DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 081 PS 025 172

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TITLE A Program for the Development of Reading Readiness Skills for Kindergarten Students Using a Cross-Age Reading Partner, Other Teacher, and Technology.
PUB DATE 8 Nov 96
NOTE 92p.; M.S. Final Report, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cross Age Teaching; Emergent Literacy; *Kindergarten Children; Primary Education; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; Reading Improvement; *Reading Readiness; Teacher Role; Teacher Student Relationship; Teaching Methods; Young Children

ABSTRACT

This practicum project developed and implemented a program to teach young children reading readiness skills before they entered first grade. A target group of 20 students ranging in age from 4 to 6 years old in an elementary school kindergarten class was established for the program. During the 12-week implementation, the target group participated in cross-age reading with fifth-grade students. The program consisted of three strategies: increasing letter recognition, increasing concepts about print, and increasing phonemic awareness. Student success was measured with teacher-made instruments, including checklists and existing score sheet instruments such as checklists for letter identification and concepts about print. Results indicated that the preschool students increased their letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and knowledge of print concepts during their participation in the program. Results support the need for kindergarten students to have cross-age reading partners in the daily curriculum. The interaction that occurred during the program built enthusiasm, allowed the target students to progress in the acquisition of reading skills, and put reading into a social context. Reading and discussing stories together resulted in a sense of ownership for the participants. (Six appendices include survey instruments, pre- and posttest scores and checklists verifying the effectiveness of the program.) (WJC)

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A PROGRAM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING READINESS SKILLS FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS USING A CROSS-AGE READING PARTNER, OTHER TEACHER, AND TECHNOLOGY

by

W. Jean Trimble

A Final Report submitted to the Faculty of the
Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education
of Nova Southeastern University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Science

November 8, 1996

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Abstract

A Program For The Development of Reading Readiness Skills For Kindergarten Students Using A Cross-Age Reading Partner, Others Teachers, And Technology. Trimble, Wilma Jean., 1996 Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Kindergarten Students/Fifth Grade Cross-Age Partners/ Special Area Teachers/ Technology/Letter and Sound Recognition/Concepts About Print/ Phonemic Awareness.

This practicum described a program that was developed and implemented by the writer to teach young children reading readiness skills before entering first grade. A target group of 20 students ranging in ages from four to six years old in an elementary school kindergarten class was established for the program. The reading program utilized a system devised from research by the writer, using cross-age reading partners, other teachers, and technology to increase the target groups' reading readiness skills. The program contained three strategies, increasing letter recognition, increasing concepts about print, and phonemic awareness. The writer measured student success with teacher made instruments including checklists and existing score sheet instruments such as letter identification checklists and concepts about print. Appendices include tables and graphs verifying the success of the program.

Final Report

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

School and Community Setting

The setting for the practicum was a large, twenty-six year old, two-story community school located on 15 acres. Besides the primary building, there are also 40 portable classrooms. Approximately 120 employees provide instructional and support services for students in the school.

The school serves a culturally diverse population of over 1,100 Pre-K through 5th grade students from low to middle income households. Approximately 56 percent of the students are African-Americans, 21 percent White, 20 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent other (Asians, Indian). Many of the students receive services from Bilingual/ESOL Programs, as the school is one of the largest bilingual centers in the county. Other students receive services from Specific Learning Disabilities, Educable Mentally Handicapped, Speech and Language, and Gifted Programs. Approximately 80 percent of the students are on free and/or reduced lunch.

Administration at the site believes that quality preschool programs increase children's chances of achieving educational success in becoming productive members of society. Only fifteen of the site's kindergarten students had previously been in a pre-kindergarten program. Due to the needs of the community and the size of the school, another pre-kindergarten unit was added. The number of kindergarten students eligible for free and/or reduced lunch for 1994-95 was 146. Five and eight tenths percent of the kindergarten students did not pass the screening test for hearing problems and .02 percent of the students did not pass the screening test for vision problems.

A mobility rate demonstrates how stable a school's population is during the school year. Schools with highly mobile populations may face instructional challenges that differ from those faced by schools with stable populations. The 1994-95 mobility rate for the site was 56.0 percent compared to the district average of 46.2 percent.

In 1994-95, the site had 151 first and second grade students that qualified and received Title I reading services (Appendix C, pp.70-75). Students in the 4th grade are tested on the Florida Writing Assessment and the Stanford-8 Achievement Test in reading comprehension. In 1995, the site schools'

average score for the Florida Writing Assessment was 2.2. The average score for the district was 2.3. In 1995 on the Stanford-8 Achievement Test, the 4th grade students' average score for reading comprehension was 30 percent while the average district score was 44 percent. The administration at the site believes that using preventive strategies rather than remediation is more beneficial to a student. Research reported in the American Education Research Journal (Mooney, 1993, p.60) agrees that "With early and continuing intervention nearly all children can be successful in reading (i.e., reading failure is fundamentally preventable for nearly all children)." The teachers at the site have the same concerns at Educational Planning meetings: what should be done with a student not reading on grade level. The concern is to be addressed for the year 1996-97 through inservice and implementation of educational strategies in the classroom.

The administration at the school of the site believes student attendance is directly related to student performance. The average daily attendance rate for the practicum school for 1994-95 was 93.2 percent compared to the district average of 93.7 percent. This includes 197 students (15.2 percent) who were absent for 21 or more days compared with the district average of 13.3 percent.

The writer of the practicum is a kindergarten teacher in a self-contained classroom at the site. This is the writers' fifth year at the school. The writer received a bachelor's degree in Physical Education and taught both middle and elementary schools for three years before returning to college to obtain a bachelor's degree in both early childhood and elementary education. The writer is in the eighth year of teaching and is certified by the State Department of Education to teach K-6th grade elementary education and K-5th grade Physical Education.

As a classroom teacher, the writer was responsible for implementing district established curriculum and objectives. The students did attend special area classes, physical education, art, music, and computer daily on a rotating schedule. The writer was responsible for the majority of the student's school day.

Students at the site have been entering first grade for the past three years without reading readiness skills and overall knowledge of the names, sounds and shapes of letters. The students were also weak in phonemic awareness skills. The inexperience in readiness skills according to the survey (Appendix A,B, pp.63-68) appear to be hindering students abilities to enter first grade "ready to read". The problem is that the students need to be read to more often by teachers, parents, and peers, as well as the students not participating as active learners.

(Table 1,2, pp.5-8).

Table 1

RESULTS FROM THE PARENT SURVEY APPENDIX A

Questions	Number of responses for a.	b.	c.	d.
1. Approximately at what age did you or someone else begin reading to your child?	2	4	10	4
2. If none of the answers in question 1 pertain to you, please indicate why in the space below.	Work, Single parent, material not available at home, time, parents don't read, Hispanic.			
3. Which of the following behaviors have you observed during you child's playtime with books?	4	5	10	2
4. At what age did your child begin to enjoy books?	0	5	10	5 don't
5. Approximately how many times a day do you or someone else read to your child?	5	3	0	12 none
6. While reading to your child, do you or someone else ask questions about the material so your child can retell the story?	5	15		
7. While reading to your child do you or someone else get the child involved in acting out the story?	2	18		

8. When reading to your child do you or someone else talk about the letters and how the letters form words?	3	17		
9. If the answer to questions number 6,7, or 8 was no please indicate reasons in the space below.	Just don't, Time, Didn't know to do this, Don't take time to read to them a lot.			
10. Would you or another family member commit to reading with your child on a daily basis?	5	0	15	
11. Please indicate your awareness of the following statement. Research has proven that reading aloud to your child would help him/her to become more aware of letters and sounds, which would result in helping them to become better readers.	7	10	3	10
12. Would you like for your child to participate in a Cross-Age Reading Partner Program in his/her class?	17	3	0	
13. Do you feel your child would benefit from a cross-age reading program with older students at their school?	18	2	0	0

Table 2

RESULTS FROM THE FIRST GRADE TEACHER SURVEY APPENDIX B

Questions	Number of responses for a.	b.	c.	d.
1. I have taught for	0	2	5	1
2. I am certified in Early Childhood Education.	5	3		
3. As a First Grade teacher would you say that all pre-readers need to have thorough knowledge of the letter name and sound for each letter in order to begin reading?	7	1	0	0
4. Based on your knowledge/opinion, do you believe Kindergarten students entering first grade have pre-reading skills to recognize and name letters?	7	1	0	
5. Based on your knowledge/opinion, developmentally some students are not ready to retain letter recognition and letter name skills by the time they reach first grade?	0	0	2	6
6. As a First Grade teacher would you encourage different teaching techniques to improve letter and sound recognition for Kindergarten students?	7	1	0	0

Please rate the following from 1-5 in the order of importance to you. 5 being the most important, 1 being the least important.

	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
7. Some immediate step(s) that could be taken by the Kindergarten teachers for improved skills could be?	3	2	1	4	5

To become active learners and readers the students need to hold the books, look at the words and pictures, and read along. They also need to gain experience with phonemic and letter awareness, which are critical pre-reading skills necessary for fluent reading.

The target group at the site consisted of 20 kindergarten students in a self-contained classroom, from four to six years of age. The target group included a diversity of cultures, as well as genders. There were 10 females and 10 males in the target group. Ten percent of the students are in an environment where the parent(s) work and the child is either at the site or attended to by some other means, both before and after the hours that school begins. The economic situation of the families attending the school range from middle class to 80 percent families qualifying for free or reduced breakfasts and lunches at the school.

The survey of the targeted group at the school disclosed information regarding the lack of reading habits and available reading materials in the students' homes (Appendix A, p.63-65). Results of the survey revealed that 50 percent of the parents are not reading to children at home. The survey also indicated books are not easily accessible for the children to read or experience looking at the pictures. Eighty percent of the families are plagued with long working hours, or managing the responsibility of the family and home all by themselves. The parents lack of time for reading to their child or having language oriented conversations with them could contribute to the child's inexperience (Table 1, p.5).

A survey completed by the current first grade teachers identified kindergarten students entering first grade have not acquired the skills necessary to accomplish the required reading tasks (Appendix B, p.67-68). Seven of the eight first grade teachers surveyed indicated the students are lacking in prereading skills (Table 2, p.7).

There was also other documentation that the problem exists. An interview with the school principal at the site indicated that reading readiness for the first graders was a problem. Further indications of the low reading skills is documented by the number of students served by the remedial reading services at

the site by Title I, and also by the Reading Recovery Program (Appendix C, p.70).

As documented by both the parent and first grade teacher survey, there are several causes that contribute to the lack of prereading skills for the target group at the site. The class size of the target group was as large as 25 - 30 students. With only one adult in the classroom, it was difficult to give the children the one to one attention they need or require. This year the state did pass a law stating there could be no more than 20 students per classroom for kindergarten. Thus the targeted group of students were cut by six students.

School records and individual education plans (IEP's) indicated some children upon entering kindergarten were not developmentally ready to comprehend what reading was about. The students' abilities to understand the concept of 26 letters of the alphabet, names and sounds, were not within their capabilities. Physical and mental disabilities also contributed to the problem.

Individual school records also attests cultural differences can sometimes present a language barrier for the child. The parents may speak a different language at home, while at the site the primary language is English. Students at this early age do tend to learn English faster; however, they can have difficulty

when it comes to learning and conceptualizing the letters of the alphabet and the sounds.

Although these causes do not pertain to every student at the site, the effects of even one or more of the factors can be detrimental. The student can become frustrated, and less interested in participating in reading activities, possibly evolving into a discipline problem, as documented by the number of referrals and parent contacts made by the teacher. The students may also need to receive remedial help, but at the site remediation is not done until first grade. Even worse, the child can begin to dislike reading or being read to. Thus, students want less to do with any reading skills or even listening to stories being read to them.

One intervention strategy at the site was parenting classes that are offered free to families by the site counselors. The classes were designed to help families have a better understanding of ideas pertaining to strategies they could use at home. The classes were offered late in the evenings in hopes that more parents would attend. After reviewing the school's attendance records for the past three years, the participation was very low.

Another intervention to provide resources such as books, tapes, videos, and tactile activities to the families exists through the Curriculum Resource

Teachers (CRT) at the site. Again, however, the materials available were very rarely checked out as shown by the CRT's check out records. Other interventions consisted of Reading Recovery and Title I, but the targeted group of students were not eligible to receive remedial services until they reach first grade.

The problem the practicum addressed was that students entering Kindergarten needed more exposure to reading materials. The students in the targeted group needed to be read to as often as 3 to 4 times daily. Students needed to participate in discussing and drawing the stories, drawing subjects associated with each of the letters of the alphabet. Students were not involved in retelling , acting out stories after they had been read.

The purpose of this practicum was to develop a program to improve readiness skills by 50 percent so that 10 of the 20 target group students would improve in letter recognition, concepts of print, and phoneme awareness.

The demands for reading have increased during this century as we have moved from an industrial to a technological, informational based society. Reading has become a basic skill affecting school success and employment opportunities.

Positive outcomes for intervention programs have become even more important for kindergarten age students, as reading is a continuum that began

when the child first started to use language; and it will continue well into their adult life. Even though our culture presently dictates that formal reading should begin early, research tells us that an informal beginning eventually produces more skilled and willing readers. The most important component of the reading progression is learning to love and appreciate books. The recognition of the words will follow. Another vital ingredient in reading successfully is the reader's background of experience. One of the important functions of the early childhood teacher is to build children's non-visual experiences so that meaning can be attached to print. Oral language development is another major area of reading instruction for young children. Phonetically decoding words is of no value to children when the words have no meaning.

The objectives of this practicum were:

Objective #1

After 12 weeks of participating in the intervention program the 20 students in the target group will increase their skills in letter recognition by 50 percent, a mean score gain of 10 letters as demonstrated by the letter identification score sheet. (Appendix D, p.77).

Objective #2

After 12 weeks of participating in the intervention program the 20 students in the target group will increase concepts about print by 50 percent, a mean score gain of seven concepts as demonstrated by the concepts about print score sheet. (Appendix E, p.81).

Objective #3

Over a period of 12 weeks, the 20 students in the target group will increase skills in phonemic awareness on the pre-observation checklist to at least 7 items on the post - observation checklist. (Appendix F, p.85).

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

The elements explored throughout this review were letter and sound recognition, concepts about print, and phonemic awareness. Helping students succeed as readers can be challenging. The background students receive in the early years will play a major role in whether the child will become a fluent reader.

> Children need to value reading and writing as pleasurable and enriching experiences. The desire to read is as important as the act of reading. Reading to relax, to satisfy curiosity, and to gain new information are important benefits. A love of books, enthusiasm for reading and writing, and a positive attitude, if established at a very early age, greatly facilitate literacy development. In their encounters with reading and writing children's emotions are engaged and their imaginations stirred and stretched. If children are to develop lifelong reading and writing habits, they must experience the excitement and personal fulfillment that print brings to them (Allington & Walmsley, 1995, p. 39).

Michener (1988, p.118) stated, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual succes in reading is reading aloud to children." Trelease, as cited by Smith (1989) construed reading to children is

done for many of the reasons talking is done to them, explaining and providing information about the world, encouraging them to be curious and inquisitive and to see language as entertaining and stimulating. Butler, as cited by Smith (1989, p.320) believed, "While reading aloud improves reading and listening skills and expands the use of oral language, it also motivates students to read." Teale, as cited by Smith (1989) confirmed, children who have been read to at home usually like to read and become proficient readers. Some researchers are now using long-term ethnographic studies to look at how reading aloud at home affects early literacy development.

Reading aloud affects the full range of language processes. It helps students discover similarities and differences between oral and written language, sharpening their speaking and listening skills and their understanding of narrative structure (Smith, 1989). Mooney (1994) explained listening to stories is not the prerogative of preschool or kindergarten children. Listening to stories, poems, rhymes, songs, articles and plays should be a frequent and enjoyable experience for all readers. Carbo & Cole (1995, p.63) stated, "Children learn from modeling. Adults and older children need to show youngsters that they value and enjoy reading. Young people learn this by observing role models."

Michener (1988) expressed reading aloud to young children does help. According to two research studies by the same author, children having been read to regularly by their parents is one factor all early readers appeared to have in common. Reading aloud builds a love for books and teaches left to right progression. The realization by the students that words rather than pictures is the basis for prereading understandings. Findings of Rosenblatt, Walker and Kuerbitz, as cited by Michener (1988) stated reading aloud to children also gives them a feeling that reading is important, fun, and informative, while exposing them to a wide variety of experiences they can later use to interpret the words they will decode.

Gaustad (1993) stated that the Companion Reading Program developed by Brigham Young University by Professor Grant Harrison for levels K-3 and higher is an integrated instructional program which helps the students to listen. The students serve as a cross-age tutor and all students in a class take turns acting as tutor and tutee during daily exercises. What makes peer and cross-age tutoring effective is children have certain advantages over adults in teaching peers. They may more easily understand tutees' problems because they are cognitively closer. Peer and cross-age tutors can effectively model study skills such as concentrating on the material, organizing work habits, and asking questions. Peer and cross-age

tutoring often improve the overall school atmosphere. Teachers and parents in Faribault, Minnesota, found companion reading reduced competition and created a more supportive classroom environment.

Leland and Fitzpatrick (1994) stated "When sixth-grade students were paired with kindergarten children to read and write collaboratively on a regular basis students' atttitudes toward literacy improved" (p.292). They reported how their study called Cross-age interaction builds enthusiasm for reading and writing. The study showed reading with a buddy and discussing the story allowed children to progress in the acquisition of reading skills and to put reading into a social context. The older students in cross-age programs often find it helpful to discuss book and author choices with their peers. Discussions about favorite stories and authors are activities characteristic of good readers that are adopted by poor readers when they take on the tutoring role (Lamme, 1987). "Emergent literacy studies indicate that an improtant aspect of children's natural acquisition of literacy is their attachment to favorite book authors and their sense of ownership for pieces they have written" (Lamme, 1989, p.44). Thus, reading and discussing and then writing original stories together would result in a sense of ownership for all participants in the cross-age program. Leland and Fitzpatrick (1994) stated to prepare the students for the cross-age program the sixth graders needed to under-

stand they were not expected to teach the kindergarteners how to read, but only to make sure they both had fun while reading and writing together. Another activity focused on literary awareness, working in pairs to examine pictures and what happened at the beginning, middle, and at the end of the story. At a much simpler level, this paralleled regular classroom instruction on story mapping which focused on developing an awareness of important story elements. Story mappng provides readers with a basic framework for organizing and sorting information.

Morrice and Simmons (1991) reported the effects of the cross-age Reading Buddies Program at Parkside School in Ajax, Ontario that fostered more than just Reading Buddies. The program addressed oral reading, viewing and listening for pleasure, as well as talking for checking comprehension and expressing and sharing appreciation. Routman (1989) specified the use of older elementary students to help conduct comprehension checks. Lindfors, as cited by Froese (1990) stated talk can expand a child's theory of the world, can make understanding more precise, and can increase retention. By implementing a Buddies program that encompassed whole language experiences, students grew to respect the significance of literacy and the impact of literature-based curriculum on the learning outcomes of elementary school children. By

developing additional avenues of literacy, children practiced being in charge of their learning.

Rekrut (1994) reported that recent attention to cooperative and collaborative learning has renewed teachers' interest in cross-age and peer tutoring as well as the elements of reading that are readily amenable to tutoring. In the monitorial system, one schoolmaster had responsibility for a large number of children. The older and abler students were trained to teach what they learned, largely the three R's, to younger children, and monitor their practice. This practice was developed in the 19th century by Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster, and Andrew Bell, an Anglican clergyman. Lancaster's schools were founded on the principle that children learned most efficiently from one another. Recent decades have seen a return to this early version of peer and cross-age tutoring. A number of reasons for the preponderance of work on elementary reading: the availability of study populations, the importance of reading as the foundation of success in other subjects, and the measurability of reading achievement. Within reading, a number of aspects have attracted considerable attention, most linked to strategy instruction or metacognitive awareness in one form or another: (a) sight word identification, (b) oral reading

and comprehension, (c) use of a story grammar as a recall apparatus, and (d) text look-backs to locate information.

Morrow (1994) reported shared reading with children fosters emergent literacy as children actively participate during story times. Listening to storybooks increases children's interest in books and in learning to read. Furthermore, as they actively listen and respond to storybooks during shared-reading times, children see how stories are structured, they develop comprehension and language skills, and become increasingly familiar with the difference between written and oral language. Children's involvement in shared reading experiences with storybook's yields other important benefits. When the teacher or reading partner tracks a big book's print with a pointer or finger, you reinforce how a story's text proceeds form left to right across the page, and help children understand the relationship between spoken and written words. Repeated readings of the same story enhance interest about the nature of print. When children independently engage one another in shared-reading experiences with storybooks, they exchange ideas and may even arrive at new joint understandings. Advanced readers can often be seen helping classmates figure out words. Research has shown that children's reading achievement, as well as their interests in books, increases as a result of participation in story experiences

with their peers.

Ayers and Wainess (1989) stated " Start the school year by pairing younger children with older reading partners, and watch the learning and friendship grow"(p.22). Sharing the joy of reading is what the Reader Pals program is all about. The concept can be as utilitarian or elaborate as the cooperating teachers determine it to be. When Reader Pals is in place as an integral part of every school day, the rewards of the program are reaped by students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

Siegel and Hanson (1991) reported two national studies have recently confirmed the particular home, school, and extracurricular experiences that impact an individual's reading achievement over the course of development. The studies analyzed comprehensive data gathered from 3,959 high school students in 24 school districts across the U.S. The first study, the Kindergarten Reading Follow-up (KRF) Study, examined the long-term effects on children being taught to read in kindergarten. The second study, the Reading Development Follow-up (RDF) Study, analyzed the same data to identify the specific kinds of experience, from preschool through high school, that foster high levels of reading achievement in high school seniors (Siegel, 1987). The implications were clear:

students provided with more of these specific kinds of experiences across their development will have higher reading achievement levels as young adults than those who have less.

The RDF Study confirmed that the specific kinds of early educational experiences students have are highly predictive of later reading abilities as well. The study showed those high school seniors who were provided with more reading, language, and other kinds of both direct and indirect educational experiences during their preschool years had higher overall levels of reading competency than those provided with less. Preschool activities provided were learning nursery rhymes and stories, watching Sesame Street, playing word and number games, and being read to.

The findings of the KRF study indicated students who began their formal reading instruction in kindergarten had higher reading achievement scores, both at the end of their kindergarten year and as seniors in high school, than those students who did not. Also, compared to other high school seniors in the same school districts, those who received the kindergarten reading instruction had better grades, attendance, and attitudes toward reading, as well as less need for remediation. More importantly, these same results held up across ethnic, gender, and social class groups. The RDF study also found students who spent more time

in writing stories or papers, reading books, and working on language lessons had good school attendance records and high levels of reading achievement.

The findings of both the Reading Development Follow-up Study and the Kindergarten Reading Follow-up Study emphasized the responsibility of parents, educators, and policy makers in regard to literacy development; to offer, encourage, and support activities that provide these kinds of schooling experiences and require the use of such skills for students at every schooling level. Early childhood learning experiences, however, are particularly important to literacy development. The finding that early childhood educational experiences, and early reading instruction in particular, are key factors in the reading competency level of high school seniors strongly suggests that all children should be given the opportunity to attend high quality preschools and kindergartens that will provide them with these experiences.

Adams (1990) summarized in two comprehensive research studies "The best predictor of reading achievement is a child's knowledge of letter names" (p.61). The more familiar children are with letter names and shapes before learning to read, the more likely they are to find success in reading.

Chall, as cited by Adams (1990) reported prereader's knowledge of letter names was a strong predictor of success in early reading achievement Bond and

Dykstra, as cited by Adams (1990) conducted the USOE First Grade study that found prereader's letter knowledge was the single best predictor of first-year reading achievement, with their ability to discriminate phonemes auditorily ranking a close second. Furthermore, these two factors were the winners regardless of the instructional approach used.

The way in which children are most often introduced to letters at home is through the alphabet song and further, these children typically learn to recite the names of the letters long before they can recognize them. Letter learning for these children typically are not accomplished by showing them the letters and then teaching them the names. Most children, instead, are taught to identify the letters only after they have been taught the letter names. By thoroughly learning the letter names first, children have a better understanding for a symbol to which their perceptions can be attached. More than that, they have a set of conceptual anchors with which to sort out relevant and irrelevant differences in the letters' appearances (Adams, 1990).

It is significant that the initial ability to recite the alphabet is so often achieved through the alphabet song. Songs, with their rhyme, rhythm, and tune, are far easier to learn than unintoned lists. These children typically learn the names of letters long before introduced to their sounds. When it is time to learn

the sounds of the letters, their solid, over learned familiarity with the letter names probably protects them from confusing the two (Adams, 1990).

Research reported by McGee & Richgels (1989) indicated alphabet learning has a long tradition as an important component of learning to read and write. Durrell, Walsh, Price and Gillingham, as cited by Mcgee & Richgels (1989) construed it is one of the best predictors of reading success. Anbar and Durkin, as cited by Mcgee & Richgel (1989) stated, parents of early readers report learning letter names was one of their children's early literacy accomplishments .

Young children learn many things about alphabet letters such as letter names, noticing features of letters and exploring letter features in writing, and taking note of letter knowledge by beginning to talk about letters. Children also learn roles that letters play in reading and writing (McGee & Richgels, 1989).

Baghba (1984) and Lass (1982), as cited by McGee & Richgels (1989), reported there are no research studies designed specifically to describe children's acquisition of alphabet knowledge. However, there are at least two case studies that provide rich descriptions of young children's literacy learning that mention alphabet learning . The case studies provided insights as to how children begin learning about alphabet letters as well as other aspects of literacy. They also

suggested implications for school instruction. The following were five settings in which the studies showed the children interacting specifically with alphabet letters:

(1) Walks or drives in the neighborhood where environmental print signs were read and considered.
(2) Games such as Command a Letter or Alternate Letters in which parents and children named or wrote letters.
(3) Writing words and names so the children could practice writing.
(4) Writing for authentic purposes.
(5) Reading alphabet books.
(McGee & Richgels, 1989, pp.220 -221).

Children learn alphabet letters by talking about them, by identifying them on signs, and labels, and by practicing reading and writing. Children do not first learn to name the letters and then write them. Instead, naming and writing letters go hand in hand. Finally, learning to name and write letters does not necessarily mean children understand letters as units of written language associated with sounds. Rather, this learning is only gradually acquired with experience with reading and writing as meaningful activities. Children need many experiences with alphabet letters in many contexts before they begin to understand the relationship between letters and sounds (McGee & Richgels, 1989).

Children learn to recognize, name, and write alphabet letters as they engage in meaningful reading writing activities with their parents, teachers, and other children. Their learning is not linear; they do not seem to learn a letter a day or a letter a week. Rather, learning to name and recognize alphabet letters seems to be a function of the meanings that children learn their ABCs, they acquire knowledge about written language and language with which to talk about their written language knowledge (McGee & Richgels, 1989).

Cunningham and Allington (1991) stated using big books turns traditional reading instruction upside-down. Kindergartners and 1st readers begin with real reading, then learn words, then letter-sound relationships. The classroom approach with big books simulates the experiences children from print-rich environments have before starting school. The authors stated exposure to lots of books at home is an important predictor of reading success. Using oversized, large-print picture books, commonly known as big books is one answer to starting children with real reading. While reading the big books children see that some words are repeated. Eventually they come to recognize some of the words, and their attention can begin to be directed to recurring letter-sound relationships.

Adams (1990) stated that it depends upon growing up in an environment where print is important in order for children to gain an understanding of the

nature and uses of print. Adams (1990) further suggested it depends upon interactions with print that are a source of social and intellectual pleasure for the individual children and the people who surrounded them.

> In preschool and Kindergarten programs, enhancement of children's concepts about print should be a central goal. The classroom itself should be full of print and the print should be varied, functional, and significant to children. In addition to displays of current activity themes and the children's names and birthdays, cubbies and nooks should be labeled, sign-up lists posted, and so on. Visits to the school or public library are well worth the hassle. And research everywhere indicates that reading books with children is especially valuable (Adams, 1990, p. 69).

Adams (1990) stated that the ability to read does not emerge spontaneously, through regular and active engagement with print. For a child who is well prepared to learn to read, the beginning of formal reading instruction should not be an abrupt step, but a further step on a journey already well under way. Children will typically learn most of the concepts of print simply by observing how the teacher turns the pages of books, how the teacher's hand or pointer moves across and down the page, and how the teacher correlates the spoken word with the written word by the use of the hand or pointer (Weaver, 1990).

There are many who believe that children's acquisition of knowledge about print, including about environmental print, is enhanced through social interaction with more knowledgeable partners (Vukelich, 1994). Findings of Nnio et al., as cited by Vukelich (1994) focused research upon adult-child interactions to improve children's acquisition of knowledge about written language.

Research by Enz and Christie and Neuman and Roskos, as cited by Vukelich (1994) applied the ideas of functional experiences with print and the tools of literacy and of social interaction with more knowledgeable others, to early childhood classrooms. They created classroom literacy contexts, places where adults and older children could engage in social interactions with young students and with literacy materials and print for specific purposes. These researchers linked young childrens'outside school and classroom environments by creating classroom play settings enriched with the print items and tools of literacy common to each setting in the world outside of the school environment. Through their research, they discovered manipulations to the classroom play environments increased children's engagement in literate behaviors. They also showed that it positively affected literacy learning as determined by children's performance on

such measures as a function of print test, for example the Concepts About Print Test.

Routman and Butler (1995) reported the term phonemic awareness refers to the ability to hear and differentiate between the various words, sounds, and syllables in speech, and this ability is critical to success in beginning reading. Phonemic awareness develops through repeatedly hearing, saying and singing traditional nursery rhymes, simple poems and songs, as well as through word-play. "Children who have a rich knowledge of rhymes develop the ability to pay attention to sounds in words more easily" (Wells & Hart-Hewins, 1994, p. 25).

Bryant et al., (1989, p.407) reported an important result.

> There is a strong relationship between early knowledge of nursery rhymes and success in reading and spelling over the next three years after differences in social background, IQ and the children's phonologically skills at the start of the project are taken into account. Knowledge of nursery rhymes enhances children's phonological sensitivity which in turn helps them learn to read.

Allington & Walmsley (1995, p. 161) reported, "There is a high correlation between low phonemic awareness upon entering first grade and poor reading progress by the end of first grade." Research done by Allington & Walmsley (1995) concluded that phonemic awareness was specifically and

regularly developed through teacher modeling of the sounding and blending of words in stories and through the writing of words and sentences by the children. Allington & Walmsley (1995) stated other researchers who concur with their findings, that phonemic awareness training for low-achieving emergent readers is important and such training has been found to improve children's reading ability.

Adams (1990) described five levels of phonological awareness ranging from an awareness of rhyme to being able to switch or substitute the components in a word. While phonological awareness affects early reading ability, the ability to read also increases phonological awareness (Smith, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995). Children do not readily learn how to relate letters of the alphabet to the sounds of language (Lyon, 1995). For all students the process of phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness, must be explicitly taught.

Examples of phonological awareness tasks include phoneme deletion ("What word would be left if the /k/ sound were taken away from cat?"); Word to word matching ("Do pen and pipe begin with the same sound?'); Blending ("What word would we have if we blended these sounds together: /m/ /o/ /p/?"; Phoneme segmentation ("What sounds do you hear in the word hot?"); Phoneme counting

("How many sounds do you hear in the word cake?'); and Rhyming ("Tell me all the words that you know that rhyme with the word cat?" (Stanovich, 1994, p. 282).

Kameenu (1996) expressed beginning readers require more direct instructional support from teachers in the early stages of reading. It is very important that the teacher or person reading model the correct sounds. A sequence and schedule of opportunities for children to apply and develop facility with sounds should be tailored to each child's needs, and should be given top priority. Opportunities to engage in phonological awareness activities should be plentiful, frequent, and fun.

Routman and Butler (1995) stated young children need to understand the alphabetic principle: Letters represent sounds, and these sounds or phonemes are represented by letters. Children need to be able to hear the sound sequences of words before they can read independently. Some procedures for teaching this would be clapping, cutting, singing, and working with onsets and rimes. The authors explained the onset is the part of the syllable that comes before the vowel and is always a consonant or a consonant blend. The rime is the rest of the unit. Onsets and rimes are powerful for helping children to read and write because they are easier to learn than individual vowel sounds. The phonic

patterns remain stable, and word families are easily constructed for reading and spelling.

Foster, Erickson, and Foster (1994) reported on a computer program designed to increase phonological awareness in young children. The program, called Daisy Quest I and II was developed in response to convincing research evidence that sensitivity to the phonological structure of words is an important aid in the acquisition of early reading skills. They reported a large amount of the research provides both indirect and direct support for the idea that improving the phonological awareness of children before they begin to learn to read, or even during the early phases of reading instruction, can have a significant impact on the rate at which early alphabetic reading skills are acquired.

Byrne and Fielding-Barnsley (1989; 1990) presented a series of studies from which they argue that training on tasks involving phoneme identification is potentially more beneficial to subsequent reading development than is instruction in segmentation. Training programs focusing on either identification or segmentation skills both increased children's ability to acquire alphabetic reading skills. Daisy Quest contained activities that train both identification and segmentation skills. Data supporting the assumption that children can attain

useful levels of phonological awareness without being exposed to all of the 41 phonemes in the English language. The studies showed that training in phoneme identification using a relatively small group of phonemes produced substantial increases in performance on tasks using phonemes that had not been trained.

Their findings suggest that children can acquire a general understanding of the phonological structure of words from training that involves only a subset of all possible phonemes. Both the Daisy Quest I and Daisy Quest II experiments reported supported the conclusion that phonological awareness in young children can be significantly increased by the training with the computer program. The training effects observed in the experiments are impressive because of the relatively brief training time involved (approximately 8 hours in 1st experiment, and 5 hours in the 2nd experiment), and because significant effects were observed on five different tests of phonological awareness.

Castle, Riach, and Nicholson (1994) reported the results of the experiment which focused on reading acquisition. Seventeen children aged 5-5.6 years who attended five suburban primary schools, in the areas of Auckland, New Zealand, received phonemic awareness training while a 2nd matched group of 17 children participated in other language and reading activities that did not involve phonemic instruction. The results indicated that the phonemic training program

did have an effect on reading skills. The phonemic group's scores on the phonemic awareness test were considerably higher than those of the other group. It appeared from the results that training which includes letter-sound relationships, enabled the phonemic group to do a better job of reading pseudowords on the Bryant Test of Basic Decoding Skills. The students also showed an improvement on the dictation test, which measured phonemic spelling skills.

Stedman and Kaestle (1987) reported an estimated 35 million American adults continue to have severe problems with even the most common reading activities. It seems reasonable to conclude that , although reading is clearly a language based activity, reading and speech are not "equivalent forms of development" and that all children do not learn both "in the same natural, unconscious way" (Liberman & Liberman, 1990, p. 56). Consequently, it is imperative that we continue to explore exactly what it is that children must understand about the connections between print and speech to become literate.

Blachman (1991) stated despite the sometimes acrimonious debate regarding the best way to teach beginning reading, we have actually learned a great deal in the last two decades about the language factors important in early reading acquisition. Adams (1990) and Stanovich (1987) reported evidence

converges from a variety of disciplines, a consensus beginning to emerge about some to the basic precursors of literacy development. Perhaps the most successful are of inquiry has been research in phonological awareness. As Williams (1987) points out, one of the most important insights in beginning reading has been the realization that "sometimes children have trouble learning to decode because they are completely unaware of the fact that spoken language is segmented" (pp. 25-26). It is these phonemic segments that are more or less represented by the letters in an alphabetic writing system. It is the complex relationship among the phonemes in the speech stream that makes it difficult for the young child to gain access to these phonemic segments. Adams (1990) concluded that "The evidence is compelling; Toward the goal of efficient and effective reading instruction, explicit training of phonemic awareness is invaluable" (p.331).

In a study by Ball and Blachman (1988, 1991), 90 kindergarten children were randomly assigned to either a treatment group or one of two control groups. Children in the treatment group learned to segment one-two- and three phoneme items and also learned letter sound associations Children in the first control group engaged in a variety of language activities and also learned letter sound associations by using the same letter sound stimuli as the phoneme awareness

treatment group. The children in both groups met for four or five times outside the regular classroom with specially trained teachers, for 15 to 20 minutes a day, 4 days a week, for 7 weeks. The children in the third group received no intervention. After the intervention, the treatment children significantly outperformed the children in both control groups in phoneme segmenting, reading, and spelling. Increasing letter sound knowledge, in and of itself, does not improve initial reading and spelling. Phoneme awareness training, coupled with instruction in letter sounds, does have a positive effect on beginning reading and spelling.

Pugh (1989) stated fairy tales, myths, fables and legends are frequently recommended for teaching literary analysis because of their clear formal features and perusable patterns. Literature is the means by which people communicate across cultures and across ages, across all divisions of time and space to gather the collective wisdom of the human experience. It is also the way we explore and communicate with the future. Through teaching literature, we recognize the special claim that children have on the future as well as our willingness to share the past. To appreciate literature is to appreciate what it means to be part of the human scene. No child should be denied that opportunity.

Solution Strategy

Students learn to read with varying degrees of success. Education has become more individualized and it is acknowledged that all children have the right to be successful. Therefore, it is only fitting that the writer design a program that will open many opportunities for reading to take place and for students to reach their full potential.

Literacy skills improve and enthusiasm for reading increases through cross-age programs (Ayers & Wainess, 1989; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Lamme, 1987; Morrice & Morrow, 1994; and Siegel & Hanson, 1991). Students learned to listen, read and write collaboratively, organize and increased basic framework understandings through story mapping, and shared comprehension and appreciation strategies, which were incorporated into this practicum.

Letter and sound recognition was encouraged with the target students through tactile activities with songs and environmental print, (Adams, 1990; McGee & Richgels, 1989;). A print rich environment was provided in the classroom with big books, labeled cubbies, sign-up lists, etc. (Cunningham & Allington, 1991; Adams, 1990; Weaver, 1990; Enz, et.al). Phonemic awareness increased through repeatedly hearing, saying, and singing traditional nursery

rhymes, simple poems and songs, as well as through word play (Routman & Butler, 1995; Allington & Walmsley, 1995). The writers' strategies utilized technology to teach phonological awareness, and provided oral readings for the children (Foster, Erickson, & Foster, 1994).

An intervention using Cross-Age Reading Partners with the fifth graders at the site as well as reinforcement by special area teachers assisted the target group in increased awareness of letter recognition, sounds, concepts about print, and phonemic awareness. It was the intent that fifth graders, along with the teachers, would provide the modeling, writing, and reading needed for the target group to develop prior knowledge in experiences for further learning.

CHAPTER III

Method

During a twelve-week implementation period, the target group of five and six-year-old students developed letter and sound recognition, concepts about print, and phonemic awareness. The role of the writer was to coordinate and schedule the Cross-Age Reading Program with the fifth grade class, as well as include the special area teachers for extended reinforcement. The writers' role was also to model and guide the program and provide a variety of highly activating hands-on experiences, including daily opportunities for students to be actively involved in writing, retelling stories, acting out stories, playing alphabet games, story mapping, making books, etc.

The same basic lesson plan format was followed each week. The students read and worked with their reading partners daily every week, for ten weeks. The last week was set aside for conducting a performance assessment with each student in the target group. The writer kept a daily journal as a written record of observations during the implementation. Data was collected at three intervals with a pre-test, a mid-point test, and a post-test.

Sequence of weekly activities

Week # 1 = The first week, the writer conducted the pretests with target students individually. (See Appendix D:77, E:81, F:85.)

The writer met with the reading partner's teacher and chose a convenient 40-45 minute time to meet daily and to begin the Cross-Age Reading Program. The writer introduced the students to each other and explained the program. The students then chose their own partners. Some students had more than one partner, due to the number of students in each class.

Week # 2 = The writer introduced and read new stories, did puppet shows, flannelboard stories, and story mapping for the entire class. The writer also introduced the letters "M, T" and ask the students to find the letters in the books or stories they read that week. They also did the letters "M,T" while making a rhyming book in the book making center each week.

The students spent the next 15 minutes reading orally to their partners. Selecting books from the writers' library or acceptable books the students had brought to read or checked out from the library.

The students would go to book making center to make rhyming books for letters "A-Z." This week they did letters "M,T."

Each day the students were given reading choice centers where the students could go to extend their reading activities about the book they read or about another story. The teacher demonstrated each reading center choice and explained the activities expected to take place in each center. Students could spend as much time as was needed in the center they choose. They could choose to visit all of the centers or they could choose to visit one center and stay there until class time was over. Students had to go

to the book making center to complete the rhyming book at least once each week..

The reading choice centers were:

Read The Room - Using a pointer students moved around the room reading print. They had to read from the calendar, lunch chart, bulletin board, etc.

Flannelboard - Favorite stories or songs were retold with both commercial and teacher-made flannel sets. Students could also create a story of their own.

Pocket chart - Both commercial, teacher-made , and student-made sentence strips were sequenced and used to retell a story.

Computer - Students used the software Bailey's Book House and The Playroom, to listen to letters and sounds, create rhymes, and make their own stories. The writers' classroom has three computers with the software on each of the three computers. Three to four students can utilize one computer at a time.

Writing center - Materials such as pencils, crayons, markers, paper, and clipboards were provided for the students to draw, write, or create a book or stories.

Story mapping - Students will discuss the title, author, setting, characters, problem, goal, and resolution of the book or story they read or made. Story mapping can be done with picture drawings, or with the aide of their partners' it can simply be written out.

Puppets - Stick puppets, hand puppets, finger puppets, and materials to make their own puppets are provided for the students to retell and act out the stories they read, or the stories they created on their own.

Big books - Students read favorite big books on an easel.

Theme books - Emergent level bookswere placed in deep pocket charts for independent exploration.

Listening - Multiple copies of books and cassettes are made available.

Book making center - Rhymes for each letter of the alphabet from "A-Z." Students will review the letter, write the letter, and the rhyme. They will also illustrate their book and make a cover.

Alphabet station - ABC books, puzzles, songs, games, (such as Bunny Hop and Leap Frog) and magnetic letters.

The writer also included reading walks where the students collected treasure to use to create their own story. Literature-based classroom cooking books provided students the opportunity to prepare and eat food after listening to the story were also utilized. The students then ate together and wrote or drew stories about their activities. Books included Rosie's Walk, and The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry, and The Big Hungry Bear were used.

Week # 3 = The writer introduced the letters "F,H,N" to the students. Students would find the letters in the books choosen to read that week. They also did these three letters while making rhyming books in the book making center.

The writer introduced and read new stories.

Students would spend the next 15 minutes reading orally with their partners.

Students would go to the book making center to work on a rhyming book for letters"F,H,N" this week.

Students would choose and go to a reading choice center.

Special area physical education teacher read a book and had students act out the story.

Weeks 4 -10 followed the same plan as week # 3. The letters and special area teacher for each week would be:

Week # 4 = Letters "A,B,Z"
Art teacher and students would create a puppet.

Week # 5 = Letters "P,S,V"
Technology specialist and The Playroom and Bailey's Book House software.

Week # 6 = Mid-point evaluation to see if students were moving toward goal and if changes were necessary. The teacher evaluated the students individually. Adjustments were made in strategies where needed. (See Appendix D,E,F: pp.77-88.)

Week # 7 = Letters "E,L,D"
Music teacher and students sang songs with rhyming words and patterns.

Week # 8 = Letters "G,C,I"
Media specialist read big books to students.

Week # 9 = Letters "O,K,W"
Technology specialist and The Playroom and Bailey's Book House software.

Week # 10 = Letters "Y,R,J"
Music teacher and students sang songs with rhyming words and patterns.

Week # 11 = Letters "U,X,Q"
Media specialist read big books to students.

Week # 12 = Post-test (See Appendix D:77, E:81, F:85,) was conducted by

the writer with students individually and end with students sharing their A-Z rhyming book with the class.

Lesson plan for the week

The writer conducted a daily 40-45 minute lesson during the weeks of implementation. To begin the lesson for the week, the writer introduced the letters for that week. This was done with songs, stories, puppets, flannel board materials, or games. After introducing the letters the writer would then ask the students to look for these letters in the books and activities the studentswould do throughout the week. The writer would also read and introduce new stories and various activities that could be done with the stories in the reading choice centers.

The reading choice centers available for the students were introduced by the writer and provided materials necessary for the centers to allow the students the opportunity to become creative and have fun while learning.

Next, the writer's role was to guide and facilitate the students while they were in the reading choice centers. Depending on the activities that the students choose to do for the week, the writer would guide the students to work together with their partner as one group or in cooperative groups of four or five. The students planned, created, and enjoyed the reading activities.

Each week the writer would take photos to show students carrying out activities and working together with the Cross-Age Reading Partners. The photos provided a pictorial record of all that was done in twelve weeks. Photos were also used to illustrate some of the books the children made.

To keep materials organized and encourage students to share stories and ideas, the writer provided labeled folders with names. In the folder, the students kept their drawings, writings, A-Z rhyming book, and other activities they wished to share and take home at the end of the twelve weeks.

Involvement With Others

To conduct the practicum with the students, the writer included the children from the fifth grade class, fifth grade teacher, and special area teachers during the daily 40-45 minute lessons. The approval of all the teachers was required. The schedules of all involved were considered. Parents were also told about the program, and asked to participate. The principal of the school consented to serve as mentor for the writer of the practicum.

Materials

The writer provided most of the materials needed for the practicum. Some materials were donated by other teachers to aide in making sure there were enough activities to allow the students to experiment and explore with all aspects of reading. Examples of materials used were:

folders	film
books	sentence strips
puppets	flannel board stories
pointers	computers
flannel board	big books
pocket chart	listening center
games	songs
paper	markers
tapes	crayons
straws	sticks
bags	scissors

In celebration of all the learning that resulted during twelve weeks of implementation, the teacher asked the students to share stories and activities with other kindergarten classes and other cross-age reading partners that they did not work with during the twelve weeks. The students showed a large increase in letter and sound recognition, concepts about print, and phonemic awareness.

CHAPTER IV

Results

To evaluate the success of the plan to develop the readiness skills for kindergarten students using a Cross-Age Reading Program with five and six- year-old children, the writer used a pre-test to measure students' prior knowledge before the implementation began in the areas of letter and sound recognition, concepts about print, and phonemic awareness. To determine how the learners were progressing at mid-point, the writer used the same checklists and score sheets to evaluate and assess if the implementation was working or if changes needed to be made. To assess how far students had progressed at the end of the program, the same evaluation instruments were used as a post-test. The writer kept a daily journal as a written record of observations of each student in the target group during the implementation. Individual assessment was used by the writer at the end of the implementation period, to assess the learning outcome ability of each target student.

During the twelve week implementation period, the target group participated in a Cross-Age Reading Program with the fifth graders where they

were actively involved in reading centers, where the students selected books to read and share with other students, made individual books, developed letter and sound recognition skills through hands on activities, became more aware of concepts about print, and increased phonemic awareness throughout the program. The role of the classroom teacher was to model and guide the process, and provide a variety of high interest, hands-on activities to reinforce the specified skills on a daily basis. The classroom teacher also worked and coordinated planning with the fifth grade teacher as well as the special area teachers involved in the program.

For Objective #1, 20 students in the target group would increase skills in letter recognition by 50 percent, a mean score gain of 10 letters. To determine if Objective #1 was accomplished, the writer used the Letter Identification Score Sheet. The writer tested each student individually, by asking the students to recognize and give the sound or a word for each of the letters and record the responses. The same test was administered individually at three points during the implementation: 1) as a pre-test to determine where students were before implementation had started; 2) as a mid-point check to see how well students were moving toward the objective and if changes were necessary; and, 3) as a post-test to find out if students achieved the goal (See Appendix D: p. 77-79).

Final results included a 51 percent increase, a mean score gain of 39 in the target group's mastery of letter and sound recognition.

In evaluating Objective #2, 20 students in the target group were to increase awareness in the number of concepts about print by 50 percent, a mean score gain of seven concepts. To determine results of Objective #2 the writer used the Concepts About Print Score Sheet. Since the target group of students was functioning at pre-reading and emergent reading and writing levels, the writer tested each student individually, by asking the questions from the Concepts About Print Score Sheet and recorded the responses. The same test was administered individually at three points during the implementation: 1) as a pre-test to determine where students were before implementation had started; 2) as a mid-point check to see how well students were moving toward the objective and if changes were necessary; and , 3) as a post-test to find out if students achieved the goal (See Appendix E: p. 81-83). Final results included an 88 percent increase, a mean score gain of 10 concepts in the target group's mastery of concepts about print.

For Objective #3, 20 students in the target group would increase skills in phonemic awareness demonstrated by an increase on at least 7 items on the post observation checklist. To decide if Objective #3 was accomplished, the writer

used a teacher- made observation checklist. Since the target group of students was functioning at pre-reading and emergent reading and writing levels, the writer tested each student individually, by asking the questions from the checklist and recording the responses. The same test was administered individually at three points during the implementation: 1) as a pre-test to determine where students were before implementation had started; 2) as a mid-point check to see how well students were moving toward the goal and if changes were necessary; and, 3) as a post-test to find out whether students achieved the goal (See Appendix F: p.85-88). Final results included a 77 percent increase, a total of eight concepts in the target groups mastery of phonemic awareness.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Ayers and Waines (1989) stated " Start the school year by pairing younger children with older reading partners, and watch the learning and friendship grow" (p.22). When Reading Pals is in place as an integral part of every school day, the rewards of the program are reaped by students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

This practicum has verified the need for kindergarten students to have cross-age reading partners in the daily curriculum. The use of this program, with the help of the fifth grade students, special area teachers, and technology helped meet the needs of the students. The writer is enthusiastic about the program, especially when viewing the increase in scores from the pre- and post-score sheets. When the fifth grade students were paired with kindergarteners to read, write, retell stories, and play games, the students' attitudes toward literacy improved. The interaction built enthusiasm and allowed the students to progress in the acquisition of reading skills and put reading into a social context. The reading and discussing stories together resulted in a sense of ownership for the

participants in the Cross-Age Reading Program. Students grew to respect the significance of literacy and the impact of literature-based curriculum on the learning outcomes of kindergarten students. The enthusiasm the children expressed toward working and reading together was very satisfactory. The one to one exposure given to each child proved to be rewarding for added self-esteem and attitudes.

The writer recommends the use of special area teachers to read stories and provide activities for the students to reinforce the reading readiness skills as well as model reading. The technology programs, Baily's Book House and Playroom provided the students an opportunity to further develop reading readiness skills with immediate reinforcement for correct answers. In addition, the students enjoyed working on the computers. Technology provided a stimulating environment in which the students became active learners.

A program using Cross-Age Reading Partners, other teachers, and technology to develop and increase reading readiness skills for kindergarten students is an appropriate topic for inservices throughout the school district. Information on the program has been submitted to the administrator of the school and the Curriculum Resource Teacher. An instructional video could be taped and

filed at the target school. This would be conducive toward training a number of the teachers at any time when needed without scheduling or time constraints.

At this time, the writer is in the process of sharing ideas and successes of the program with the kindergarten team at the school. Observations by other teachers have also made them aware of how successful and rewarding the program can be . Presently five of the eight kindergarten teachers are involved in using the Cross-Age Reading Partners. The administrator of the school has expressed how pleased and excited it is to have the program and successful results. The writer is also pleased to have chosen a program that is also one of the school wide goals, "To improve reading by meeting the needs of individual students and teaching students on their level; to encourage and stimulate student interest in reading." At this time, results are highly favorable.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Parent Survey

Appendix A

Parent Survey

The following survey is part of the project I must complete in order to earn my Master's Degree. The information you provide will be used in part to determine the direction I will take in completing this project.

At the completion of this survey, please return to Mrs. Trimble, or have your child bring it back to me.

SURVEY ON THE READING READINESS SKILLS OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS.

Please answer the following questions about your child by circling the answer that best represents you.

1) Approximately at what age did you or someone else begin reading to your child?
   a. 6 mos.-12 mos.
   b. 2 yr. - 3 yr.
   c. 4 yr. - 5 yr.
   d. other ____

2) If none of the answers in question 1 pertain to you, please indicate why in the space below.

3) Which of the following behaviors have you observed during your childs' playtime with books?
   a. leafing through pages
   b. talking to the characters
   c. looking at the pictures
   d. retelling the story

4) At what age did your child begin to enjoy books?
   a. 6 mos. - 12 mos.
   b. 2 yr. - 3 yr.
   c. 4 yr. - 5 yr.
   d. other ____

5) Approximately how many times a day do you or someone else read to your child?
   a. 1 - 2
   b. 3 - 6
   c. 7 - 8
   d. other ____

6) While reading to your child, do you or someone else ask questions about the material so your child can retell the story?
   a. yes
   b. no

7) While reading to your child do you or someone else get the child involved in acting out the story?
   a. yes
   b. no

8) When reading to your child do you or someone else talk about the letters and how the letters form words?
   a. yes
   b. no

9) If the answer to question number 6,7,or 8 was no please indicate reasons in the space below.

10) Would you or another family member commit to reading with your child on a daily basis?
   a. yes
   b. no
   c. as often as possible

11) Please indicate your awareness of the following statement. Research has proven that reading aloud to your child would help him/her to become more aware of letters and sounds, which would result in helping them to become better readers.
   a. I was aware of this.
   b. I was somewhat aware of this.
   c. I did not realize the importance of this.
   d. I did not relate the two items.

A Cross-Age Learning Reading Partner Program is an independent, daily reading program, designed to supplement the existing reading curricula and to enrich daily lessons. Older students are paired with the younger students to read and do activities involving reading together.

12) Would you like for your child to participate in a Cross-Age Reading Partner Program in his/her class?

a. yes, very much
b. yes, somewhat
c. no opinion

13) Do you feel your child would benefit from a cross-age reading program with older students at their school?

a. yes, very much
b. yes, somewhat
c. maybe
d. no

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers will help me in establishing a better reading readiness program for your child.

APPENDIX B

First Grade Teacher Survey

Appendix B

First Grade Teacher Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect information that will help me improve our Reading Readiness program for Kindergarten students before entering First Grade.

At the completion of this survey, please return to Mrs. Trimble, Kindergarten department at Ridgewood Park.

SURVEY REGARDING THE READING READINESS OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS UPON ENTERING FIRST GRADE.

Please circle the answer/answers that best represents your situation, opinion, experience.

1) I have taught for:
   a. 0-3 years
   b. 4-8 years
   c. 9-15 years
   d. More than 15 years

2) I am certified in Early Childhood Education.
   a. yes
   b. no

3) As a First Grade teacher would you say that all pre-readers need to have thorough knowledge of the letter name and sound for each letter in order to begin reading?
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Somewhat agree
   c. Strongly disagree
   d. Somewhat disagree

4) Based on your knowledge/opinion, do you believe Kindergarten students entering First Grade have pre-reading skills to recognize and name letters?
   a. A select few students do.
   b. Less than half of the students do.
   c. Most of the students do.

5) Based on your knowledge/opinion, developmentally some students are not ready to retain letter recognition and letter name skills by the time they reach first grade?

a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Strongly disagree
d. Disagree

6) As a First Grade teacher would you encourage different teaching techniques to improve letter and sound recognition for Kindergarten students?

a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Strongly disagree
d. Disagree

Please rate the following from 1-5 in the order of importance to you. 5 being the most important, 1 being the least important.

7) Some immediate step(s)that could be taken by the Kindergarten teachers for improved skills could be?

a. Set up a cross-age reading partner program. _____
b. Read aloud to children at least three to four times daily. _____
c. Ask parents or family members to commit to reading with their child on a daily basis. _____
d. Ask reading partners and children to write together about their readings. _____
e. All of the above. _____

Based on the ratings above please give any comments.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your answers will help me in providing a better reading readiness program for Kindergarten.

APPENDIX C

Title I Procedures for 1995-1996
and Title I/Reading Recovery
Services for First Grade Students

Appendix C

Title I Procedures for 1995-1996

Reading qualifying total scores:

First Grade: 25
Second Grade: 5

If a classroom teacher of a non-qualifying student feels strongly that the student should be in the program, that teacher may meet with the Title I Committee to see if the student may qualify by committee decision.

After a student has been served in Title I and is working on a level with other students in his/her homeroom class, that student may be tested to determine if he/she is ready to be placed on maintenance.

The following scores will qualify a student for Maintenance:

Reading:

First grade - Letter ID - 44, Concepts About Print - 15,

Teacher Identification

Second grade - Running records-level 14, Teacher Identification

The Title I teacher and the classroom teacher will meet with the Title I committee to discuss the student's scores and classroom placement. The committee will decide the student's placement.

Maintenance:

The student will no longer attend Title I classes and will receive instruction from the classroom teacher.

The Title I teacher will meet frequently (weekly) with the classroom teacher to ensure that the student continues to make acceptable progress. All students on Maintenance will be tested near the end of the year along with other Title I students.

The Title I reading teachers and the Reading Recovery teacher will select the students the same way using the same criteria. Once the students have qualified, the Reading Recovery teachers will administer Marie Clay's Observation Survey to the lowest scoring students.

Each Title I teacher will be assigned a Title I tutor whose lesson plans he/she will check and initial weekly, prior to service.

Concept About Print test will be given to qualified first grade students before service begins. The scores will be used to show academic growth through retesting at the end of the school year.

Reading teachers will meet with classroom teachers at the beginning of each quarter to discuss strategies to be used for that quarter to reinforce the skills presented by the classroom teachers. Coordination Forms will be used to record information from these meetings.

The Coordination Forms and student writing samples will be kept in folders.

Reading teachers will have frequent (weekly) informal discussions with the classroom teachers to see if other skills need to be added. Reading teachers lesson plans will include objectives, materials, and procedures.

A parent letter will be sent home with each student before the student receives service from Title I. A copy of the completed parent letter will be made and filed before the original is sent home.

Before students are screened in the Spring of 1996 for the 1996-1997 school year, parents will be sent letters explaining the screening procedure.

$3,500.00 will be available for the following Title I personnel:

4 Title I reading teachers
2 Reading Recovery teachers
1 Reading Support Assistant
3 Math tutors

General supplies will be ordered for all of the above personnel. The remainder of the money will be spent on non-consumable teacher materials which may be shared by everyone. These materials will be selected after school begins by the Title I team.

The Reading Support Assistant may work with a math group whenever their duties allow time for this.

Each Title I Reading teacher will choose instructional strategies that are appropriate to meet the needs of every student.

ULTIMATE GOAL IS STUDENT PROGRESS.

TITLE I MULTIPLE SELECTION CRITERIA
GRADE I

Student's Name:_____ School:_____

Classroom Teacher:_____

SECTION A

To be completed by classroom teacher

Literacy

This student in reading has:

	Points
no need of Title I services	20_____
little need of Title I services	15_____
moderate need of Title I services	5_____
great need of Title I services	0_____

SECTION A SCORE
(used for eligible score) _____

SECTION B

FOR TITLE I USE ONLY:

LETTER IDENTIFICATION

Raw Score_____

Raw Score Band	Points
44 - 54	15
36 - 43	10
18 - 35	5
0 - 17	0_____

Concepts About Print

Raw Score_____

Raw Score Band	Points
19-24	15
13-18	10
7-12	5
0-6	0_____

SECTION B SCORE _____

SECTION A AND B TOTAL SCORE_____

SECTION A

To be completed by classroom teacher

Numeracy

This student in mathematics has:

	Points
no need of Title I services	20_____
little need of Title I services	15_____
moderate need of Title I services	5_____
great need of Title I services	0_____

SECTION A SCORE
(used for eligible score) _____

SECTION B

FOR TITLE I USE ONLY:

KEYMATH

SCORES:

NUM ____ ADD_____ SUB_____

Total Raw Score_____

Raw Score Band	Points
29 - 35 +	35
26 - 28	30
22 - 25	25
19 - 21	20
16 - 18	15
11 - 15	10
6 - 10	5
0 - 5	0_____

SECTION B SCORE _____

SECTION A AND B TOTAL SCORE_____

TITLE I TEACHER:_____ DATE:_____

Indicate Alternative/Additional screening information on the back of this form.

TITLE I ALTERNATIVE/ADDITIONAL SELECTION CRITERIA
GRADE I

Student's Name:_____ School:_____

Classroom Teacher:_____

LITERACY	NUMERACY
Identify/describe screening procedures. Indicate score when appropriate.	Identify/describe screening procedures. Indicate score when appropriate.
Signature Date	Signature Date

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Appendix C

Title I and Reading Recovery Services
for First Grade Students 1995/1996

Ridgewood Park Elementary School has eight 1st grade classes. The total number of students in the first grade is 130. Title I services 60 students in their tutoring program. Reading Recovery is also part of the Title I service. They work with the lowest students in the first grade on a one to one basis. The number of students served by Reading Recovery is 11. This totals 71 students from the first grade classes who receive reading tutoring by the Title I services.

1st grade classes =	8
Total students =	130
Title I students served =	60
Reading Recovery =	11
Total students =	71
Combined total for Title I & Reading Recovery 1st grade students served.	54%
Title I only	46%

APPENDIX D

Letter Identification Score Sheet

1 LETTER IDENTIFICATION SCORE SHEET

TEST SCORE	/54
STANINE GROUP	

Date: _____

Name: _____ School: _____

Recorder: _____ Classroom Teacher: _____

	A	S	Word	I.R.		A	S	Word	I.R.
A					a				
F					f				
K					k				
P					p				
W					w				
Z					z				
B					b				
H					h				
O					o				
J					j				
U					u				
					a				
C					c				
Y					y				
L					l				
Q					q				
M					m				
D					d				
N					n				
S					s				
X					x				
I					i				
E					e				
G					g				
R					r				
V					v				
T					t				
					g				
				TOTALS					

Confusions:

Letters Unknown:

Comments:

Recording:

A Alphabet name response: checkmark

S Letter sound response: checkmark

WORD Record the word the child gives

IR Incorrect response: Record what the child says

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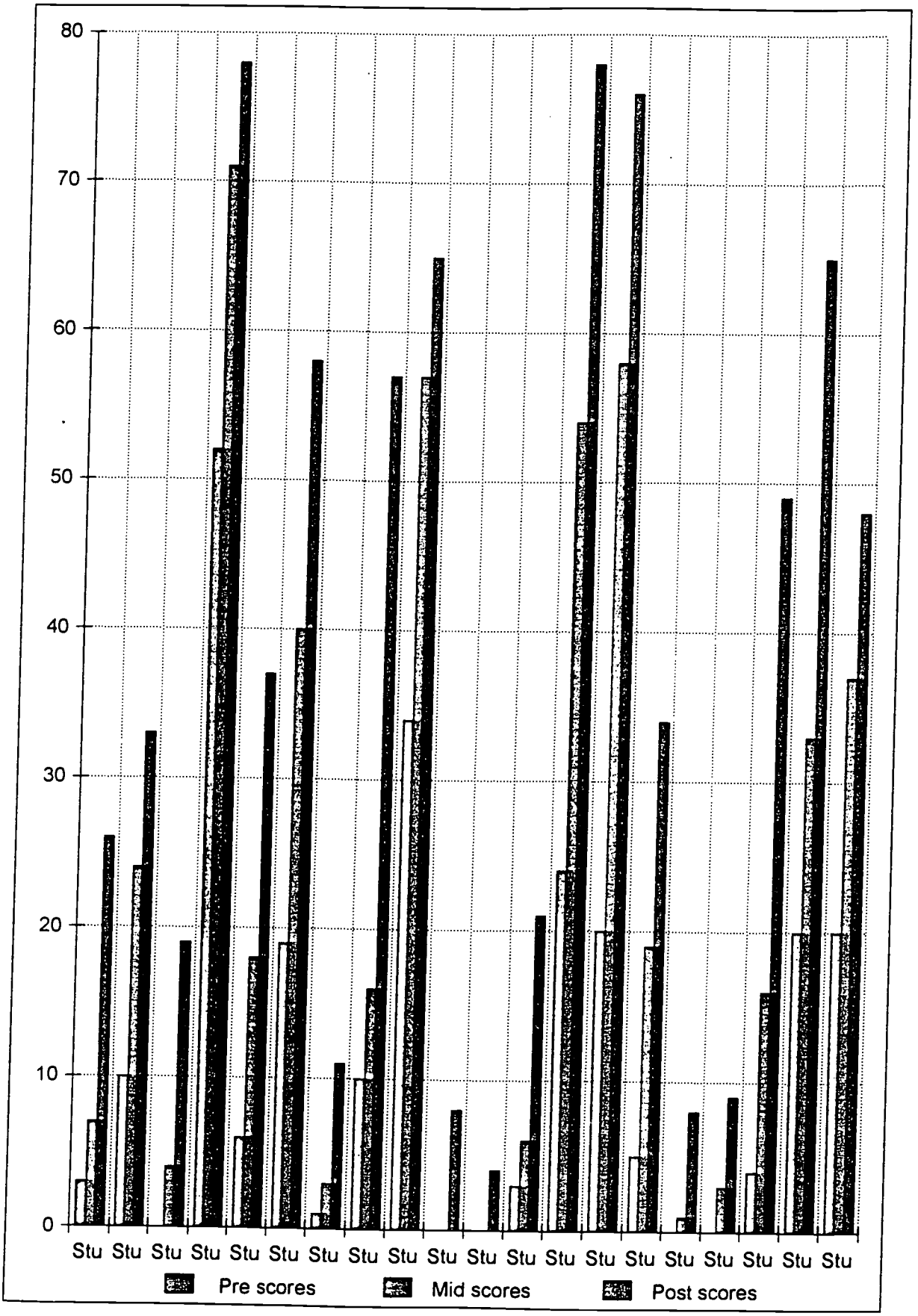
Letter and Sound Identification Score Sheet

Appendix D

Letter Identification	Pre Scores	Mid Scores	Post Scores
Student 1	3	7	26
Student 2	10	24	33
Student 3	0	4	19
Student 4	52	71	78
Student 5	6	18	37
Student 6	19	40	58
Student 7	1	3	11
Student 8	10	16	57
Student 9	34	57	65
Student 10	0	0	8
Student 11	0	0	4
Student 12	3	6	21
Student 13	24	54	78
Student 14	20	58	76
Student 15	5	19	34
Student 16	0	1	8
Student 17	0	3	9
Student 18	4	16	49
Student 19	20	33	65
Student 20	20	37	48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70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu
Pre scores
Mid scores
Post scores

APPENDIX E

Concepts About Print Score Sheet

3 CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT SCORE SHEET

TEST SCORE /24
STANINE GROUP

Date: _____ Stones: _____ Sand: _____

Name: _____ School: _____

Recorder: _____ Classroom Teacher: _____

Use the script when administering this test.

Scoring: ✓ (Checkmark) correct response. • (Dot) incorrect response.

PAGE	SCORE	ITEM	COMMENT
Cover		1. Front of book	
2/3		2. Print contains message	
4/5		3. Where to start 4. Which way to go 5. Return sweep to left 6. Word by word matching	
6		7. First and last concept	
7		8. Bottom of picture	
8/9		9. Begin 'The' (Sand) or 'I' (Stones) bottom line, top OR turn book	
10/11		10. Line order altered	
12/13		11. Left page before right 12. One change in word order 13. One change in letter order	
14/15		14. One change in letter order 15. Meaning of ?	
16/17		16. Meaning of period/full stop 17. Meaning of comma 18. Meaning of quotation marks 19. Locate M m H h (Sand) OR Tt Bb (Stones)	
18/19		20. Reversible words was, no	
20		21. One letter: two letters 22. One word: two words 23. First and last letter of word 24. Capital letter	

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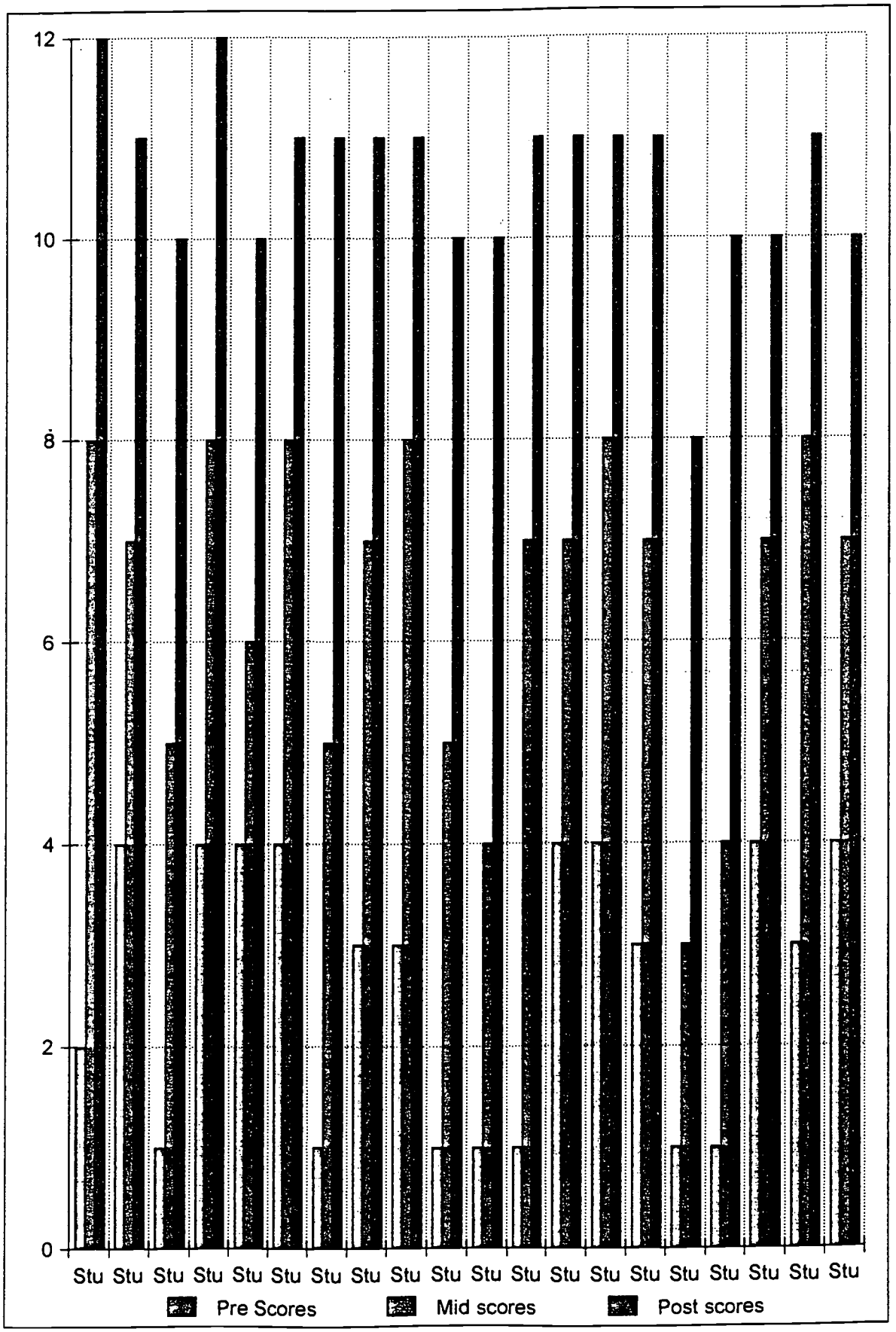
Appendix E

Concepts About Print	Pre Scores	Mid Scores	Post Scores
Student 1	2	8	12
Student 2	4	7	11
Student 3	1	5	10
Student 4	4	8	12
Student 5	4	6	10
Student 6	4	8	11
Student 7	1	5	11
Student 8	3	7	11
Student 9	3	8	11
Student 10	1	5	10
Student 11	1	4	10
Student 12	1	7	11
Student 13	4	7	11
Student 14	4	8	11
Student 15	3	7	11
Student 16	1	3	8
Student 17	1	4	10
Student 18	4	7	10
Student 19	3	8	11
Student 20	4	7	10


12
10
8
6
4
2
0
Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu
Pre Scores
Mid scores
Post scores

APPENDIX F

Teacher Made Observation Checklist
for Phonemic Awareness

Appendix F

Teacher Made Observation Checklist for Phonemic Awareness

Student = _____

Date = _____

Score = _____
(pre) (mid) (post)

Outcome Objective # 4 - Over a period of 12 weeks, the 26 students in the target group will increase skills in phonemic awareness on the pre-observation checklist to at least 7 items on the post observation checklist.

Points			Questions
Pre (X)	M(X)	Post (X)	
_____	_____	_____	1. Word to word matching. Do pen and pipe begin with the same sound?
_____	_____	_____	2. Segmentation of sentences into words. Point to each word in this sentence. I am in Kindergarten.
_____	_____	_____	3. Syllable deletion of words. Delete the syllable from this word. Olho "O" and lho, Bingo, "Bin" and go.

continued >

_____	_____	_____	4. Rhyming detection. Do these words rhyme? Hair and Fair, Twine and Mine.
_____	_____	_____	5. Non-rhyming detection. Do these words rhyme? Chair and Seat, Stair and Moon.
_____	_____	_____	6. Phonemic deletion - What word would be left if the /k/ sound were taken away from cat?
_____	_____	_____	7. Phoneme synthesis - What letters can we add to blend these sounds to make rhyming words? Start with air, hair, fair, pair, or at, cat, sat, pat.
_____	_____	_____	8. Phoneme segmentation - How many phonemes are in these words? No (2), See (2), cap (2).
_____	_____	_____	9. Phonemic position in words. The word cap has 2 phonemes, beginning and end. What about the word cat? What about the word bathtub? Beginning, middle, and end.
_____	_____	_____	10. Clap the number of phonemes in these rhyming words. Chair, flair, hair, pair.

_____ = Total items for pre-test

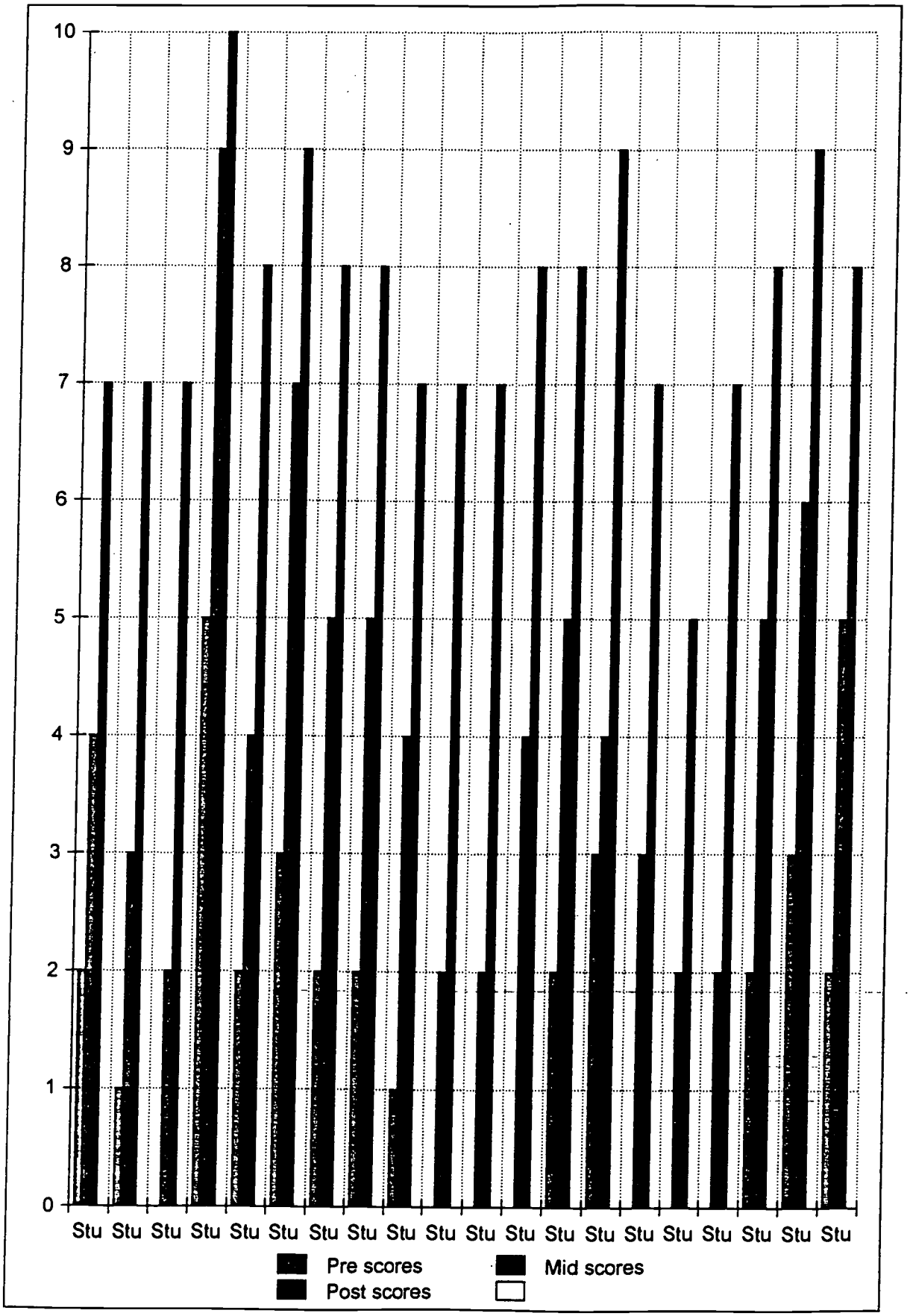
_____ = Total items for mid-point

_____ = Total items for post -test

* Pre = pre-test M = mid-point test Post = post-test

Appendix F

Phonemic Awareness	Pre Scores	Mid Scores	Post Scores
Student 1	2	4	7
Student 2	1	3	7
Student 3	0	2	7
Student 4	5	9	10
Student 5	2	4	8
Student 6	3	7	9
Student 7	2	5	8
Student 8	2	5	8
Student 9	1	4	7
Student 10	0	2	7
Student 11	0	2	7
Student 12	0	4	8
Student 13	2	5	8
Student 14	3	4	9
Student 15	0	3	7
Student 16	0	2	5
Student 17	0	2	7
Student 18	2	5	8
Student 19	3	6	9
Student 20	2	5	8


10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu Stu
Pre scores
Post scores
Mid scores

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