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problems, less parental involvement, and lack of appropriate programs.
Professional literature will assist in the documentation of the existing
problem. A study of solutions proposed by various authorities led to the
following interventions: the children in the targeted group will be screened
to determine their reading level, a peer-tutoring program will be designed
and implemented and informational material will be sent to parents to
increase parental involvement. Post intervention data indicated a need to
develop a strong early intervention program and early screening of all
children to identify at-risk children. Programs were designed to heighten a
child's interest in reading, and strategies were developed to educate parents
on the importance of early literacy development. (Contains 18 references and
8 tables of data. Appendixes contain a parent information letter,
questionnaire, a reading checklist, and parent letter.) (Author/RS)

EARLY INTERVENTIONS: KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL READERS

JoAnn Jeffreys
Joan Spang

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

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2

1

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Early Interventions: Keys to Successful Readers
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This action research outlines an early reading intervention project for improving students' reading skills and promoting the implementation of early reading intervention programs. The targeted population includes first and second grade students in one school located in the suburbs of a major city in Illinois. The problem of early reading intervention is documented by data collection using surveys, questionnaires, and a standardized reading assessment.

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Post intervention data indicated a need to develop a strong early intervention program and early screening of all children to identify at-risk children. Programs were designed to heighten a child's interest in reading, and strategies were developed to educate parents on the importance of early literacy development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Some students in the primary grades of the targeted elementary school exhibit reading problems that interfere with academic growth. Evidence of the existence of this literacy problem includes: teacher observation, poor classroom performance, district assessments, and standardized tests that indicate students' poor academic achievement. Some of these students presently do not qualify for entitlement programs.

Immediate Problem Context

The Lincoln Elementary School has a total student population of 481 students with the majority of the students being Caucasian at 73.2%, followed by Asian/Pacific Islander at 15.5%, Hispanic at 6.2%, African - American at 4.4%, and Native Americans at 0.6%. A small portion (5.2%) of the school's population reside in low-income households. Pupil attendance at 95.9% and mobility at 13.9% do not currently pose a problem to academic achievement. Only 3.1% of the students are classified as limited-English- proficient (Illinois State Report Card, 1999). The first language of these students is not English, and therefore they are eligible for transitional bilingual education.

The average experience of a teacher in this school is 13.0 years with 63.6% of the teachers having bachelor's degrees while 36.4% have master's or above. The pupil-teacher ratio is 20.8:1 throughout the district (Illinois State Report Card,1999). The faculty is comprised of 19 K-6 classroom teachers with an average class size of 24.8 heterogeneously grouped students. Not included in this number is one Primary Cross Categorical (PCC) teacher and one teacher in the Developmental Learning Program (DLP). The resource staff includes one full-time teacher for grades K-4 and one teacher for grades 5 and 6 who has extended district responsibilities as the inclusion facilitator. Other support staff includes one Reading Recovery teacher, one full time speech and language therapist, and one part-time teacher assistant to work with children who do

not speak the English language. Social services are provided by three part-time social workers and one district psychologist who is available to the students and staff one day a week.

Additional programs include physical education, music, art, and computer lab. The needs of the accelerated students in grades 3 - 6 are being met through a pull-out program being taught by certified personnel. Currently an optional full-day Kindergarten program is being piloted throughout the district. Several of the extra-curricular activities include band in grades 4 - 6, chorus, student council, and a variety of team sports.

The Lincoln School was built in 1957 with three additions being added during the next eight years. Since the last major construction to the building, no significant remodeling has taken place. Due to an increased student enrollment, the building is presently overcrowded forcing some students to work in closets, locker rooms, or even hallways. Within the next year an addition will be added to the junior high to help alleviate an overcrowding problem at the elementary schools. The junior high will follow the middle school concept and will include grades 6 - 8.

<div align="center">The Surrounding Community</div>

The location of Lincoln School is in an urban setting 30 miles west of a major metropolitan area and is part of a district composed of one junior high school (7 -8) and three K-6 elementary buildings with a total enrollment of 1,798 students. The administrative staff includes the superintendent and a business manager, with one principal in each building.

The population of the suburban community is 21,229 and the median family income $73,136 but 5.6% of the households have incomes below $15,000. There is a wide range of single-family housing available in this community ranging from $115,000 to $750,000 with the median being approximately $200,000. Eighty percent of the population lives in single-family homes. The lack of sufficient commerce and industry in the area has an impact on the local tax base. The instructional expenditure per child is $3,361. This is below the state average of $3,990 and far below neighboring districts.

The district prides itself in the fact that they continue to have neighborhood schools when many of the surrounding districts have gone to grade-level centers. The district has attempted to align the curriculum to the state standards. The teachers are currently developing assessments to evaluate student performance of these standards; consequently there has been an increased focus on

student accountability throughout the district. During the 2000 - 01 school year, a new reading series will be implemented in the elementary schools.

The community involvement consists of a seven member district school board and an individual P.T.O. at each of the buildings. At Lincoln School, the P.T.O.'s main focus is fund-raising activities. There is a limited number of senior volunteers who assist the classroom teachers with various projects.

<p align="center">National Context of the Problem</p>

The need for early intervention has generated concern at the state and national levels. Negative consequences occur when reading problems are not identified and addressed as early as possible. It is important that schools identify problems before children experience failure and before expensive remedial programs are needed (Snowe,1998). The right help needs to be given before a pupil wastes valuable learning time, falls further behind, and becomes a permanent slow reader (Intervention Pays Off,1998). In her book, An Observation Survey of Early Literary Achievement, Clay (1993) states,

> In other areas of special education we practice early identification. Deaf babies, our blind and cerebral-palsied preschoolers and others with special handicaps get special help to minimize the consequential aspects of their handicaps. Yet a child with reading difficulties has had to wait until the third or fourth year of school before being offered special instruction. By then the child's reading level is two years behind that of his peers. The learning difficulties of the child might be more easily overcome if he had practiced error behavior less often, if he had less to unlearn and relearn, and if he still had reasonable confidence in his own ability. Schools must change their organization to solve these problems early. (p.15)

Educators have learned that for 90% to 95% of poor readers, prevention and early intervention programs can increase reading skills to average reading levels. However, they have also learned that if they delay intervention until nine years of age (the time when most children with reading difficulties receive services), approximately 75% of the children will continue to have difficulties throughout high school. While older children and adults can be taught to read, the time and expense of doing so is enormous (Lyon,1998). Many reading problems encountered by students in middle or high school could have been avoided had they been identified and dealt with

before third grade. Schools that have abandoned early reading intervention programs should reexamine their need for them and provide the functional equivalent of these well - trained staff members. Research has shown that all children use the same skills to learn to read. Children who experience difficulty in reading do not need different instruction but rather a more focused, more intense, more responsive, and more individual application of the same principles (Snowe, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the lack of early intervention reading programs in the targeted sites, a student questionnaire and teacher-adminstrator surveys were given. Reading assessments were administered to all first and second grade students to determine individual reading levels. A letter was sent home to parents explaining the project before it was initiated (Appendix A). No parents expressed concerns about their children participating in the research project and surveys.

The teachers in Kindergarten through third grade in the targeted district were given a survey (Appendix B) at the start of the 2000 - 2001 school year. This survey recorded their attitudes and feelings about the current intervention reading programs in the district. Thirty teachers were involved in the survey: six Kindergarten teachers, nine first grade teachers, eight second grade, and seven third grade educators. Six teachers taught 0 -5 years, nine taught 5 - 10 years, and 15 teachers taught 10 or more years. The teachers were very thorough in evaluating the current reading programs. The results of the survey are as follows: What role do you feel early reading interventions have in our present reading curriculum? Teachers responded that early intervention programs are extremely beneficial to children and are essential to a successful reading program in the primary grades.

Do you feel that our intervention programs are adequate and meet the needs of all students? Teachers felt that there were more programs at the early primary levels that met the needs of children who are experiencing severe reading difficulties. These programs included Dibbles and Reading Recovery. It became apparent that as students progressed through the primary grades less support was available. Children with severe reading difficulties in second grade were included in a reading literacy group. However in third grade there were no reading intervention programs and only children with IEP's were being serviced.

Do you feel that we have adequately trained personnel to meet the needs of our students? In general, teachers felt that the current teaching personnel had enough training to support the

program. Most teachers felt that more training was needed for the teaching assistants. Many teachers felt that additional teaching staff was needed to meet the needs of the students throughout the primary grade levels.

Do you feel that our current screening program identifies the children with reading difficulties? The teachers responded by saying that there is not a consistent screening program across the district. In Kindergarten and first grades, children are screened by teacher recommendation. This is often done too early in the school year before classroom teachers truly know students' needs. Second and third grade teachers indicated that there is no consistent district screening program.

What role do you feel phonemic awareness plays in teaching young children to read? Overall, teachers felt that phonemic awareness is a very important component to a successful reading program for young readers.

Are students in our district given enough parental support to reinforce their reading skills? The teachers surveyed felt that parental involvement was inconsistent in the district. Some teachers felt that parents did not always have the skills to help their children. Often children experiencing reading difficulties receive the least amount of support. Some teachers felt that parents need assistance on how to reinforce reading skills at home.

What interventions do you think would enhance our current program? The teachers felt, throughout the district, that more trained personnel were needed so programs could be expanded to meet the needs of more students and a consistent screening program to identify children with reading difficulties.

District administrators were given the same Early Intervention Questionnaire as the teaching staff. All administrators agreed with the teachers that early reading intervention programs were essential to have all children reading effectively by third grade. They agreed that phonemic awareness played a large role in developing children's reading skills. The administrators differed markedly from the teaching staff in the area of program implementation. Most administrators felt that early interventions and screening programs should take place within the individual classrooms.

Another method of documenting the problem at the targeted sites was a student reading checklist (Appendix C), compiled by two primary grade teachers and administered to first and

second grade students at the targeted school. This checklist reflects the child's attitude and enjoyment of reading. It was administered at the start of the 2000 - 2001 school year.

Table 1

Results of First Grade Reading Checklist Administered September 2000

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	HARDLY EVER	NOT YET
1 I read well.	9%	48%	35%	9%
2 I read to find out about things.	17%	61%	13%	9%
3 I like to read on my own.	43%	9%	30%	17%
4 I like to read with a partner.	61%	39%	0%	0%
5 I like to read to the class.	22%	22%	13%	43%
6 I know how to read words that are new to me.	4%	30%	22%	43%
7 I ask for help when I don't know the word.	43%	35%	22%	0%

Table one shows that most first graders enjoyed reading on their own or with a partner. They do not, however, feel that they read well most of the time. Only 4% felt they frequently used strategies to decode new words on their own. In contrast, 78% of the students felt they should frequently request help when they could not read the word.

Table 2

Results of Second Grade Reading Checklist Administered September 2000

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	HARDLY EVER	NOT YET
1 I read well.	55%	37%	6%	2%
2 I read to find out about things.	25%	54%	19%	2%
3 I like to read on my own.	50%	37%	10%	3%
4 I like to read with a partner.	21%	48%	24%	6%
5 I like to read to the class.	24%	44%	11%	21%
6 I know how to read words that are new to me.	35%	45%	17%	2%
7 I ask for help when I don't know the word.	16%	42%	32%	10%

Table 2 shows that at the start of the second grade school year 92% of the students felt that they frequently read well and 87% enjoyed reading on their own. In addition, 80% of the students had developed reading strategies to decode new words independently

The final method of documentation of evidence of the problem is The Developmental Reading Assessment. This assessment was administered to all first and second grade students at the targeted school. DRA's were conducted by classroom teachers during a one -on-one reading conference as each child read a specially selected assessment text. The designated levels were as follows: the Kindergarten levels of this assessment were A-2; first grade levels 3-16; and second grade levels 18-28.

Table 3

Results of First Grade DRA Administered September 2000

Levels	Numbers of Students
A-2	24
3-16	37
18-28	4

Table 4

Results of Second Grade DRA Administered September 2000

Levels	Number of Students
A-2	0
3-16	12
18 or above	54

A review of the data from this DRA assessment results indicate that more children at the first grade level are reading below grade level standards. This would indicate a need for additional reading support at the Kindergarten and first grade levels. In addition, the results indicate that there are fewer students in second grade who are reading below grade level.

Probable Causes

Review of the literature indicates there are a variety of causes to indicate a need for early reading interventions. Some of the causes are: designation of appropriate funds, lack of qualified personnel, the need to screen children earlier to detect possible problems, less parental involvement, and lack of appropriate phonemic awareness programs for children.

The National Research Council committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1999) states that the power to determine sufficient funding is in the hands of school superintendents, elected officials, and other policy makers. They decide how the children

are educated, where resources go, and which programs receive funding. "The problems are being diagnosed by classroom teachers, but the school district doesn't always have enough resources for preventative measures. It's a fight and struggle to get services in the early grades" (Manzo, 1997,p.1).

According to Snowe (1998), another cause supporting the need of early intervention programs is the lack of qualified personnel. This includes classroom teachers as well as support personnel.

> A well - designed classroom reading program delivered by a competent teacher can bring most primary grade students to the levels of reading proficiency expected of students in those grades. But too many teachers do not have the training and skills needed to teach reading effectively. Teachers need professional development that spans their training and careers to address reading instruction needs. In addition, every school should have access to a variety of reading specialists who can work with classroom teachers in ways that develop their capacities as teachers as well as directly with children, to ensure optimal instruction (p.5).

Schools that lack reading specialists should reexamine their use of personnel. Any special services should be integrated with already existing classroom instruction. Reading specialists and classroom teachers need to communicate about the needs of children experiencing reading difficulties.

Research supports the need for early screening to detect possible reading difficulties. Many school districts are conscientious about identifying children who are experiencing difficulty learning to read, unfortunately there is a growing trend towards non-identification. There is a reluctance by some schools to begin testing of children because once a problem is identified districts are required to deliver services that are often very expensive. Often schools adopt a policy of waiting until a child is one full year behind grade level before initiating testing (Hall and Moats, 1999). In a March 2, 1997 article by Bonnie Miller Rubin in the *Chicago Tribune* entitled, "Reading Wars,"Dr. Reid Lyon states:

> It is particularly distressing that government research shows that children can be identified as poor readers when they're as young as 4 or 5, based merely on how they hear, remember and repeat the subtle sounds found in everyday speech. Yet schools often don't

15

jump on the problem until children are 8 or 9.

If a youngster does not receive special help until age 9, " it takes four times as long to move the same skill the same distance," Lyon said.

" That means what could be addressed in 30 minutes a day in kindergarten now can take two hours a day by the 4th grade."

Research indicates that parent involvement plays a crucial role in developing early reading skills in young children. Studies show that parental beliefs, aspirations, and actions play a critical role in teaching children to read (Nistler and Maiers, 2000). The degree of parental involvement is affected by many external factors. These may include parental education, family responsibility, available time, family size, problems with other children, parental conflict, and pressures from work (Roswell and Chall, 1999).

In the past two decades research has shown that poor phonological processing deficit was a core cause of poor reading development (Walser, 1999). Children with reading difficulties are more likely to exhibit poorer phonemic awareness. Research indicates that phonemic awareness is a hinge on which early reading success or failure swings. Children who have difficulty hearing sounds will develop difficulty decoding words. Screening for phonemic awareness is the first step to language-enrichment intervention (Majsterek, 1995).

Designation of appropriate funds, lack of qualified personnel, the need to screen children earlier, less parental involvement, and lack of appropriate phonemic awareness programs all contribute to children having difficulty learning to read. Each of these areas need to be addressed to assure early literacy development in children.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Upon reviewing the literature, the researchers found several solutions that would help to develop early intervention programs in the primary grades. The literature suggests using programs that do not require additional funding, incorporating staff development in reading instruction, utilizing screening programs to detect reading difficulties in students, and developing parent education programs.

Programs That Do Not Require Additional Funding

One method of providing extra programs for students with reading difficulties is that of peer tutoring. "Reading aloud is perhaps the best-known intervention and most commonly used one-to-one reading intervention" (Knapp and Winsor, 2000,p.18).

Knapp developed a reading apprenticeship program for her son who was experiencing reading failure at the first grade level. She and her son took turns reading aloud. Through this process her actual decoding of words and use of strategies while reading were made explicit for internalization by her son. Likewise her son's reading and struggles to decode words were made audible and explicit to both of them, enabling ongoing self-monitoring. He continually worked within his "learning zone" which is beyond the level at which a child can perform independently, but within which he can operate with assistance from another person.

From this experience, Knapp was able to develop a program that relied on volunteers and did not require additional funding. Unlike programs such as Reading Recovery and Success For All, this program can be utilized in all schools with the help of parent volunteers, senior citizens, and even older students. The positive reading outcomes from this method of remediation are consistent with research on other successful one-on-one reading intervention programs (Knapp and Winsor, 2000).

Another successful program was "1,000 Days" developed by the principal of the Scott Lane Elementary School in the heart of the Silicon Valley in California. This program guarantees

that children will be reading at grade level by the end of the second grade. The faculty used many different strategies to improve reading instruction in their school. Some of these strategies included an uninterrupted morning literacy block, early interventions of learning difficulties, volunteer reading programs, and cross-age tutors (Wheaton and Kay, 1999).

An additional program to provide services to children with reading difficulties in Douglas Elementary School in central Massachusetts was called Jumpstart. This program was developed due to limited available funding and was an action research pilot to run for 18 weeks. It was a voluntary program in which inclusion and Title I aides tutored students for a half-hour before school, three days a week. Because of the success of this program, there was a strong commitment by all involved to continue the program. The caring staff created an innovative program that impacted student achievement and had far-reaching effects (Rose, 1999).

"Volunteers are particularly helpful when they spend their time reading to children, giving children supported practice in oral reading, and allowing opportunities for enriching conversation. . . .Volunteer tutors can provide very valuable practice and motivational support for children learning to read" (Burns, Griffin, and Snowe, 1999 p.142).

Incorporating Staff Development In Reading Instruction

Duffy and Hoffman (1999) discussed three main ideas for teacher education. First, teachers need to think of teacher education as an ongoing, not short term, process. The article states that one cannot learn how to teach reading in preservice courses alone.

Second, educators must think differently about what teachers must learn. Teacher education must require more than intelligence and knowledge of methods. It must develop in teachers an inner strength, a curiosity about how to proceed, and a propensity for seeking new solutions for a wide variety of classroom problems. To develop this strength, administrators must provide teachers with not only the usual kind of professional knowledge, but also enable the teachers to build strong sense of self.

Third, educators should emphasize the use of various methods when teaching children to read. Teachers should not limit their thinking to one program. This shift in thinking by teachers would encourage them to be thoughtful adapters, not compliant followers.

"Traditionally, staff development has been undervalued in this country, with many school districts having no long range plans for professional development. In order to move forward in

our teaching, however, we must become knowledgeable practitioners" (Routman, 1994, p.461).

Research has found that for new concepts and strategies to transfer to classroom teaching, the following components need to be present for effective staff development. These components are: presentation of theory, demonstration or modeling, practice under simulated conditions, structured feedback, and coaching for application (Routman, 1994).

Utilizing Early Screening Programs

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development since 1965 has been conducting studies of over 34,000 children and adults to understand normal reading development and reading difficulties. In addition, studies have been designed to develop early identification methods that can pinpoint children during kindergarten and first grade who are at risk for reading failure. If early reading difficulties are not identified by the end of first grade, educators begin to notice substantial decreases in the child's self-esteem, self-concept, and motivation to learn to read. As the child progresses through the grades, these problems compound (Lyon, 1998). Postponing evaluation of students with reading difficulties may appear to be an efficient way for financially struggling school districts to sort out the most severe problems, simply by waiting. Research, however, indicates that prevention and remediation of some reading problems, if identified early, may actually be more cost effective than providing expensive remedial services later in a student's academic career. Many times parents are told at parent-teacher conferences that their child has a developmental lag and are assured that he will eventually close this reading gap. Studies that have been conducted indicate that some children who do experience developmental lags can improve without treatment, however only one child in five does close the gap by third grade (Hall and Moats, 1999).

Slavin (1996) stated, When students fail in the early grades, they begin a cycle of poor self-esteem, poor expectations, poor motivation and further poor performance that all too often leads to despair, delinquency and drop out in the later grades . . . Children who have failed hate school, hate reading, and are anxious and unmotivated. Research and common sense tell us that prevention and early intervention make more sense than remediation and special education (p.6).

Parent Education Programs

Promoting literacy at home does not mean creating an academic setting and formally teaching children. Parents and other caregivers can take advantage of opportunities that arise in daily life to help their children develop language and literacy. Often, these are unplanned, casual acts, like commenting on words on an article of clothing or engaging children in conversation. At other times, it is a conscious effort to read good books with children or provide toys that promote good literacy development (Burns, Griffin, and Snowe, 1999, p.16).

Teachers need to take into account the varying levels of parental education, time availability, family size, and family responsibilities. Teachers must use their best judgment in making appropriate suggestions so the time spent working with the child is positive and productive. Even the most understanding parents experience a wide range of emotions, from feeling sorry for the child and developing doubts about his future, to feeling inadequate about their own knowledge and ability to help the child. On the other hand, when a child asks for assistance it should come willingly and in a positive manner. Parents can become involved and increase the child's self-image by providing experiences and opportunities for recognition of the child's worth (Roswell and Chall, 1999).

There are many ways teachers can encourage parents to become involved in their children's literary. Educators can provide opportunities for parent education such as newsletters, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. A list of ideas can be sent home to parents with suggestions on worthwhile home activities. Teachers can encourage good book selection by sending home appropriate reading material. Any way that a parent can become involved in their child's reading should be encouraged and used as a valuable resource.

"We need to create opportunities for parents to see themselves as a vital, continuing part of the children's education. We need to keep the lines of communication open and to build trust" (Routman, 1994, p. 485).

Success in learning to read is largely based on developing literacy related skills very early in life. Children need to be involved in some type of reading from the first days of life through such language activities such nursery rhymes, storybooks, and writing activities. They need to

understand the purposes of reading and the joy and wonder that can be derived from it. Parents need to become aware of the importance of vocabulary development and the use of oral language to develop early literacy skills.

There is a distinct relationship between successful readers and parental involvement. When home and school successfully work as a team to develop a reading program, a student's chance of becoming a successful reader is greatly improved.

<div align="center">Project Objectives and Processes</div>

As a result of early reading interventions during the period of September 2000 to January 2001, the first and second grade students will increase their reading skills as measured by the Developmental Reading Assessments. The results of this project will promote the use of early intervention reading programs.

In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. A teacher and administrator questionnaire will determine the needs and attitudes toward early intervention reading programs.

2. A series of questions will determine student attitudes and needs concerning their reading ability.

3. Materials that assess students' reading level will be used.

4. Informational materials will be sent to parents.

5. A peer-tutoring program will be developed.

<div align="center">Project Action Plan</div>

The following plan has been created to implement the intervention. The plan consists of a 20 week program and will be initiated on August 21. There may be some weeks that are affected by holidays and institutes.

Week 1:

* administer teacher/administrator survey

* communicate with sixth grade teachers to enlist volunteer student tutors.

* organize beginning weeks of the "Lunch Box Book Club"

Week 2:

* send home parent letter

* explain tutoring program to sixth grade students

Week 3

> * administer Development Reading Assessment to all first and second grade
>
> students
>
> * administer student survey
>
> * begin training for peer tutors

Week 4

> * continue to administer DRA
>
> * compile data from student survey

Week 5

> * evaluate DRA reading assessment
>
> * organize groups for tutoring program

Weeks 6-8

> * initiate peer-tutoring program
>
> * distribute parent information sheet

Week 9

> * reevaluate peer-tutoring program and implement changes
>
> * distribute parent information sheet

Weeks 10-12

> * continue peer-tutoring program
>
> * distribute parent information sheet

Week 13

> * reevaluate peer-tutoring program and implement changes
>
> * distribute parent information sheet

Weeks 14-16

> * continue peer-tutoring program
>
> * distribute parent information sheet

Week 17

> * end peer-tutoring program

Week 18

> * administer DRA reading assessment

Week 19

* continue to administer DRA reading assessment

* administer student survey

Week 20

* compile and evaluate data from DRA assessment

* evaluate peer-tutoring program

Methods of Assessments

To assess the effectiveness of the action research project, a student's survey, a questionnaire of staff, and a Developmental Reading Assessment will be administered. The Developmental Reading Assessment (Celebration Press) will determine the students who require intervention programs and will provide a method of monitoring student progress. This assessment will be administered to all first and second grade students at the beginning of the school year. At the conclusion of the program, this same assessment will be given to the students who participated in the reading intervention program. A questionnaire will be given to all primary teachers and district administrators to help determine attitudes and needs of the current reading intervention programs that are available throughout the district. A student survey will be given to first and second grade students to determine their attitudes and feelings about their reading ability. This will be given at the start and conclusion of the intervention program.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to address the need for early intervention programs within the targeted district, and to show evidence that these programs have the potential to improve the literacy of students.

The project was initiated by surveying teachers and administrators to determine the effectiveness of current programs, administering a reading checklist to all first and second graders, and implementing the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). As a result of this objective, a select group of students in first and second grades at the targeted school participated in a peer tutoring reading intervention program during the period of September 2000 to December 2000.

The researchers began the process of determining the need for early intervention programs by conducting a teacher/administrator survey. The results of this survey determined the need for additional programs (See Appendix B). The researchers sent a letter home to inform parents of the targeted action research (See Appendix A). The children completed a reading checklist to determine their attitudes concerning reading (See Appendix C). The same survey was administered to the students at the end of the action plan to compare before and after results upon implementing the action plan. The teachers administered the Developmental Reading Assessment to all first and second graders to determine the students' reading levels. Children who scored below their grade level at the start of the school year were selected to participate in the Lunch Box Book Club. A letter was sent home to explain the program to the parents (See Appendix D). The Lunch Box Book Club was implemented with the targeted first and second graders. The goal of the program was to help foster and promote a love of reading. This program was conducted once a week for 30 minutes during the students' lunch period. Sixth grade students volunteered to be reading tutors for the younger children. Appropriate reading texts were selected by the teachers for the children to read. A sixth grade student was assigned to act as a reading buddy for the younger child during the duration of the program. This helped to foster a relationship between the two children that led

to a feeling of security for the younger child. At the conclusion of the program, the DRA was again administered to the children who were selected for the Lunch Box Book Club Project. This provided the researchers with a tool to assess the program's effectiveness upon the children's reading levels.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

At the conclusion of the Lunch Box Book Club program, a student reading checklist was again administered to first and second grade students at the targeted school. This was done to determine if there was a general improvement in the students' attitudes and enjoyment of reading.

Table 5

Comparison of Results of First Grade Reading Checklist Administered September 2000 and January 2001

	Most of the Time		Infrequently	
	Sept.	Jan.	Sept.	Jan.
1 I read well.	57%	91%	44%	9%
2 I read to find out about things.	78%	68%	22%	32%
3 I like to read on my own.	52%	73%	48%	27%
4 I like to read with a partner.	100%	91%	0%	9%
5 I like to read to the class.	44%	63%	56%	37%
6 I know how to read words that are new to me.	34%	62%	66%	38%
7 I ask for help when I don't know the word.	78%	82%	22%	18%

The comparison of the results of the first grade checklist presented in Table 5 reflects an increasingly positive attitude towards reading by most of the students. This is indicated by an increase of 34% of students responding that they read well. There was also an increase in children responding that they liked to read on their own by 21%. When asked if they knew how to decode new words, there was an increase of 28%.

Table 6

Comparison of Results of Second Grade Reading Checklist Administered September 2000 and
January 2001

	Most of the Time		Infrequently	
	Sept.	Jan.	Sept.	Jan.
1 I read well.	92%	92%	8%	8%
2 I read to find out about things.	79%	71%	21%	29%
3 I like to read on my own.	87%	83%	13%	17%
5 I like to read to the class.	69%	46%	31%	54%
6 I know how to read words that are new to me.	80%	76%	20%	24%
7 I ask for help when I don't know the word.	58%	59%	42%	41%

The comparison of the results of the second grade reading checklists presented in Table 6
indicated little change in the attitudes of the children toward reading from the initial survey. In
both surveys, 92% of the children answered that they read well. There was a slight decrease of
4% when asked if they enjoyed reading on their own. When asked if they could decode new
words, there was a decrease of 14%.

The final method of assessing the effectiveness of the program was The Developmental
Reading Assessment. This assessment was initially given to the students in September 2000 and
re-administered in January 2001. Only the 32 students who participated in the Lunch Box Book
Club were given the DRA in January. The designated levels of the Developmental Reading
Assessment are as follows:

Kindergarten   Levels A - 2

First Grade (first semester)   Levels 3 - 8

First Grade (second semester)   Levels 10 - 16

Second Grade (first semester)   Levels 18 - 22

Second Grade (second semester)   Levels 24 - 28

Table 7

Results of First Grade Student DRA Testing Administered September 2000 and January 2001

Student	Pre-Test Level	Post Test Level
A	0	10
B	0	2
C	0	0
D	0	2
E	0	8
F	0	2
G	A	8
H	A	8
I	A	8
J	A	8
K	A	12
L	A	3
M	A	6
N	1	6
O	2	12
P	2	6
Q	2	6
R	2	6
S	2	3
T	2	4
U	2	8
V	2	4
W	2	6
X	New	8
Y	New	4

Table 8

Results of Second Grade Student DRA Testing Administered September 2000 and January 2001

Student	Pre-Test Level	Post Test Level
AA	3	6
BB	6	16
CC	8	10
DD	10	14
EE	16	20
FF	16	20
GG	18	20

The test results presented in Tables 7 and 8 indicate that most students made some type of progress. Of the 25 first graders tested, 10 scored within the appropriate grade level range and 15 continued to have delays. The second grade students scored below the established grade level range even though some progress was evident in the students' test results.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the action plan showed favorable results for improving the first grade students' attitudes and enjoyment of reading. Research has shown that a child's attitude and enjoyment of reading is an important component of early literacy development. It was very encouraging to see that most of the first grade students felt that they read well and learned strategies to decode words. The second grade results were somewhat discouraging. The 14% decline in word decoding could be attributed to the increased difficulty of reading textbooks. This finding supports the research that early intervention programs should be implemented in kindergarten and first grade. The researchers also hoped the second grade students would develop a stronger enjoyment of reading.

It is also evident that the teachers in the targeted district, who participated in the survey administered in September 2000, felt strongly that more personnel and programs were needed to meet the increasing needs of the students. While the administrators agreed that early intervention

was essential, they differed markedly on program implementation. Most administrators felt that early interventions and screening programs should take place within the individual classrooms.

Based on the results of the research project, the researchers felt that the results of the DRA did not show notable growth for most students. This may be attributed to many factors, including children who were bilingual, students with learning disabilities, and children who exhibited behavior or emotional problems. In second grade, there appeared to be less improvement. The researchers attributed this to a poor attitude towards reading and a lack of self-confidence in the students' reading ability. This emphasized the need and importance of early reading interventions.

In order to develop a strong early intervention program within a district, researchers suggest the following recommendations: (1) Intervention programs should be implemented as early as possible, preferably in kindergarten and first grade; (2) screening programs should be administered to all students to identify at-risk children; (3) programs should be developed that enhance a child's interest and enjoyment of reading; and (4) parent programs should be established to help educate parents on the importance of early literacy development.

The information generated from this action research project indicates a need for early intervention programs. There are many programs available to address these needs; however many interventions are expensive to implement. The researchers found that the Lunch Box Book Club required no additional funds and did generate a great deal of enthusiasm for reading. In addition, it encouraged a bond between the older and younger students. Research has shown that early intervention programs are really the keys to early reading literacy.

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Appendix A
Parent Information Letter

Saint Xavier University
Field-Based Masters Program
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Early Interventions: Keys to Successful Readers

Dear Parents of First and Second Grade Students,

Mrs. Spang and Mrs. Jeffreys are currently working on a Master's Degree of Arts in Teaching and Leadership through St. Xavier University, Chicago. Our topic of study is early reading intervention programs. The purpose of this research project is to develop a program to encourage children to become better readers.

Your child will participate in several educational activities, such as surveys and skills evaluation. The skills evaluation is currently given to all first and second grade students at Lace to help teachers determine the child's reading development. The results of these activities will help us to develop better programs to improve your child's reading skills this year. Participation will be in keeping with normal school procedures. All results will be kept confidential. If you do not want your child's results to be used in this project, his or her grade will not be affected in any way by that decision.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at Lace School 968 - 2589. Please return the next page with your signature.

St. Xavier University requires us to include the following paragraph. There will be no risk to the student and children will not be interviewed. Our goal is to develop in all students a love of reading.

I, the parent/legal guardian of the minor named below, acknowledge that the investigator has explained to me the need for this research, identified the risk involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I freely and voluntarily consent to my child's participation in this study. I understand all information gathered during the interview will be completely confidential (or anonymous). I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

Sincerely,

Joan Spang
Jo Ann Jeffreys

_____

Name of Minor Participant

_____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

_____

Date

_____

Witness

Appendix B

Early Intervention Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to collect information about early reading interventions in our district. These programs are designed to identify and correct reading difficulties in children. This research is part of a master's degree project. All information will be kept confidential.

Please circle your position within the district.

Administrator   Teacher

Please circle the school, grade level , and years of experience.

Lace   Fairview   DeLay

Grades   Kdg.   1   2   3

Years of Experience   0 - 5   5 - 10   10 +

1.   What role do you feel early reading interventions have in our present reading curriculum?

2.   Do you feel that our current intervention programs are adequate and meet the needs of all students? Please explain.

3.   Do you feel that we have adequately trained personnel to meet the needs of our students? Please explain.

4.   Do you feel that our current screening program identifies the children with reading difficulties? Please explain.

5.   What role do you feel phonemic awareness plays in teaching young children to read?

6.   Are the students in our district given sufficient parental support to reinforce their reading skills? Please explain.

7.   What interventions do you think would enhance our current program?

Please return by _____ . Thank you for your assistance.

Appendix C
Reading Checklist

Name_____Date_____

My Reading Checklist

1. I read well.

   Often   Sometimes   Hardly Ever   Not Yet

2. I read to find out about things.

   Often   Sometimes   Hardly Ever   Not Yet

3. I like to read on my own.

   Often   Sometimes   Hardly Ever   Not Yet

4. I like to read with a partner.

   Often   Sometimes   Hardly Ever   Not Yet

5. I like to read to the class.

   Often   Sometimes   Hardly Ever   Not Yet

6. I know how to read words that are new to me.

   Often   Sometimes   Hardly Ever   Not Yet

7. I ask for help when I don't know the word.

   Often   Sometimes   Hardly Ever   Not Yet

Appendix D
Parent Letter

Dear Parents,

      Your child has been invited to join the Lunch Box Book Club. The club will be meeting once a week during lunch time for approximately ten weeks. The children will be eating lunch (hot or cold) with a sixth grade reading buddy while reading and enjoying literature. This is an informal reading program to help foster and promote a love of reading. We developed this program in conjunction with our masters research project If you have any questions please feel free to call us at Lace School 968-2589.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Spang
Mrs. Jeffreys

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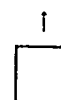| The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
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Sign here,→ please

Signature: JoAnn Jeffreys; Joan Spang	Printed Name/Position/Title: Student/s FBMP
Organization/Address: Saint Xavier University E. Mosak 3700 W. 103rd St. Chgo, IL 60655	Telephone: 708-802-6214 FAX: 708-802-6208 E-Mail Address: mosak@sxu.edu Date: 3/20/01

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