the scores of the Illinois Goals Assessment Program Test) and whether a school drafted and implemented a School Improvement Plan. Schools in District U-46 were required to

complete a School Improvement Plan by September of 1993.

In 1986, at the district level, a committee wrote K-12 language arts objectives which supported the State Goal for reading (School Improvement Plans, 1993). From 1986 through 1989, reading specialists, third, sixth, eighth, and eleventh grade teachers designed a test to measure reading progress which met district objectives (U.S.D. 46, 1993, p. 15) The results from these tests are used to develop the building School Improvement Plan.

Within the last four years, classroom teachers in District U-46 were encouraged to use the basal reading series no more than 50 percent of the time during reading instruction. New strategies were introduced to improve the reading ability of elementary school students. To compliment the basal reading series and to encourage more holistic learning, the district adopted various Whole Language strategies, which include Writer's Workshops and Celebrate Literature. Outside the classroom the district has made special services available (Chapter 1 programs, Reading Recovery, and other programs).

Problem Evidence

Every day life revolves around reading; it is important that children today be able to read with confidence, for pleasure, for a purpose and for prosperity. It is crucial that low readers make adequate progress during the elementary years. Current data shows that there is a gap in reading progress in schools in Illinois. The extent of the problem is evidenced by the results of the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) test. The 1993 School Report Card (which reports IGAP results to the public), reported that in the state of Illinois alone, 25% of third graders and 24% of sixth graders did not meet the state goal in reading. Similarly, district scores (in District U-46) reported that 24% of third graders, and 21% of sixth graders did not meet the state goal in reading (1993 School Report Card, School District U-46).

Low achievement in reading is evidenced at Huff, Hanover Countryside, and Bartlett Elementary Schools, by IGAP scores, reading placement tests results, students' attitudes and teacher observations. Together, the results show a need to improve reading comprehension at all grade levels.

The 1993 School Report Card reported that 42% of third graders and 30% of sixth graders at Huff Elementary did not meet the state goal in reading. Although many children did meet the state goal, only 8% of third graders and 10% of sixth graders exceeded the state goal in reading. This is below both the district (17% in third grade and 26% in sixth grade) and the state (21% in third grade and 38% in sixth grade) averages of students that exceed the state goals.

The MacMillan End-of-Year Placement Test (MacMillan Connections Placement Tests, 1987) was administered to twenty-six sixth graders in late September at Huff Elementary School. The test is divided into three major categories: comprehension, vocabulary, and a cloze comprehension section. The results of the tests showed that twenty-one students were reading below grade level, two students were reading at grade level, and one student was reading above grade level. Of the twenty-one students that were below grade level, ten children tested at a fifth grade reading level, eight children tested at a fourth grade reading level, two child tested at a third grade reading level, and one child tested below the third

grade reading level. The need to improve reading levels in this sixth grade classroom was clear.

Lastly, there were many observations made by the teacher that reflected the general attitudes towards reading. First, after meeting with eighteen of the twenty-six families, during Open House in late September, the majority of parent concerns revolved around reading. One out of every two parents asked what they could do to improve their child's reading grade, or how they could get their child to like reading. Secondly, when students were asked if they liked reading, only one child out of twenty-six answered in the positive. Independent reading and teacher selected novels were not a "hit" in this classroom of reluctant readers. Finally, after observing children preparing for silent reading, over a two week study, it was found that seven out of the twenty-six students were unable to find a novel they were interested in reading. Similarly, these same children had trouble focusing and staying on-task during silent reading.

Low achievement in reading at Hanover Countryside School is evidenced by IGAP scores, reading group placement,

student attitudes, and teacher observations. The results show a need to improve reading comprehension and attitudes at all grade levels. The 1993 School Report Card for Hanover Countryside School reported that 20% of the third graders and 16% of the sixth graders tested did not meet the state goal in reading. Many of the children did meet the state goal, with 15% of the third graders and 28% of the sixth graders exceeding the state goal in reading.

The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) was administered in March of 1993 to the children attending kindergarten at Hanover Countryside School. Of the children now in the first grade classroom, 22 were tested at that time. Of these 22, six children received scores below the average range of 34-84 in the National Percentage by Grade Level section in one or more areas, six children scored in the average range, and ten children received above average scores. Five children were new to Hanover Countryside School and CogAT scores were not available. Based upon the first grade teacher's assessment of students at the beginning of the year, three children were at a pre-reading level, 18 children were at a beginning reading

level, and six children had begun to read prior to the start of the school year. Of these six, one child was reading at a second grade level and the other five were at a first grade primer level.

Teacher observations indicate that most children in the first grade classroom enjoy having stories read to them. However, few of the children will regularly choose a book to look at in their free time. Those with more reading ability appear to be more likely to select reading as an activity. At the September Parent Night, many parents appeared to be pleased with the variety of literature and reading activities the children will come into contact with during the year. They expressed the desire to help their children become good readers by reading with them frequently at home.

The 1993 School Report Card for Bartlett School reported 17% of third grade students and 8% of sixth grade students not meeting state goals in reading, according to the IGAP. Twenty-one percent of third graders and 43% of sixth graders exceeded state reading goals.

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was administered to

all second graders in mid-September at Bartlett School for the purpose of grouping students according to ability. The test is comprised of two areas: vocabulary and comprehension. The results showed that in the "average" group, 16 of 27 students had an overall reading score below grade level.

Since children were grouped according to ability and came from different "home rooms", the teacher-researcher at Bartlett School had little opportunity to observe how often these students chose reading as a free time activity, or to take note during Open House of parents' concern/interest in their children's reading ability. (See Table 1).

Mathes cited research by Will, (1986), explaining that "20-30% of the school-age population fail to achieve when provided with traditional instruction" (p.10), not to mention time spent practicing new skills independently. Mathes again cited research from The National Commission of Excellence in Education (1983) that stated, "it is estimated that one in three children experience significant problems in learning to read" (p.5). This in turn leads to another problem: high school drop-outs. Morris, Shaw and Perney (1990) stated that "high school

drop-out and adult illiteracy rates...can often be traced to reading failure in the first few years of school" (p.133-134), again emphasizing the need for strong reading programs during the elementary years. Finally, the statistics, as noted above, speak for themselves. When "six percent of 9-year-olds in 1984 could not do rudimentary reading exercises and were in danger of future school failure...and forty percent of 13-year-old students had not acquired intermediate reading skills" (Goodman, 1987), we definitely need to take a step back and see what can be done to improve our reading instruction. After all, our "perception of self is related to reading performance" (Levine, 1986).

Table 1
Percent of First, Second, Third, and Sixth Grade Students Reading at Unsatisfactory Levels
September 1993

	Reading Below Grade Level	Not meeting state goals				
Grade		Huff	Hanover	Bartlett	State	District
1	27%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	59%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	N/A	42%	20%	17%	24%	25%
6	88%	30%	16%	8%	21%	24%

In early September, the Garfield Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was administered to all three classes. The survey consisted of simply worded, brief statements concerning reading. After each statement there were four pictures of Garfield (the cartoon character), each depicting a different attitude from very negative to very positive. The test was read aloud to students in need of assistance, and others worked individually to choose the answer that best reflected their feelings. Points were awarded, ranging from 1 to 4, depending on which Garfield

picture was chosen. Points were then totaled and converted to percentile ranks based on norm tables (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The results showed large percentages of first, second, and sixth grade students having poor attitudes toward reading (see Table 2).

Table 2
Percent of Students in Percentile Ranges
Reading Attitude Survey
September 1993

	Percentile Range			
Grade Level	0-25	26-50	51-74	75-99
1	41%	22%	30%	7%
2	8[illegible]	35%	30%	31%
6	23%	15%	38%	23%

Some probable causes for these low scores may be attributed to: an insufficient amount of on-task authentic reading practice, lack of immediate feedback, little student choice of instructional reading material, and a lack of positive, stimulating reading experiences in school.

Chapter 3

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Knowledgeable Others

Interviews with Chapter One resource teachers, Still and Hausner (1993), highlighted teaching strategies that are aimed at helping low readers. Hausner suggested the direct teaching of reading behaviors that are evident in good readers: 1) Never skipping an unknown word, but substituting another word (preferable beginning with the same sound). This enables the student to continue to the end of the sentence and then self-correct the problem-word, based on context clues 2) Returning to the beginning of the sentence and re-starting when they are "stuck" or when they realize they have made an error 3) Monitoring their own reading, so that they can self-correct by asking themselves the following questions: Does it fit in the story? Does it sound right? Does it look right?

Two additional strategies suggested by Still were shared reading and guided reading. Shared reading consists of reading together in unison, which models fluency for low readers and

enables them to participate when they are able. Guided reading is a pre-reading activity in which a book's cover, title, and pictures are previewed and discussed as a basis for tapping into background knowledge and making predictions about the story. During this time, possible vocabulary and plot lines are highlighted.

Literature Findings

The major solution strategy selected was peer tutoring. Other solution strategies, such as: Reading Recovery, Parental Tutoring, Basal Reading Programs and After-School Tutoring were explored, but they seemed to lack the in-class, on-task reading component.

Over the years, several possible solutions have emerged, addressing the problem of readers making inadequate progress. In "Preventing Early School Failure: What Works?", Slavin, Karweit, and Wasik (1993) review some of these attempts. Family- and child-centered interventions which either train parents to stimulate their children's intellectual development or place children in stimulating environments for a portion of the day have shown positive results, but intervention must be

intensive and in place over a number of years to have long-lasting effects. Lack of longevity of positive effects on Intelligence Quotient and language proficiency have also been shown to be a weakness of pre-school programs, full-day kindergartens, retention, developmental kindergartens and first grades. Reducing class size has been another popular choice. Effects, once again, have shown to be positive, but minimal. The most effective strategy found by Slavin et al. (1992-1993) has been the implementation of one-on-one tutoring, preferably using teachers as tutors (e.g., Reading Recovery and Prevention of Learning Disabilities). Improving instruction and curriculum is yet another approach to the problem. However, the theories of teaching reading are changing so quickly at the present that Slavin et al. (1992-1993) do not attempt to make any recommendation.

The solution strategy chosen for the purposes of this problem context was peer tutoring. Based on research by Hall, Delquadri, and Harris (1977), Mathes and Fuchs (1991) state that among at-risk students, there was "the opportunity to read only sixteen words of print as compared to high achieving

students being afforded the opportunity to read 1,933 words while being instructed by the same teachers" (p.9). Another example given by Mathes and Fuchs tells of low-performing fourth graders having less than 10 seconds of actual reading practice in a 2-week period (Delquadri et al.,1986).

Aside from opportunity to do some authentic reading, there is also a significant lack of active student engagement in reading instruction. In "School Literacy: The Real ABCs", Greenspan and Lodish (1991) state "In many schools-- at all levels-- there is very little interactive learning. With so much deskbound self-learning, there is very little engaging, relating, communicating or self-monitoring.... Most instructional time is one-directional-- about 80% teacher talk and only 20% student talk" (p. 303). Delquadri, Greenwood, Whorton, Carta, and Hall (1986) describe a typical reading period: The child sitting alone at a desk until his group is called. If this is the last group, time has often run out. He was actively engaged for an average of only eight minutes of a 60-minute reading period.

Delquadri et al., (1986) cites research by Hall et al.

(1982) and Delquadri and Greenwood (1981) which states that "a necessary condition for academic achievement is an arrangement in which there is frequent interaction between teacher and/or classroom antecedents and student responding" (p. 536). Part of this engagement means having an opportunity to respond academically to what they are reading or learning. In fact, Mathes et al. (1991) cite research showing that opportunity to respond is actually a critical factor related to achievement (Brophy & Good, 1986; Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1984; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986). Conversely, few opportunities for response result in minimal progress (Greenwood et al., 1984). Peer tutoring provides a logical and practical framework for addressing all of these problems. Some peer-tutoring strategies have given students two or three times as much reading practice (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Carta, 1988; Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall,1989; cited by Mathes et al., 1991). It also provides a framework that increases opportunities to respond (Greenwood et al., 1984; Greenwood, Carta and Kamps, 1990; cited by Mathes and Fuchs, 1991). Since a child is also working one-on-one with another,

opportunities for engagement and response are also increased.

Probable causes gathered from the literature suggested that students do not experience enough on-task, quality, reading time. When time is designated for reading practice, students are often found reading alone, without formal instruction and meaningful feedback. Mathes, (1991), cited research by Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Leinhardt, Zigmond, Cooley, 1981; Nagy & Andersen, 1984; O'Sullivan, Ysseldyke, Christenson, & Thurlow, 1990; Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Pate, 1990, that stated that the "major reason why many of these students do not develop adequate reading skill is that they are not afforded adequate opportunity to practice reading" (p.6). "Other studies suggested that instructional time may not be fully utilized because students found it necessary to wait in order to have a question answered or receive clarification of instructions" (Land, 1984). Similarly, children that are not "actively engaged by the curriculum or the teacher's lesson" (Delquadri, et al., 1986) are often apt to fall even farther behind in reading.

Project Objectives

The terminal objective of this problem intervention was related to the discrepancy data presented in Chapter Two, the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP), basal, Gates-MacGinitie, and CogAT reading related scores. These scores indicate that reading abilities of a number of first, second, and sixth grade students are below grade level. Probable cause data, presented in the latter part of Chapter 2, and solution strategies presented in the first part of this chapter suggested a need for improving the quantity and quality of on-task reading time in the elementary school classroom and for the implementation of teaching strategies to improve self-esteem and attitudes toward reading.

Therefore, as a result of peer tutoring, supported by instruction in social skills during the period of October through December 1993, the target group will improve reading scores, as measured by various reading achievement tools.

Probable causes gathered from the literature suggested that students do not experience enough on-task, quality, reading time. When time is designated for reading practice,

students are often found readihg alone, without formal reading instruction and meaningful feedback. Mathes (1991) cited the research of many (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Leinhardt, Zigmond, & Cooley, 1981; Nagy & Andersen, 1984; O'Sullivan, Ysseldyke, Christenson, & Thurlow, 1990; Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Pate, 1990) who stated that the "major reason why many of these students do not develop adequate reading skills is that they are not afforded adequate opportunity to practice reading" (p.6). Similarly, children that are not "actively engaged by the curriculum or the teacher's lesson" (Delquadri, et al., 1986) are often apt to fall even farther behind in reading. Mathes cited research by Will (1986) explaining that "20-30% of the school-age population fail to achieve when provided with traditional instruciton" (p. 10), not to mention time spent practicing new skills independently.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following process objectives defined the major strategic procedures proposed for problem resolution.

1. Students will be instructed on the expected social skills to be used during each peer tutoring session.

2. Student will be instructed on the procedures to be followed during peer tutoring sessions.

3. Students will be taught the proper instructional techniques required of a peer tutor.

4. Students will be given time to practice the social, procedural, and instructional skills necessary for effective peer tutoring.

5. Students will be placed in groups of two, based on reading skills.

6. The teacher will implement a system for holding students accountable for the social, procedural, and management skills expected during peer tutoring sessions.

7. A total of 45-90 minutes over the span of three to five days, will be designated for peer tutoring each week.

8. The teacher will plan the peer tutoring session and monitor student progress.

9. Tutees will use self-selected or teacher selected

literature to practice reading.

10. Tutor will listen to tutee read and award points for various behaviors.

Major Elements of the Solution Strategy

The major elements of the approach to improve reading proficiency fall into two categories: the implementation of peer tutoring and instruction of social skills. These elements relate to the terminal objective in that they attempt to effect a change in on-task reading time, to allow for individual instruction, to improve self-esteem, and to improve attitudes toward reading.

Chapter 4

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Description of Resolution Activities

The action plan was designed to address peer tutoring as the major solution component, supported by instruction of social skills. The data collecting instruments were prepared prior to the school year. Reading interest surveys, reading scores and grades, and teacher observation were used as the needs assessment data for designing a peer tutoring program.

The social skills phase of the plan began in September 1993 in the three classrooms. Each teacher prepared lessons on social skills to be used throughout the year and in the peer tutoring program. Instruction in social skills, classroom behavior expectations, and peer tutoring rules were continued throughout the period of study.

The peer tutoring plan began in October 1993. The research team of teachers instructed students in proper tutor/tutee roles, assigned student pairs, prepared mini-lessons, and coordinated times each week to conduct the peer

tutoring sessions. The implementation plan is presented in outline form and in chronological order, allowing for the overlapping of strategies over time.

Summer 1993

I. Prepare Data Collection Instruments

A. WHO: Research Team

B. WHAT: Data Collecting Instruments
1. student attitude survey
2. reading tests
3. tally sheets

C. WHY: Data will be used as a resource for research team

II. Prepare Lessons on Social Skills

A. WHO: Teachers prepare lessons for whole group and cooperative group settings.

B. WHAT: Social Skills Lessons
1. bulletin boards
2. arrangement of classroom
3. task groups
4. base groups
5. graphic organizer of what good social skills look and sound like
   a. T-chart
   b. Venn diagram

6. discipline
    a. positive reinforcement
    b. proximity
    c. guidelines and responsibilities
7. allow time to practice

C. WHY: Social skills are taught for management and peer tutoring sessions

III. Collect Current Data From Available Resources

A. WHO: Teachers Using School Resources

B. WHAT: Student Data
1. Reading grades from previous year
2. Reading levels
3. IGAP/CogAT scores
4. ITBS scores
5. note disabilities
6. case studies (testing)

C. WHY: To document the problem of reading achievement

September 1993

IV. Document Probable Causes

A. WHO: Parents and teachers

B. WHAT: Collect probable cause data
1. send home parent questionnaires
2. students complete reading questionnaires
3. tape students reading orally

4. tape students' impressions of reading on video
5. give reading test (will be used at beginning, middle, and end of peer implementation.)
6. have students draw pictures of themselves reading

C. WHY: To complete data collection

October 1993

V. Peer Tutoring Preparation

A. WHO: Peer tutors or cross-age tutoring for younger grades

B. WHAT: Present plan
1. Two students will meet for three times a week or a total of 75 minutes a week.
2. Five minutes for teacher instruction
3. Tutors use tally sheets to keep track of points earned
4. Teacher monitoring

C. WHY: To train tutors

VI. Implementation of Peer Tutoring

A. WHO: Students in grades one, two, and six will be paired with a compatible reader (first grade will be tutored by third grade partners).

B. WHAT: The Process

1. Tutor-Tutee Assignment: Students will be grouped in pairs based on reading test scores, teacher observation, and student compatibility.
2. Book Selection: The teacher will select the appropriate literature for the assigned pair (basal reader, trade books, class-made books, and content area literature may be used to incorporate the different genres.)
3. Review and Practice of Social Skills: Weekly reviews and daily reminders w ill be used to encourage the use of expected social skills. The major required social skills are: active listening, six-inch voices, taking turns, and put-ups.
4. Mini-lessons and Word Attack Skills and Comprehension
   a. Word Attack: context clues, phonics, cloze techniques, vocabulary building
   b. Comprehension: building background, setting a purpose for reading, previewing, forming questions

C. WHY: To raise students ability and interest in reading while allowing teacher observation

Methods of Assessment

A variety of data collection methods were used in order to assess the effects of peer tutoring on improved reading

ability. The results will be compared to similar surveys given out at the beginning of the school year.

The word attack skills and comprehension ability of the student will be documented through administering the basal reading tests before and after the program.

Teacher observations, tally sheets, and student journal entries will be used as records to compare students' social skills. Student interactions will be consistently monitored to observe improved social behavior and assess the needs for continued instruction.

Chapter 5

EVALUATION OF RESULTS AND PROCESS

Implementation History

Terminal Objectives

As stated in chapter three, the terminal objective was to use peer tutoring to improve reading scores in various reading assessments.

Pre Assessment Activities

Before implementing this strategy, a variety of pre-assessment activities were used. First, a reading attitude survey (Appendix D) was given to all students. The purpose was to measure students' feelings towards academic and recreational reading as well as to "get a feel for" how children viewed themselves as readers. Secondly, some form of determining reading ability was used at each grade. In the first grade classroom, The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) scores from the previous year were used as an indicator of the children's' readiness to begin reading. They were also informally screened on letter recognition or oral reading

ability (if ability was high enough). The reading ability of the second grade class was assessed with the Gates-MacGinite Reading Test which measured the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. In sixth grade, the MacMillan Reading Placement Tests were administered, which also assessed vocabulary and comprehension.

Interventions

In the first grade classroom, following these pre-assessment activities, the implementation of peer tutoring was started. Using the information gained from these tests, first graders were matched with third graders of a compatible reading ability. The third grade classroom received three-thirty minute sessions of instruction in social skills and tutor training. The first graders also received ongoing social skills instruction. Cross-grade tutoring sessions began after this was completed. The two classes met three times a week for a period of approximately twenty minutes each. A typical peer tutoring session consisted of the third graders reviewing vocabulary words on flashcards and listening to oral reading. The children worked both in basals and trade books. At the end

of each session, third graders completed an evaluation form on their tutees progress (Appendix C).

Second graders were matched with each other (not cross-graded) also according to their reading scores. An effort was made in this process to pair students heterogeneously. Social skills and tutoring instructions were also provided to the students prior to the actual implementation of peer tutoring. Sessions generally consisted of fifteen minutes of practice in word-attack strategies (e.g., reading the rest of the sentences, looking for word parts, sounding out). During this time tutors tallied the reading strategies employed by their partner on a record sheet. Halfway thru the tutoring session, students exchanged roles. They generally read from the basal.

In sixth grade, the tutoring program began by placing students in compatible groups. Students received instruction in social skills, how to use the "tootie time" record sheet and how to correct errors made by the reader. The typical peer tutoring session took place three times a week for approximately twenty-five minutes. Each child was tutored

for ten minutes, as well as acted as the tutee for ten minutes. The extra five minutes were used to set up and select material, tabulate and record tally marks and to put materials away. During the tutoring session, children were awarded two points for each sentence read correctly, and one point for self correcting or rereading for accuracy and comprehension, and no points were awarded when errors were made and not corrected. At that time, the tutor would intervene and show the tutee the error. The teacher circulated and interacted with the students during each session. A variety of reading materials were used (basals, news papers, big books) and were available to the students at all reading ability levels.

Post Assessment Activities

When the project intervention time was over, the reading attitude surveys were readministered, as were the reading assessments (first and sixth graders were post-assessed with the MacMillan Reading Placement Test and second graders with the Gates-MacGinite Reading Test).

Presentation and Analysis of Project Results

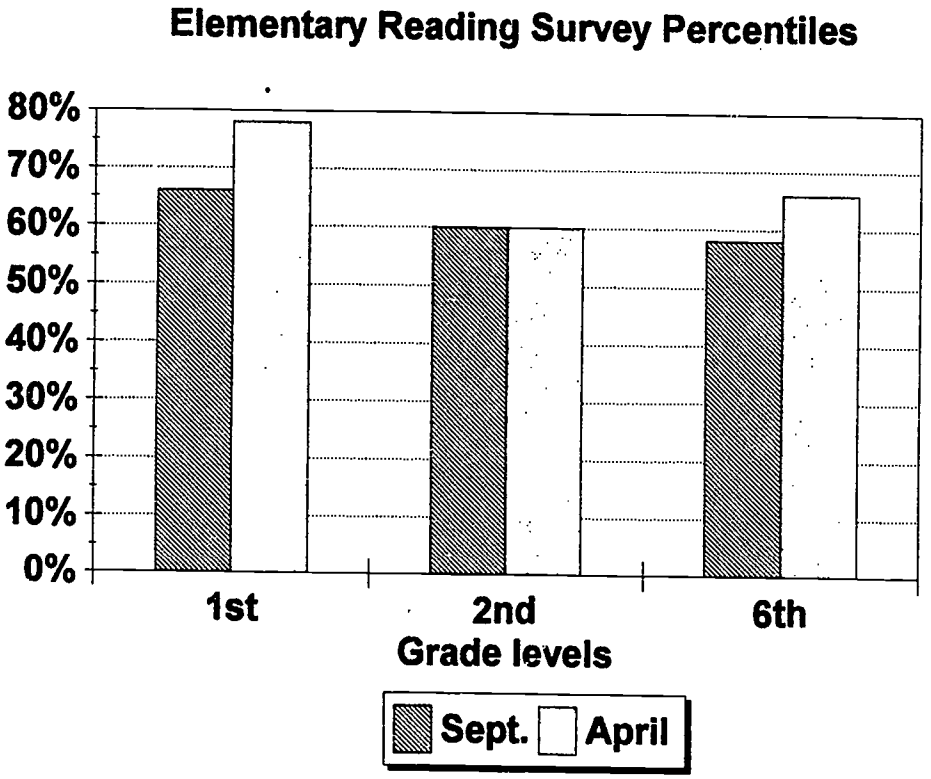
First Assessment

In the first grade classroom the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was readministered in April. The results showed an increase of 12 percentage points in the class' average percentile ranking. In September, the average percentile rank was 66. In April the class average was 78. (See Figure 1.)

In second grade, when the Reading Attitude Survey was readministered, the class average remained the same. No increase or decrease was shown. (See Figure 1.)

In sixth grade, when the Reading Attitude Survey was readministered, the results showed a general increase in reading attitudes. In September, the class average percentile rank was 58. In April, the class average percentile rank increased to 66. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1


Elementary Reading Survey Percentiles
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
1st
2nd
6th
Grade levels
Sept.
April

Second Assessment

In October, the giving of informal assessments, checking students on letter recognition, listening to the reading of sample passages, and the interpretation of the Cognitive Abilities Test scores was done by the first grade teacher. Twenty-seven percent of the children were at a readiness level, 32% at the first pre-primer level, and 41% of the children had begun to read. In April, 23% were below grade level, 50% were at grade level, and 27% were above grade level in reading as indicated by the MacMillan Reading Placement Test. (See Figure 2 .) Grade equivalent scores provided by the publisher were used to determine whether a child was below, at, or above grade level. In conclusion, the number of children reading at or above grade level increased from 73% in September to 77% in April. (See Figure 2.)

The Gates-MacGinite Reading Test was readministered to the second graders in April of 1994. Results showed that a lesser amount of students (50%, as compared to 59% in October) were reading below grade level (based on grade equivalent scores provided by the publisher of the test) after

the implementation of peer tutoring was completed. Furthermore, the amount of students reading at and above grade level also increased from 41% to 50%. (See Figure 3.)

The MacMillan Reading Placement test was readministered to the sixth graders in April of 1994. Results showed that a lesser amount of students (54%, as compared to the 88% in October) were reading below grade level after implementation of peer tutoring was complete. Grade equivalent scores provided by the publisher were used to deteremine whether they were reading below, at, or above grade level. Furthermore, the amount of students reading at and above grade level also increased from 12% to 46%. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 2

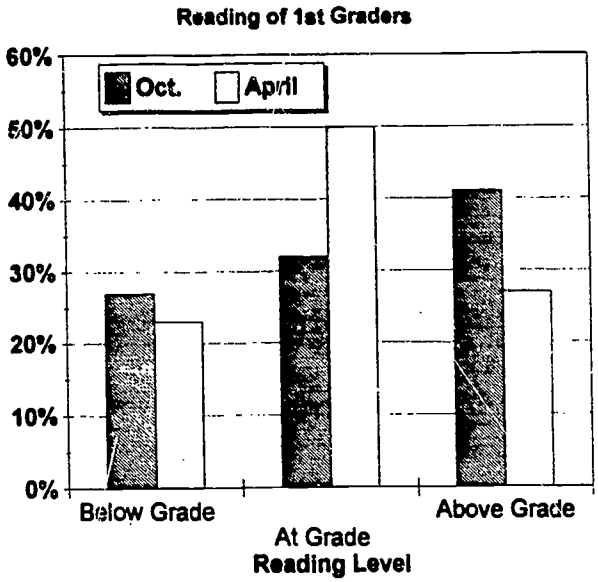


Figure 3

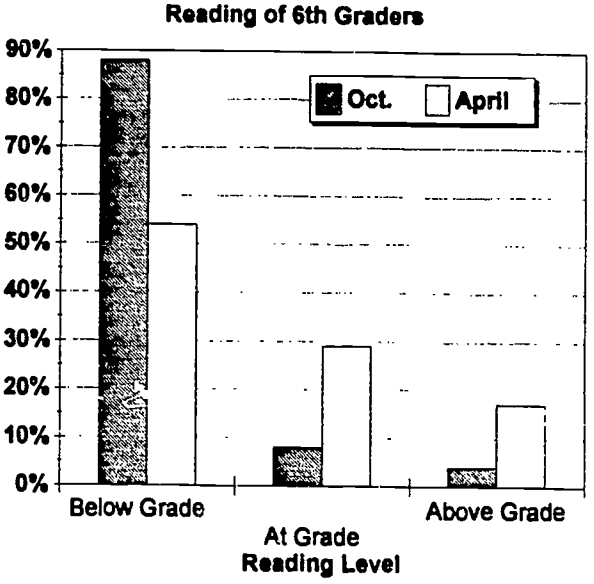
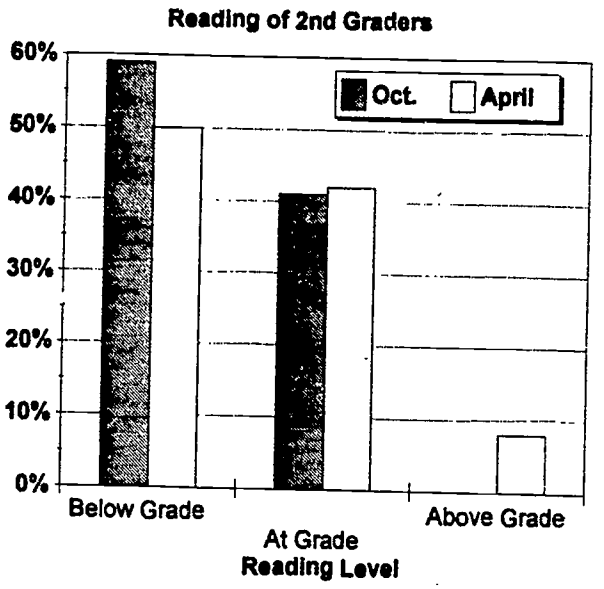


Figure 4



Reflections and Conclusions

Peer tutoring, whether in homogeneous of heterogeneous groups, at the first grade level or sixth grade level seemed to have a positive impact on all children in the first, second, and sixth grade classrooms. Reading abilities and attitudes were either maintained or, in many cases, improved.

The cross-grade level peer tutoring program implemented in the first grade classroom provided the students with quality time to read to another child who

possessed more skill in the reading process. The older children assissted the younger children in learning their vocabulary words as well as helping them read the stories they selected, while providing positive reinforcement. This resulted in the first grade children eagerly looking forward to each peer tutoring session. The on-task individual practice contributed to the children's growth in both their ability and attitude toward reading. The teachers of the two classes involved in the peer tutoring program decided to continue bi-weekly sessions for the remainder of the school year.

In the second grade classroom, peer tutoring was enjoyed by the students and was often asked about. A positive response always followed an announcement that the class would be "Buddy Reading" that day. The time spent on peer tutoring seemed valúable in that it was an enjoyable way for the students to spend time reading while receiving positive feedback. It also gave them increased practice time in word-attack strategies (e.g., reading the rest of the sentence, looking for word parts, sounding out, etc.) which was previously minimal. While results may not have

been as significant for grade two as the others, this may have been due to the fact that partners were often extremely close in reading ability as the class was 1 of 5 homogeneously-grouped second grade classrooms. The positive attitude and increased on-task reading time are still very valuable aspects of peer tutoring.

Peer tutoring at the sixth grade level provided students with the necessary on-task quality time needed to help improve reading ability scores and general attitudes toward reading. Twenty-three of the twenty-four students involved in peer tutoring moved up at least one grade level when retested in April, when only one child (of the twenty-four) stayed at the same level. As stated earlier, reading attitudes increased by eight points (based on the results of the percentile ranks from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Sixth graders responded positively when asked if the program should be continued next year.

The benefits of peer tutoring are many and varied, depending upon the situation and the interaction between the children. A significant amount of quality on-task reading time

is an essential part of a well-balanced reading program. The three teachers involved in the peer tutoring program agree that the time was well-spent.

CHAPTER 6

DECISIONS ON THE FUTURE

Solution Strategy

Although all three teachers had positive results with peer tutoring, there remain certain aspects that might be improved with some changes. In the first grade classroom first graders and third graders worked together. The coordination of schedules with another teacher was often difficult. One solution might be to run the program for the entire school year on a bi-weekly basis, rather than three times per week for a limited time. To improve the existing program, more opportunities would be provided for the older children to read to their younger partners. Lastly, more time would be provided for self evaluation activities at the first grade level.

The second grade classroom was ability grouped for reading. This classroom was a homogeneous grouping of average second grade readers. The teacher felt there would

have been more success had the class been heterogeneously grouped. Especially with a homogeneously grouped classroom, cross-grade tutoring may have been a more effective approach.

The sixth grade teacher involved in this peer tutoring found much success with the program as she set it up, and her changes deal more with refinements than major program changes. For example, while a variety of reading materials were made available to the students (e.g.,, big books, newspapers, magazines, basals, poetry, pamphlets, school newsletters), earlier on in the program introducing one new format of reading material at a time throughout the span of the year, may maintain interest and newness. Presenting more mini-lessons on word-attack strategies on a more consistent basis would also hopefully help and strengthen basic reading skills.

One problem all three teachers encountered was keeping students focused on the task at hand. For the sixth grade teacher, this frequently came in the form of not following along with the reader in order to closely monitor their reading. In addition to the monitoring done by the teacher, points could

be tallied for those students who exhibited active tutoring behaviors. Finally, rather than scheduling peer tutoring sessions for only 7-9 minutes three times a week, but shorter (5 minutes) sessions on a daily basis, may be more beneficial.

All teachers agree that formal, consistent instruction in social skills, both before and during the implementation of peer tutoring, is critical to its success. Before students can be effective tutors, they must learn to be effective communicators and encouragers.

Additional Applications

One of the most valuable aspects of any peer-tutoring program is that it provides increased time in one task behaviors. Despite the growing trend in child-centered classrooms, much instruction and learning remains teacher-centered. Peer tutoring is a logical, practical, and simple way to increase this extremely valuable on-task learning. Additional areas in which students could tutor each other would be in mathematic facts (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), and their weekly spelling lists. Science and social studies material could be reviewed with

peer tutors. It is also a necessary part to any Writer's Workshop program.

Another application (actually used by the first-grade teacher) is cross-grade tutoring. The advantage to this application is that there is more certainty of the tutor being able to catch and correct mistakes of the tutee. Depending on the range of abilities, more success may or may not be seen with cross-grade tutoring. Peer tutoring is a flexible strategy that allows for applications in numerous areas, and provides a successful experience for the majority of the student involved.

Dissemination of Data and Recommendations

The teachers in this study consider peer tutoring to be an option that can be used to provide children with a safe, positive experience in reading. As our study indicates, peer tutoring can aid in improving attitudes and ability levels in reading. The abstract of our study will be made available to teachers in the district by placing a copy at the school district's Teacher Center, as well as having a copy available in each of the three building. A flier (See Appendix A) to promote interest in peer tutoring will be made available with

the abstract. The teachers will encourage others to become involved in a peer tutoring program either within their own classroom or through cross-grade interaction. The teachers will participate in an Action Research Exhibition in which the results of peer tutoring will be displayed and presented.

The teachers involved in the peer tutoring program recommend that peer tutor/cross-grade tutoring be implemented in more schools to increase on-task reading time at all grade levels. Ideally, a pilot school is recommended to further investigate the benefits of an expanded peer-tutoring program. This program was valuable, worth and recommended to all teachers who work with children reading below grade level.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

FRUSTRATED? CONCERNED? SEARCHING?

If these are your feelings about some of the readers in your classroom, consider **peer tutoring**. It:

* can give students 2-3 times more reading practice than other approaches used alone.
* increases individualized instruction
* enhances both whole-language and basal approaches to reading instruction.
* is relatively easy to implement and adapt
* can help improve attitudes toward reading

INTERESTED?

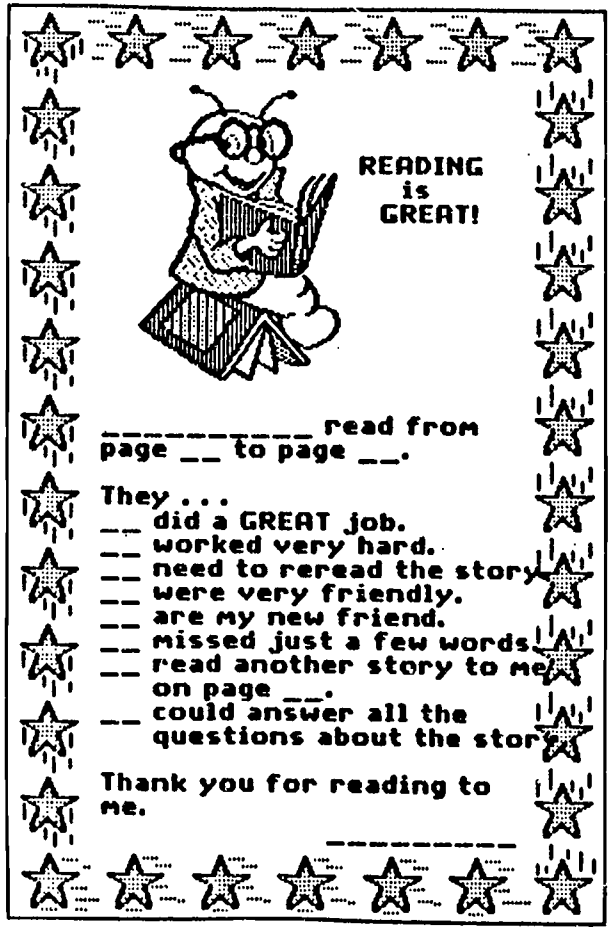
* Pair students with complementary reading abilities (a difference in ability--but not too great a difference-- is best).
* Train tutor in social skills, procedures, and basic instructional skills.
* Choose materials to be used during session.
* Determine duration and frequency of sessions.
* Re-evaluate regularly. Change and adapt peer-tutoring program as needed. One of the nice things about peer tutoring is its flexibility!
* Read up!

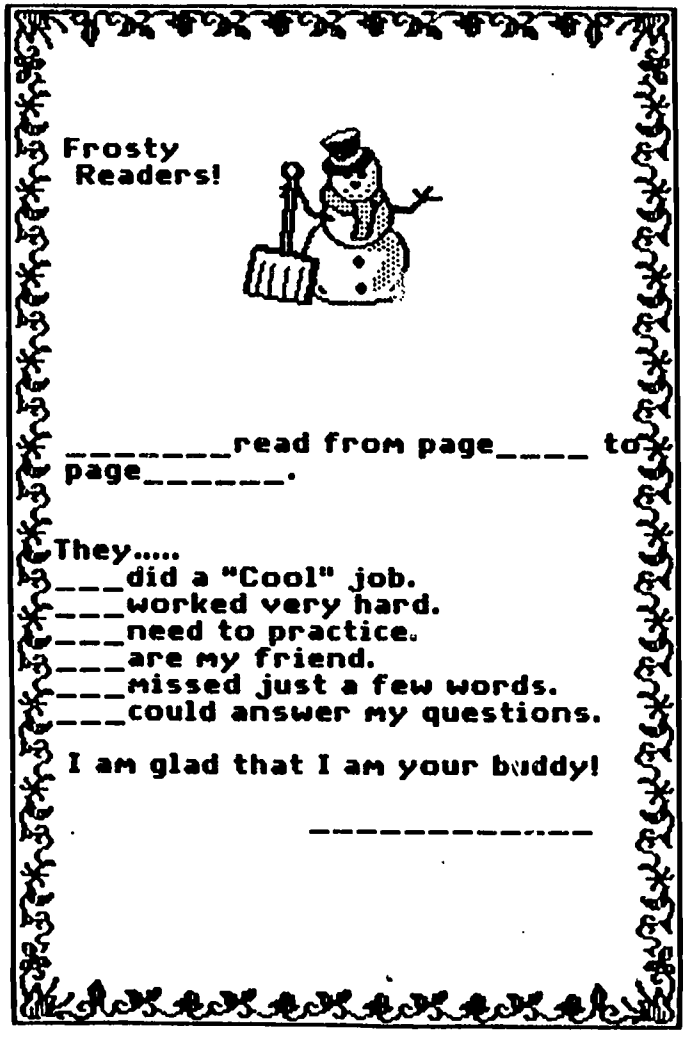
For more information and resources, see attached abstract and contact authors through School District U-46, Elgin, Illinois.

Appendix B

TOOTIE TIME

NAME	NAME	DATE
INDIVIDUAL POINTS	INDIVIDUAL POINTS	TOTAL POINTS
		DATE
INDIVIDUAL POINTS	INDIVIDUAL POINTS	TOTAL POINTS
		DATE
INDIVIDUAL POINTS	INDIVIDUAL POINTS	TOTAL POINTS


READING
is
GREAT!
_____ read from
page __ to page __.
They . . .
__ did a GREAT job.
__ worked very hard.
__ need to reread the story.
__ were very friendly.
__ are my new friend.
__ missed just a few words.
__ read another story to me
on page __.
__ could answer all the
questions about the story.
Thank you for reading to
me.
_____

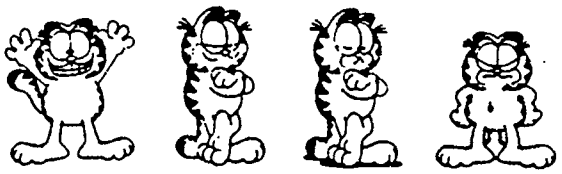

Frosty
Readers!
_____read from page____ to
page_____.
They.....
____did a "Cool" job.
____worked very hard.
____need to practice.
____are my friend.
____missed just a few words.
____could answer my questions.
I am glad that I am your buddy!
_____

Appendix D

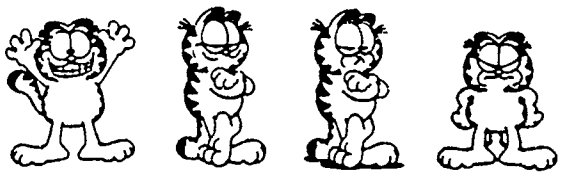
Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

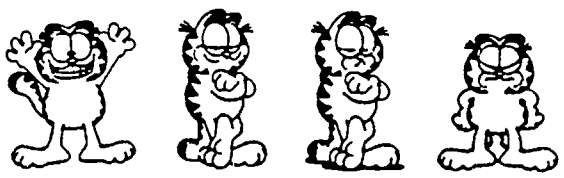
1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



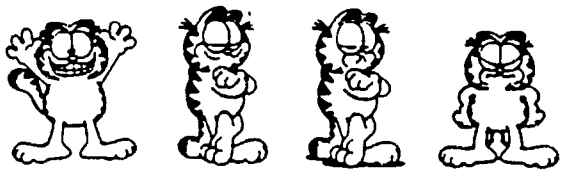
2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?



3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

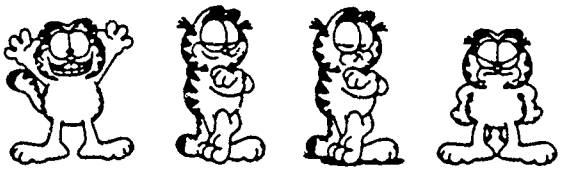


4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



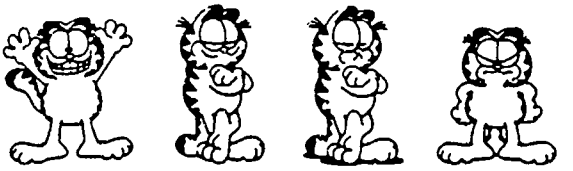
GARFIELD reprinted by permission of UFS, Inc.

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

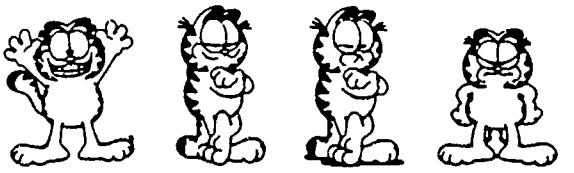


6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



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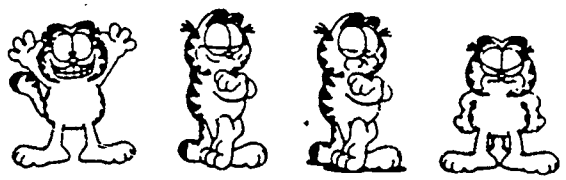
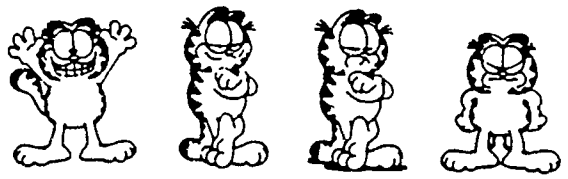
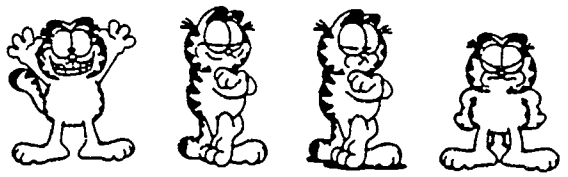
9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about wh you read?



12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?

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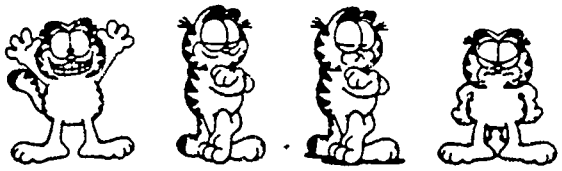
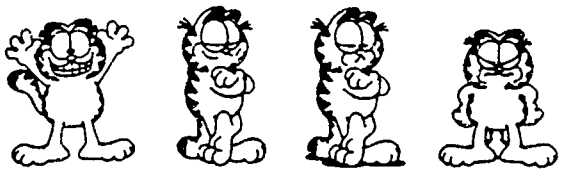
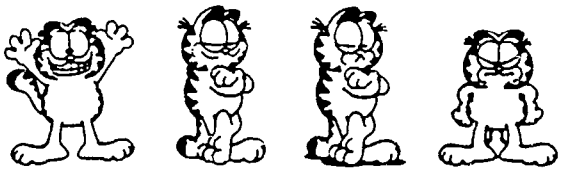
13. How do you feel about reading in school?



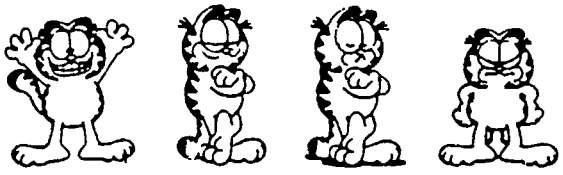
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?



15. How do you feel about learning from a book?



16. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



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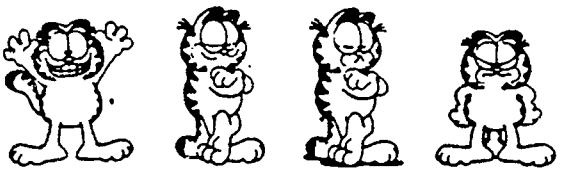
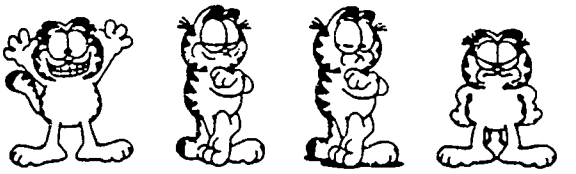
17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?

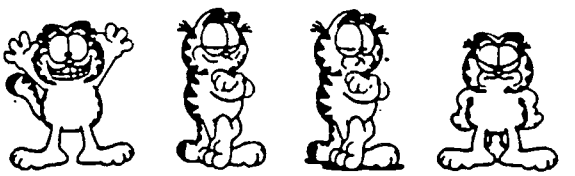


18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?

20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?



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Reader _____ Helper _____

	TALLY
Number of times the reader used "blank"	
Number of times the reader fixed the blank	

The reader knew all the words. ☐

The helper... followed along well ☺ 😐 ☹
kept points well ☺ 😐 ☹

Reader _____ Helper _____

	TALLY
Number of times the reader used "blank"	
Number of times the reader fixed the blank	

The reader knew all the words. ☐

The helper... followed along well ☺ 😐 ☹
kept points well ☺ 😐 ☹

Appendix F

Reader: _____

Buddy: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

Page Number	Said "Blank" + got it	Looked for word parts + got it	Sounded it out + got it	Asked buddy			

*Reader does this part!

My buddy . . . . . helped me choose a strategy. ☐

. . . usually gave me the answer. ☐

This is how well my buddy listened to me read: