DOCUMENT RESUME

ABSTRACT
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grade elementary students in a Midwest community. Evidence for the existence
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measure reading achievement, and teacher observations with anecdotal records
to document student reading growth. Analysis of probable causes was evidenced
by teachers' observations of students' poor decoding strategies and weak
comprehension skills. Teachers reported that students did not exhibit
necessary decoding skills to be fluent readers. It was also noted that
students did not demonstrate use of higher order thinking skills when
responding to comprehension activities. A review of solution strategies
suggested by cited authors, combined with an analysis of the problem setting,
resulted in the selection of three categories of intervention: Instruction on
the Four Block Method to improve student's decoding skills, the use of
graphic organizers, and questioning techniques to increase student
comprehension levels. The results of the implementation of the Four Block
Method, graphic organizers, and questioning techniques were positive. Based
on the presentation and analysis of the data, the teachers believe that the
implementation of the strategies was very beneficial in helping students
acquire decoding and comprehension skills necessary to become proficient
readers. (Contains 29 references, 2 figures, and 5 tables of data. Appendixes
contain first grade high frequency words; checklists; the four components of
a balanced reading and language arts classroom; a story summary guide
recording chart; an oral reading assessment; a summary rubric; story maps;
and a list of words for each level of the taxonomy.) (Author/RS)

# IMPROVING READING ACHIEVEMENT
# THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF READING STRATEGIES

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

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Abstract

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Date:  May 2001

Title:  Improving Reading Achievement Through the Implementation of Reading Strategies

This study describes a program designed to increase student achievement in reading. The targeted population consisted of first and fourth grade elementary students in a Midwest community. Evidence for the existence of the problem included standardized tests and alternative assessments to measure reading achievement, and teacher observations with anecdotal records to document student reading growth.

Analysis of probable causes was evidenced by teachers' observations of students' poor decoding strategies and weak comprehension skills. Teachers reported that students did not exhibit necessary decoding skills to be fluent readers. It was also noted that students did not demonstrate use of higher order thinking skills when responding to comprehension activities.

A review of solution strategies suggested by cited authors, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three categories of intervention: Instruction on the Four Block Method to improve student's decoding skills, and the use of graphic organizers, and questioning techniques to increase student comprehension levels.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted elementary classes in a Midwestern metropolitan area exhibited low reading achievement which interfered with their academic success. Evidence for the existence of the problem included standardized test scores, teacher observation and anecdotal records, and alternative assessments that documented reading performance.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted school was located on the banks of the Mississippi River in the Midwest. This city was the county seat and had an approximate population of 30,000. The city was about 40 miles from a large metropolitan center.

Enrollment for the school was 428 students with student ethnicity diversified 92% Caucasian, 2% Hispanic, 4% African American, and 1% Asian American. The average daily attendance rate was 96%, with 31% of the students receiving free breakfast and lunch and less than 1% receiving reduced meal rates. Busing was provided for 185 students on a daily basis.

The school had 33 certified staff members. Twenty-five educators held a bachelor's degree, and eight teachers held master's degrees. Teaching experience at the school ranged from one year to 34 years. The average number of years of teaching experience was 15 years. Thirty-four non-certified staff included food service, school nurse, custodians, classroom assistants, and secretarial staff.

The school facility was built in 1957 as a 25,000 square foot, one story building. In 1999, an additional 25,000 square feet were added to the existing structure. The school consisted of 18 regular education classrooms, 7 special education classrooms, 2 supportive reading/math strategist classrooms, a computer lab, Learning Resource Center (LRC), a gymnasium, and a

commons/lunch room. In addition, the school had a music room with two practice rooms which also served the district for extra band and orchestra rehearsals, three conference rooms for special education support staff, and an office complex that included a guidance office, nurse's station, conference room, secretarial work space, and the principal's office.

School staff provided many educational opportunities for students. Programs included Human Growth and Development, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), Supportive Reading and Math, Talented and Gifted program (TAG), Peer Reading Buddies, Study Connection, School Resource Officer (SRO), and the Humanities Enrichment Program (HEP). In addition, faculty provided a science enrichment experience at the local Nature Barn and a Prairie Awareness program. School programming was enhanced through activities of the Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.), a yearly talent show, and a three year rotation schedule of Fine Arts Day, Prime-Time Read In, and Science Fair.

Issues unique to the school included the passage of a bond referendum in the fall of 1997 with a 25,000 square foot building addition completed in the fall of 1999. This resulted in the joining of two schools, as well as their students, faculties, and families. The blending of two schools presented challenges in scheduling, combining, and compromising on goals and philosophies. Having a larger building resulted in scheduling problems with the playground, computer lab, and LRC. The building did not qualify for Title I funding for special support programs, which left the school at a disadvantage for at risk students.

Community Context

The community, which was founded at the turn of the century by the lumber industry, had several types of commerce, including manufacturing, which used skilled and unskilled labor; construction, and wholesale and retail sales; finance; insurance and real estate sales; service jobs; and government jobs. The average hourly rate for these occupations was $9.00 per hour resulting in an average household income of $37,742. Unemployment rate in this city was 2.9%.

The community was home to several corporations and factories. Collis Company, Custom-Pak, E.I. DuPont, International Paper, Equistar, Ralston Purina Company and Archer Daniel Midland (ADM) were located there. A total of 49 manufacturing plants employed 4,500 people.

Social service organizations found in the community included the Department of Human Services, the United Way, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's

Christian Association (YWCA), and the Salvation Army. The community supported a homeless shelter, a rehabilitation house for men recovering from alcohol addiction and drug abuse, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and a Women's Resource Center.

Located in the city were 48 religious congregations. The community was predominantly Protestant with 46 churches being of this faith. There was one Catholic church.

Many cultural and recreational facilities were located in the community. A theater, library, art gallery, ballet company, symphony, historical society, and arts council were supported by community members. Recreational facilities within a half hour drive included 3 public golf courses, 24 tennis courts, 16 public parks, 1 swimming pool, 1 country club, and a 1,000 passenger riverboat gambling casino.

New housing developments were created after a bypass on the northwest end of the community caused a shift in population. The medium home value in this community was $41,589. The average cost of construction for housing was $67.00 per square foot.

There were three four-year colleges within 40 miles of the city. Within the city there was a community college and one four-year institution of higher learning. The public school system included a high school, two middle schools, and six elementary schools. A parochial school served children kindergarten through twelfth grade. The community also had six preschools.

Medical facilities included three hospitals within a one hour drive. Specialty services available through the hospitals included rehabilitation, dialysis, radiation therapy, and an Alzheimer's program. The city and surrounding area had several nursing homes for the elderly.

The local school district's population was 98% Caucasian. Fifty percent of the households had children. Educational attainment showed that 76% of the community members held high school diplomas, 13% held bachelor degrees, and less than 4% held graduate degrees.

School district members confronted three main issues: a declining enrollment in the schools due to a population reduction, the open enrollment option for parents, and a community push for smaller class sizes. The push for smaller class sizes was complicated by the fact that there was a lack of state funding as well as limited building space. Due to shifts in the population, the school community had experienced a number of boundary changes. In addition, there was a strong district thrust to align curriculum in grades kindergarten through twelfth.

National Context of the Problem

Low reading scores have captured attention of educators for many years in this country. Classroom teachers have sought solutions to this problem by investigating national reports that have been written, state guidelines that have been formulated, and courses that have been offered to address this concern. Legislators, educators, parents, and students are working together to seek effective solutions to this growing concern.

The range in reading ability among students within a classroom becomes greater as the children get older. For example, student reading levels within a first grade class may range from pre-primer to second grade. The reading ability range for students in a fourth grade class may be from second grade to sixth grade. In a sixth grade classroom, it would be possible for student reading levels to range from a third grade level to a ninth grade level. The use of grouping practices is one way for teachers to address this range in reading found within a classroom. Grouping practices used for reading instruction are just one means to facilitate learning; they are not an end in themselves (Nelson, 1994).

The National Coalition of Family Literacy Research Staff (NCFL, 1999) found that 21% to 23% of adults in this country have skills at the lowest levels in reading comprehension, writing, and computational skills. Evidence of these low skills is shown in an adult's difficulty when totaling an entry on a deposit slip, locating the place and time of a meeting on a form, or identifying a piece of specific information in a short news article.

According to Honig (1997), 70% to 80% of children in some suburban and inner-city schools are reaching upper elementary levels without being able to read and understand age appropriate material. The seriousness of this problem causes many personal tragedies and significantly reduces academic expectations. This puts the future of our public schools in great jeopardy. Honig suggested that teaching children to read is the key to future educational success. The teaching of reading should be a priority of elementary schools.

The dawn of the Twenty-First Century will change dramatically what it means to be a competent reader. The ability to read has always been, and will continue to be, of the utmost importance for the academic success of all students. As children move along the continuum of education, the focus of reading changes; the focus begins as "learning to read" and then changes as the child gets older to "reading to learn." The educational community must provide a balanced and

integrated literacy program to foster each child's individual strengths. A student who has achieved

reading success is destined to become a lifelong learner.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reported in its 1994 Reading Assessment that more than one out of six children (17.5%) will experience a problem in learning to read during the critical first three years of school. In addition, research indicated that 4 out of 10 fourth-graders (42%) were reading below grade level. Consequently, the lack of reading success during the crucial first three years of school is a problem that faces every community and school in the nation (Reading: The First Chapter, 1996).

In order to document low reading achievement in first and fourth grade, the following information was considered: standardized tests, teacher observation, anecdotal records, and alternative assessments. During the first three weeks of school, three independent observers were involved in collecting and recording the information on low reading achievement at the targeted site. A summary of the data collected is presented in Figure 1, and Tables 1, 2, and 3.
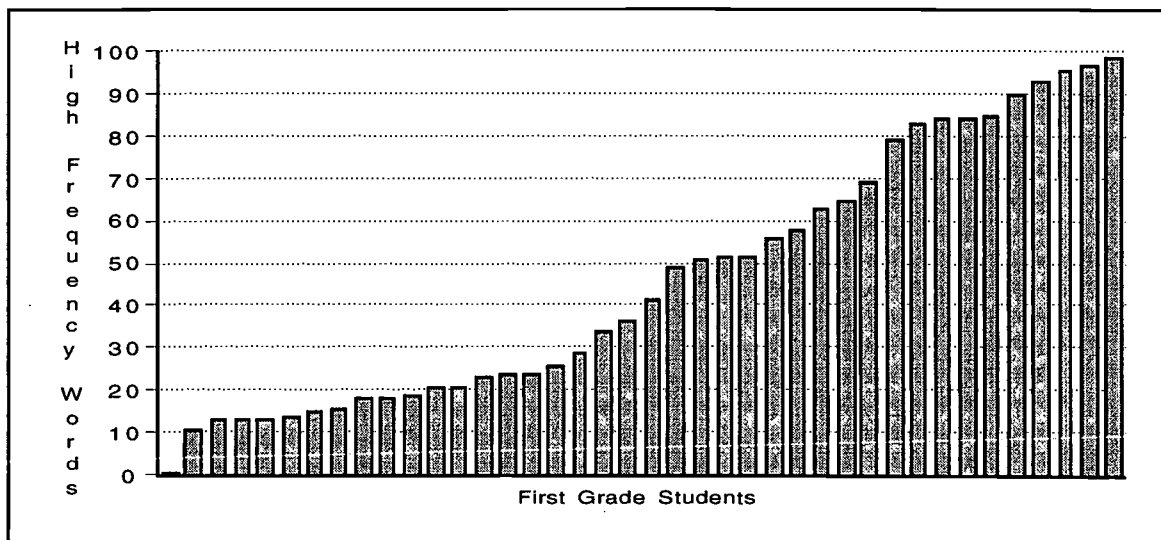


Figure 1. Known words out of a list of 100 high frequency words, Appendix A.

The National Reading Panel's ((NRP) 2000) report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stated that "word recognition frees a reader's cognitive resources so that the meaning of a text can be the focus of attention" (p. 3-6). Teachers from the targeted school pretested 40 students at the end of their kindergarten year using the Early Literacy Assessment test. Students were to identify as many words as possible from a list of 100 high frequency words. Figure 1 provided evidence of a word recognition problem. Teachers found that there was a large range of abilities in the number of words that students could identify. The bottom one-third could identify fewer than 25 of the words, yet the upper one-third could identify more than 60 words. Word recognition is an important component in reading fluency and comprehension. A student who struggles with fluency may have difficulty getting meaning from what they read.

Table 1

First Grade Reading Skills Checklist, Appendix B

| Kindergarten Skill | Mastery (%) | Non-Mastery (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Identifies Upper Case Letters | 93 | 7 |
| Identifies Lower Case Letters | 73 | 27 |
| Identifies Consonant Letter Sounds | 63 | 37 |
| Claps Syllables | 53 | 47 |
| Identifies Rhymes | 90 | 10 |
| Generates Rhymes | 95 | 5 |
| Identifies Beginning Sounds | 93 | 7 |
| Identifies Ending Sounds | 85 | 15 |
| Segments Words Into Sounds | 55 | 45 |
| Identifies Kindergarten Words | 68 | 32 |

Teachers at the targeted school also discovered that some students enter the first grade deficient in the decoding skills needed to read proficiently. Table 1 shows mastery and non-mastery of skills taught at the kindergarten level. Using a checklist at the beginning of the school year, 40 first grade students were individually tested over skills generally taught in kindergarten. The students were asked to identify letters, sounds, rhyming words, and kindergarten high frequency words, as well as to clap word syllables, generate rhymes, and segment individual words into sounds. Teachers indicated that students were struggling in the areas of identifying letters and sounds, segmenting words, clapping syllables, and recognizing high frequency words. Without these fundamental beginning building blocks, decoding words becomes an overwhelming challenge for struggling readers.

Comprehension is another area of concern at the targeted site. Researchers have found that summary writing may increase a child's comprehension. Teachers at the targeted site pretested students from the bottom third of the class on their summary writing skills. Before the pretesting, students were introduced to the story and new vocabulary words. Approximately one third of the story was read aloud to the students. They completed reading the remainder of the story independently at their desks. The students were then told to write a summary of the story. They were instructed to imagine they were retelling the most important parts of the story to a friend. Table 2 highlights the results of the summary writing pretest.

Table 2

Baseline Data for Summary Writing

| Components of Summary | Improvement Needed | Satisfactory | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Setting | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Characters | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Problem | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Main Events | 2 | 6 | 0 |
| Conclusion | 7 | 1 | 0 |

Areas of greatest concern in summary writing included identification of setting, main events, and the conclusion. All of the eight subjects needed improvement in setting identification. Twenty-five percent showed they needed improvement in the main event identification. Seventy-five percent performed satisfactorily in that same area. In conclusion identification, 88% needed improvement and 12% were satisfactory.

Data indicated evidence of a problem. Students did better in the summary components which tend to be directly stated in the text, such as character names. Identification of the characters requires literal thinking. The areas of greatest weakness were setting and conclusion identification. The recognition of these components in a story necessitates inferential thinking. The student's difficulty with this skill is evident in the Table 2.

In addition to summary writing, researchers believe that teaching students to ask higher order thinking questions may also improve comprehension. At the targeted school, students from the top third of the class were pretested on their ability to write these types of questions. Prior to pretesting, students were told they would be starting a new social studies unit. A list was generated by individual students of knowledge they already had about the new unit. Students were then asked to think of questions they could ask to learn more about this topic. To facilitate their thinking a list of subtopics related to the unit were listed on the board with student input.

One hundred percent of the questions written were at the knowledge level. A total of 27 questions were written by the 8 subjects. The data suggest that this task was difficult for them. Students may not have been introduced to the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Researchers have found that when there is a lack of instruction of higher level questioning techniques during reading, students ability to comprehend, answer questions, and summarize are jeopardized (National Reading Panel, 2000).

<div align="center">Probable Causes</div>

Many students may be exhibiting low reading achievement which interferes with their academic success based on three probable causes: poor decoding skills and comprehension strategies, large class size, and lack of parent involvement.

Decoding and comprehension strategies are directly linked to reading proficiency. Approximately 95% of students entering first grade are mature enough to learn the basic phonetic and decoding skills. If these essential skills are not mastered in the early years, only one in eight

children will ever read grade appropriate materials (Honig, 1997).

Class size impacts the amount of individual attention given to each student which results in lack of reading success. Creative organization of classrooms and the use of grouping strategies is needed during instructional time to maximize student achievement. Students involved in alternative groupings such as peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, small learning groups, and combined grouping formats have accomplished better reading outcomes than students taught in a whole-class setting (Burnette, 1999).

The National Coalition of Family Literacy (1999) expressed that a lack of parent involvement contributes to poor reading achievement. Ballen and Moles (2000) stated that the foundation of parent involvement is when parents value learning, emphasize good character, set high expectations, monitor activities, and stay informed about their children's progress. The relationship between comprehension levels and parent involvement is considerable. On the national level, students average 46 points below the norm when parent involvement is low. When parent involvement is high, students scored 28 points above the national average, a discrepancy of 74 points.

Learning to read is a complicated task. In today's schools there is a growing number of children who struggle with reading. Instructors at the targeted site discovered through pretesting that many students lack the necessary decoding and comprehension skills needed to become competent readers. Educators are challenged to develop programs and strategies for reading underachievers (Quatroche, 1999). Three important factors that may benefit reading achievement are: teaching children decoding and comprehension strategies, attempting to reduce class size, and involving parents in the reading process. A child's reading success may be enhanced if these three components are in place.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Researchers have concluded that reading skills among school-age children and young adults are declining. Many children are being left behind at a time when literacy skills are at the basis of learning (Palmaffy, 1997). The most important task given to an elementary school is to have its students reading by the end of third grade. Beginning in fourth grade, reading takes on a new dimension in the learning process. At that point, the expectation is that students will "read to learn" rather than "learn to read." The knowledge of other content areas will become inaccessible to the students if they are not proficient readers (Reading: The First Chapter, 1996).

Researchers have shown that approximately 10 million elementary children have reading difficulties. These difficulties are manifested when the student attempts to read aloud. For example, students may mispronounce words, skip words completely, and start and stop often (NCFL, 1999). Because all children do not learn in the same way, teachers must utilize a variety of strategies to assure students' transfer of understanding.

One reason students are underachieving in reading may be because they lack decoding skills. Honig (1997) defined decoding as "reading through a word from left to right, generating the sounds connected to all the letters or letter patterns in that word, and manipulating those sounds until they connect to a word in the student's speaking vocabulary" (p. 17).

Using instructional strategies that promote phonemic awareness is one way to help children attain decoding skills. Blevins (1997) defined phonemic awareness as "the understanding that spoken words are made up of a series of discrete sounds" (p. 5). Researchers reported that almost 20% of all children have a lack of phonemic awareness. Without early intervention, many children are eventually labeled dyslexic or learning disabled and fall further behind their peers in reading development. Phonemic awareness training studies have reinforced two significant points:

Phonemic awareness can be taught; and it takes a minimal amount of time to bring many children's phonemic awareness abilities to a higher level (Blevins, 1997).

Five basic objectives should be utilized when incorporating phonemic awareness into a classroom: aptitude to hear alliteration and rhymes; capacity to compare and contrast the sounds of words; ability to orally blend and split syllables; expertise to count and segment sounds; and capability to do phonemic manipulation (Sensenbaugh, 1996). Phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition are two of the most indicative factors of a child's early reading success (Blevins, 1997).

Another strategy that can be used in acquiring decoding skills is the Four Blocks approach. This approach has four major components to be taught daily in the classroom: guided reading, self-selected reading, writing, and working with words (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999). Each component is taught for a total of 30 minutes resulting in a 2 hour block of reading and writing instruction (Appendix C). Researchers have found that children are very diverse in their learning styles, and the Four Blocks approach exposes them to well balanced reading instruction in their acquisition of reading skills (Cunningham, Hall, & Defee, 1998).

Poor comprehension skills may be another explanation for low achievement in reading. Bransford, Norris, and Phillips (as cited in Alvarez & Risko, 1989) defined comprehension as that which "occurs when a reader is able to use prior knowledge and experience to interpret an author's message" (p. 1). Knuth and Jones (1991) cited evidence that meaning is constructed by the reader, rather than derived from the words alone. There is evidence that in a large number of classrooms, content is driven by the textbook and that comprehension instruction is not provided by most teachers. According to the 1994 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), more than 40% of all fourth graders could not make simple inferences at the most basic reading level. The result is that students do not understand the overall meaning of what they have read (Quatroche, 1999).

One strategy used to strengthen comprehension skills is the use of graphic organizers. Stein and Glenn (as cited in Pressley et.al, 1990) stated that stories have a general structure which includes setting, characters, problem, events, and conclusion. According to Mandler (as cited in Pressley et.al, 1990), adept readers are familiar with story grammar and automatically apply it to aid in remembering and comprehending. Story grammar is an attempt to describe the rules people

use to create and remember stories. Like sentence grammar, a story grammar is a set of structural rules (Mandler, as cited in Pressley et.al, 1990). According to Nolte and Singer (as cited in Pressley et. al, 1990), story grammar instruction increased recall of story information by average fourth and fifth grade readers. Teachers instructed students to ask themselves questions about setting, important characters, character goals, and problems encountered in reaching the goal. This strategy was taught in ten 40 minute sessions. Teacher modeling was needed initially and then decreased as students become more independent. Idol and Crall (as cited in Pressley et.al, 1990) claimed that the story grammar strategy can be easily adapted to the classroom by using a story map (Appendix D).

Story maps are effective tools for children to utilize when building comprehension. These maps provide an avenue for students to make visual representations of important themes, story elements, questions, and conclusions. Readers are more likely to make connections, categorize, and organize their thoughts when a story map is used (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997).

One alternative to traditional story maps is Character Perspective Charting (CPC). This method provides a format for the reader to chart the story from two characters' points of view. This strategy is best used with stories that have two or more characters with conflicting goals. Before CPC can be implemented, the teacher must demonstrate the strategy. First, all the children read the same story. Next, the teacher reviews the story elements of the chart, and completes the character chart using student input. Then, the students are given two blank charts that are filled in with directions provided by teacher questions. When the chart is completed, the teacher asks the children to reflect on the thinking strategies they used in comparing character goals and actions, remembering details, making conclusions, and drawing inferences. CPC is useful because it challenges students to use basic structural information to interpret a story. The majority of students who have used this technique, regardless of grade level, have said that the CPC strategy helped them think about a story at a deeper level (Shanahan & Shanahan, 1997).

The use of questioning is another strategy to help students with comprehension. Presseisen (1999) stated that to question means "an ability to think beyond what we see, touch, and hear with our senses" (p. 98). She also claimed that teachers must have the ability to create a safe environment which makes children feel comfortable to take risks with their questions. Good questions reflect curiosities, uncover assumptions, lead to answers, and help students think about

their learning.

The Pyramid Approach, according to Hinton (1994), is one method which incorporates questioning in building comprehension skills. It teaches children how to ask and answer questions at all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. The use of this approach creates student awareness for high level thinking and empowers teachers to foster these skills as well. In this strategy, learners are first guided through the Key Words and Sample Questions for each level of the taxonomy (Appendix E). This may take five to seven days. Next, a research topic is chosen and student questions are listed, as well as possible sources to use for seeking information to answer their questions. Then students use the Key Words and Sample Questions sheet to review level one: knowledge. Text is read about the research topic and the children write and answer three or four questions at the knowledge level, based on what they have read. Key words are underlined to indicate that each question is at the knowledge level. To check for understanding, students share their questions with the class.

The same process is repeated for each level of the taxonomy. Once students have a clear understanding of the levels of questions, they select their own research project and use this process independently. Benefits of this approach are many: The process encourages students to use different sources of information, it allows students to ask their own questions which results in original reports, and it provides a meaningful way for students to understand and implement higher level thinking (Hinton, 1994).

Reciprocal teaching is another technique to strengthen comprehension. Researchers have suggested that this method helps young readers learn and incorporate the strategies that excellent readers use: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing (Carter, 1997). Reciprocal teaching is best introduced with small groups. When implementing this strategy, the teacher's job is to monitor metacognition as the students are guided through four strategies. As a result, a dialogue begins between the teacher and students.

During the predicting phase of the text, the learner may use prior knowledge to formulate a hypothesis and then think ahead to confirm or reject that hypothesis. They then move to the clarifying stage where students are guided to use strategies that deal with difficulties in the text. These strategies may include rereading, using context clues, and using reference materials. The third strategy is questioning. Here the students become involved in their reading by asking and

answering questions as a way to self check for understanding. Finally, when summarizing, the important content of the material is identified and applied to indicate student understanding (Bertram and Givern, 1998). Reciprocal teaching leads to greater knowledge of a topic, produces self confident learners, and provides a forum for cooperation and initiative among children.

Another reason students are underachieving in reading may be due to large class sizes in the instructional setting. Students bring to a classroom a wide diversity of academic levels and individualized needs. It is very difficult for teachers to provide instruction that is appropriate for all students in such a large group environment (Hollifield, 1987).

Nelson (1994) discussed two classifications of grouping practices: Ability grouping, in which students are organized for the purpose of providing instruction developmentally; and cooperative group learning, which allows groups of heterogeneous students to investigate a specific topic or theme. In cooperative group learning, group members work together and support each other to bring learning to the maximum potential. Johnson and Johnson (1987) found that peers typically achieve more success in collaborative situations compared to situations where individuals work alone. Many classrooms use ability grouping among students as a strategy to improve reading achievement. Ability grouping is one strategy that has been debated for years both at the elementary and secondary level. Hollifield (1987) argued that ability grouping would allow teachers to teach lessons at a faster pace and at an increased level for high achievers and would allow teachers to give more individualized attention, reiteration, and analysis to lower achievers. He defined two types of ability grouping: Between-class grouping is the practice of forming classes that includes students of comparable ability; and within class grouping is the manner in which groups of students with similar competency levels within one classroom are formed. With either type of grouping, teachers are more likely to provide reading activities that are specialized to meet their groups' needs and abilities.

Slavin (1986) recommended that the following practices be implemented in a successful ability grouping plan: Students should be placed primarily with a heterogeneous class but grouped for just one or two specific subject areas; the practice should be used to reduce the range of academic skill levels in the group; the plan should be reviewed and revised frequently; and the teachers should vary the academic instructional pace according to the learning rates of the group being addressed. Kulik (1992) stated that programs which involve the greatest amount of

curriculum adjustments have a more positive effect on student learning.

Burnette (1999) offered some samples of alternative grouping practices that have proven to produce better reading outcomes for students compared to whole-class instruction: Peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, small learning groups of three to ten students, and combined grouping formats. If properly implemented, grouping strategies have proven to be beneficial not only to the high academic achieving students, but also to the average and lower academic achieving students (Farmer, 1996).

Researchers have determined that there is a connection between a lack of parent involvement in schools and reading achievement. Anderson et al. (as cited in Ballen & Moles, 2000) maintained that "Children's success in school can be linked to reading to children and listening to them read. The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p. 2).

Parents can support their children's education at home and at school in a variety of ways. Some strategies parents can implement to help their children achieve success and become lifelong learners may include reading together, watching television wisely, establishing a daily family routine, and scheduling daily homework times (Ballen & Moles, 2000). According to Allington and Gruce (1997), children should be immersed in language. This can be done by allowing children to experiment with the alphabet and sounds, giving them writing utensils, and providing books at the appropriate age level. When parents and children read together, children learn the concept of how a book works. If parents enhance at home what is taught at school, reading achievement may be significantly influenced.

Smith (1999) suggested that parents assist children with comprehension of fiction stories by teaching them to make mental maps. Children begin by reading a story, by visualizing the events, and finally by imagining a series of connected boxes. As the events of the story take place, the children sequence the events into the boxes. Initially, parents contribute by drawing boxes, and discussing the important events of the story. After the story is finished, questions can be asked about the characters, setting, and plot. This method reinforces comprehension and make it more concrete.

Reading achievement is associated with families showing support for schools and reinforcing good reading habits (Ballen & Moles, 2000). Home support is imperative for children

to become life long learners.

Many Americans believe that reading is of vital importance for educational success. In 1994, 70% of teachers stated that reading was the most essential skill for children to learn. In addition, 62% of parents believed that reading mastery is a priority for their children (Reading: The First Chapter, 1996). After surveying over 10,000 teachers, Honig (1997) identified similar traits among reading underachievers: First, he stated that underachievers exhibited poor decoding skills and the inability to read strategically; next, he found that struggling readers are not successful in large class settings due to the wide diversity among student learning rates; finally, he discovered that parents do not provide enough reading opportunities for their children outside the school environment. Strong decoding and comprehension skills, small group sizes, and active parent participation are three key elements in helping a child become a successful lifelong reader.

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

Taking into consideration the many strategies available from which to design an effective plan of action to promote change among first and fourth graders underachieving in reading, members of this research team concluded that their approach would encompass a combination of diverse strategies. Teachers would instruct students in each of the following: Implementing the Four Block Method, using graphic organizers, and applying questioning techniques.

As a result of implementing the Four Block Method during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted reading students will increase their reading achievement as measured by reading assessments, rubrics, and checklists. In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Develop the first grade checklist to determine student reading growth.

2. Design an oral reading assessment rubric to measure reading achievement.

3. Design lessons for the Four Block Method.

4. Utilize standardized tests to examine student achievement.

5. Record teacher observations and anecdotal records.

As a result of instruction in the use of graphic organizers during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted reading students will increase their reading comprehension as measured by reading assessments, rubrics, and checklists. In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Design a series of lessons that instruct students on how to correctly complete graphic organizers.

2. Construct a graphic organizer rubric to measure reading comprehension.

3. Utilize standardized tests to examine student achievement.

4. Record teacher observations and anecdotal notes.

As a result of application of questioning techniques during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted reading students will increase their reading comprehension as measured by reading assessments, rubrics, and checklists. In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Develop a series of lessons on questioning techniques that are directly applicable to reading achievement.

2. Create a rubric to assess higher order thinking in student reading achievement.

3. Utilize standardized tests to examine student achievement.

4. Record teacher observations and anecdotal notes.

First Grade Action Plan

During each day of the twelve weeks of interventions, the first grade teachers will teach a two hour block of reading using the Four Block Method. The Four Blocks include writing, guided reading, self-selected reading, and working with words.

September

Writing:

Initiate writing activity

-Interview student of the day

-Draw and label pictures for special student

Guided Reading:

Utilize reading materials

-Predictable books

-District reading series

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Self-Selected Reading:

Use a variety of reading materials

-Back to school books

-Johnny Appleseed books

-Science/Social Study theme books

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Working With Words:

Introduce five new vocabulary words weekly

Review alphabet and consonant sounds

Generate rhymes

October

Writing:

Practice writing a complete sentence

Teach mechanics of writing (capitalize "I", use spaces between words)

Make class books

Guided Reading:

Utilize Reading Materials

-Predictable books

-District Reading Series

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Self-Selected Reading:

Use a variety of reading materials

-Fire prevention books

-Halloween books

-Science/Social Studies theme books

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Working With Words:

Introduce five new vocabulary words weekly

Read tongue twisters

Guess the covered word

Practice ending sounds and word segmenting

<div align="center">November</div>

Writing:

Implement "Think Aloud" writing

Practice writing at least two sentences on a topic

Teach mechanics of writing (use a capital and period)

Make class books

Guided Reading:

Utilize Reading Materials

-Predictable books

-District Reading Series

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Self-Selected Reading:

Use a variety of reading materials

-Thanksgiving books

-Science/Social Studies theme books

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Working With Words:

Introduce five new vocabulary words weekly

Make and break words

Guess the covered word

Implement a variety of phonemic awareness activities

December

Writing:

Write with a partner on winter themes

Write three sentences on a topic

Make class books

Review mechanics of writing

Guided Reading:

Utilize Reading Materials

-Predictable books

-District Reading Series

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Self-Selected Reading:

Use a variety of reading materials

-Winter books

-Science/Social Studies theme books

-Teacher provided grade appropriate books

Working With Words:

Introduce five new vocabulary words weekly

Make and break words

Guess the covered word

Implement a variety of phonemic awareness activities

Assessments

Students will be assessed three times during the twelve week research project; before implementation of reading strategies, mid-way through the project, and finally at the end of the project. A rubric will be used that combines an early literacy sight word assessment, teacher observations, and anecdotal records. A reading checklist will also be given before implementation of reading strategies and again at the end of the research project.

Fourth Grade Action Plan

Week 1    Give students Summary Survey

Collect baseline data on summary writing

Collect baseline data on question levels

Week 2    Lesson on the 5 parts to a story: setting, characters, problem, main events, conclusion

Introduce story map format used to aid in summarizing

Lesson introducing the 6 levels of Bloom's taxonomy

Week 3    Mini lesson on setting

Student practice on setting (story map)

Mini lesson on writing knowledge level questions

Student practice writing knowledge level questions

Week 4    Mini lesson on characters

Student practice on characters (story map)

Mini lesson on writing comprehension level questions

Student practice on writing comprehension level questions

Week 5    Evaluate progress made on setting and characters using the summary writing rubric and story map

Evaluate progress made on writing knowledge and comprehension level questions using record keeping sheet

Week 6    Mini lesson on problem identification in a story

Student practice on problem identification in a story (story map)

Mini lesson on writing application level questions

Student practice on writing application level questions

Week 7    Mini lesson identifying main events

Student practice on identifying main events (story map)

Mini lesson on writing analysis level questions

Student practice on writing analysis level questions

Week 8       Evaluate progress on problem identification and main events using summary
             writing rubric and story map
             Evaluate progress made on writing application and analysis level questions using
             record keeping sheet

Week 9       Mini lesson on story conclusions
             Student practice on story conclusions (story map)
             Mini lesson on writing synthesis level questions
             Student practice on writing synthesis level questions

Week 10      Review of the 5 story map components to be used in the writing of a summary
             Mini lesson on writing evaluative level questions
             Student practice writing evaluative questions

Week 11      Final evaluation of summary writing using summary writing rubric and story map
             Review all levels of question writing

Week 12      Final evaluation of question writing

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

In order to assess the effects of the Four Block Method in reading achievement, rubrics and checklists for decoding, fluency, and sight words will be developed. Graphic organizers will be designed and assessment rubrics will be constructed. In addition, a recording chart for tallying questions written at the different levels of Bloom's Taxonomy will be created.

# CHAPTER 4

## PROJECT RESULTS

### Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was for students to show an increase in reading achievement through improved decoding and comprehension skills. The implementation of the Four Block Method, the use of graphic organizers, and the application of questioning techniques were selected to invoke the desired changes.

At the beginning of the school year the teachers of the targeted first grade classrooms introduced the Four Block Method to the students (Appendix C). Two hours of every day were devoted to the Four Block Method. The reading block was broken into four 30 minute sessions: writing, guided reading, self-selected reading, and working with words. During the writing block, teachers focused on the mechanics of writing and the beginning steps of the writing process. Initially students started with the labeling of pictures, and by December had progressed to writing two or three complete sentences on a given topic. Students were put into smaller, homogeneous groups based on their reading ability during the guided reading block. A variety of literature and comprehension strategies were introduced to the students. The self-selected reading block consisted of students silently reading books at their individual levels. Teachers also read a variety of literature books aloud to students. Throughout the working with words block, teachers introduced new vocabulary words each week, instructed students on a number of phonemic awareness skills, phonics rules, and basic alphabet sound/symbol relationships.

The teachers executed the Four Block Method without any major deviations from the action plan. The biggest factor in departing from the plan was the result of time constraints due to the many holiday activities; the other required curriculum such as computers, guidance, gym, music, and art; vacation days; and Wednesday early dismissal days. Teachers felt that there was not enough time for student reflection and independent writing.

In the targeted fourth grade classroom, graphic organizers were used to improve reading comprehension. Each week a mini-lesson was used to instruct the students on one of the five parts of a story: setting, characters, problem, main events, and conclusion. A variety of graphic organizers were used to help students identify these story components. After students gained mastery of these five major story components, they applied their knowledge to complete a story map (Appendix D) for several basal stories and novels.

Questioning techniques were also introduced to strengthen reading comprehension. The six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, were used as a guide. The levels of the taxonomy were introduced sequentially each week, beginning with knowledge. The teacher instructed students on correct verb usage for each level. These verbs were then used to write questions using the basal stories and novels that were read. The questioning activities were also integrated into the other content areas.

The action plan for graphic organizers was closely followed in the targeted fourth grade classroom. The questioning techniques proved to be more challenging for the students than anticipated.The teacher found that students had very limited background knowledge in writing higher order questions. More instructional time and visual cues were needed to develop vocabulary and verb usage at each level of the taxonomy. Lack of time was another concern in following the plan. To compensate for this, the teacher used the other content areas to practice and apply the comprehension strategies mentioned in the action plan.

<div align="center">Presentation and Analysis of Results</div>

In order to assess the effects of the Four Block Method on reading achievement at the first grade level, teachers from the targeted school used a portion of the Early Literacy Assessment Test. Forty students were pretested in June 2000 and 38 students were posttested in December 2000, due to the transfer of two students during the research project. Students were to identify as many words as possible from a list of 100 high frequency words. Figure 2 shows growth of each student from June through December. Before implementation of the action plan, one-third of the targeted first grade students could identify fewer than 25 of the words. Upon completion of the action plan, students could identify at least 60 of the 100 words, indicating an average growth of 65 words. The implementation of the Four Block Method appeared to have had a positive effect on the recognition of high frequency words.
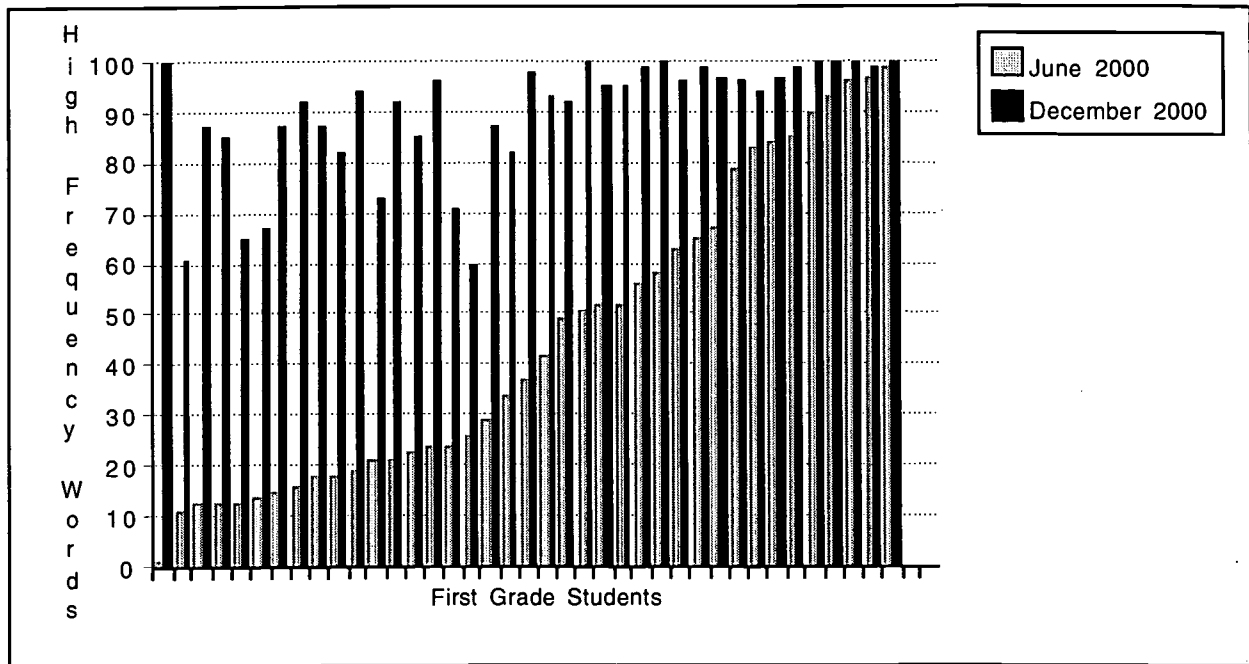
Figure 2. Known words out of a list of 100 high frequency words (Appendix A).

Another form of assessment used to show reading achievement was a reading skills checklist (Appendix B). Using the checklist, teachers at the targeted school identified 13 students who were deficient in decoding skills. Students were given a pretest at the beginning of the school year and a posttest in December. They were individually asked to identify letters, sounds, rhyming words, and kindergarten high frequency words, as well as to clap word syllables, generate rhymes, and segment individual words into sounds. Table 3 shows mastery of skills in August and December. The teachers found that there was a notable amount of growth in all skill areas, except for generating rhymes. The checklist reflected that the Four Block Method may have contributed to success in decoding skills.

An oral reading assessment rubric (Appendix F) was used to demonstrate reading achievement at the first grade level. Teachers again focused on the same 13 students to determine reading fluency. The students were observed reading a grade appropriate passage and then evaluated on sight word recognition, accuracy, voice inflection, decoding skill usage, and self correction. At the beginning of the year, teachers observed that the students were at the "Needs Improvement" level in all areas of the rubric. In December, teachers found that students advanced to the "Satisfactory" level or above in the areas of sight word recognition and accuracy. When

looking at voice inflection, decoding skill usage, and self correction, students made a slight gain to the "Improving" level. Significant gains in these areas are usually not seen until the latter half of the first grade school year due to the fact that appropriate decoding skills need to be achieved before fluency can be developed.

Table 3

First Grade Reading Skills Checklist

| Skill | Mastery (%) | |
|---|---|---|
| | August | December |
| Identifies Upper Case Letters | 77 | 100 |
| Identifies Lower Case Letters | 31 | 92 |
| Identifies Consonant Letter Sounds | 15 | 92 |
| Claps Syllables | 46 | 100 |
| Identifies Rhymes | 85 | 100 |
| Generates Rhymes | 46 | 69 |
| Identifies Beginning Sounds | 85 | 100 |
| Identifies Ending Sounds | 69 | 100 |
| Segments Words Into Sounds | 46 | 100 |
| Identifies Kindergarten Words | 23 | 100 |

In order to assess the effects of the use of graphic organizers in summary writing at the fourth grade level, the teacher from the targeted school pretested the lower third of the class in August 2000 and posttested the same students in December 2000. In both pretesting and posttesting the teacher read aloud one-third of a story from the basal, and the remainder of the story was read silently by the students. To collect the pretest data the teacher asked students to retell the story in their own words without the use of a graphic organizer. Table 4 reflects the results of the

summary rubric (Appendix G) used to determine how well the students incorporated the five story elements in their summary. Students had the most difficulty in identifying the setting and conclusion of a story. The majority of students were at the satisfactory level or above in identifying characters, problem, and main events. After the culmination of the action plan there was notable improvement in the identification of the setting and conclusion. All students performed at the satisfactory level or above in all five components of summary writing. The results indicated that the use of graphic organizers seemed to have had a positive effect on the student's ability to summarize a story.

Table 4

Baseline Data for Summary Writing of Eight Students

| Components of Summary | Improvement Needed | | Satisfactory | | Excellent | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | August | December | August | December | August | December |
| Setting | 8 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| Characters | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 3 |
| Problem | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| Main Events | 2 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| Conclusion | 7 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 5 |

To assess the effects of questioning strategies at the fourth grade level, the teacher from the targeted school pretested the upper third of the class in August 2000, and posttested the same students in December 2000. In both settings, students were asked to write questions about a given topic.

A form entitled "Levels of Questions Recording Chart" (Appendix E) was used to tally the number of questions written at each level of the Bloom's taxonomy. Table 5 cites pretest and posttest data. The pretest data indicated that all student generated questions were at the knowledge level. After the action plan was completed, all students advanced to the next level or above in the taxonomy. At least 50% of the students were able to write questions at all six levels. Implementation of the action plan seemed to have a positive effect on the student's ability to write

questions at a higher level.

Table 5

Baseline Data for Questioning Techniques of Eight Students

| Level of Questions | Mastery (%) | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | August | December |
| Knowledge | 100 | 100 |
| Comprehension | 0 | 100 |
| Application | 0 | 75 |
| Analysis | 0 | 63 |
| Synthesis | 0 | 50 |
| Evaluate | 0 | 50 |

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Teachers discovered some positive benefits through the use of the Four Block Method. The method encouraged a well-rounded language arts approach consisting of guided reading, writing, working with words, and self-selected reading. Yet within this structured framework the teachers were allowed the freedom of tailoring the program to the class' needs. After using this method, teachers recognized that all 13 students showed a marked improvement in decoding skills.

Teachers also noted that there were other contributing factors that may have influenced the desired outcomes. The targeted school implemented a pull-out supportive reading program, in which a certified reading teacher worked with struggling readers in a small group setting, 30 minutes a day, 4 times a week. Equally important, once or twice a week, some of the targeted students read to volunteers. Three times a week, smaller homogeneous groups were utilized during the guided reading block. Each group was designed to specifically tailor the skills or strategies needed by the members to achieve maximum reading potential. In addition, family involvement may also have played a role in the positive outcomes that were achieved.

Upon reflection of the action research project, teachers determined that there was a negative aspect of the Four Block Method. This method demands a structured two hour language arts block of time everyday. With all the other daily requirements put upon a teacher's schedule, this blocking

of time is very difficult to achieve on a regular basis.

Implementation of graphic organizers had a positive effect on the student's ability to summarize. Through the use of picture books, activities, and a variety of graphic organizers, growth was shown in student recognition of the five components of a story. The teacher cited some contributing factors which may have influenced the student's ability to summarize: discussing the story before students were asked to write their summaries; displaying a large poster, with visual cues for remembering the five story components (Appendix H); working with half the class at a time; using the story map for creative writing; summarizing the student's individual silent reading book; and reviewing the story components in the literature book which the teacher read aloud each day.

There were two areas of concern when implementing graphic organizers to aid in summary writing. It was noted by the teacher that it was difficult to assess the story maps without some subjectivity and teacher judgment. To compensate for this concern, the teacher looked for key words in each of the five components in the students' summaries. The other area of concern was that the stories from the fourth grade basal were too difficult for some students to independently read and summarize with success. Individual teacher support, peer tutors, and other adult tutors were used to assist students with their reading difficulties.

The teacher cited positive effects from the use of higher order questioning techniques. This strategy impacted all areas of the curriculum by improving the student's ability to ask questions and think at a higher level. When students wrote their questions for the posttest, they were allowed to use cards listing verbs for each level of the taxonomy (Appendix I). The reason for this change in the posttesting format was due to the difficulty of the skill and the students' lack of background knowledge. Without these visual cues, the teacher found that the task was too challenging for the students to achieve success in writing questions at a higher level.

After reflecting upon the action research project, the teacher determined that it was very difficult for students to write higher order thinking questions. To compensate for the limited background knowledge in vocabulary skills and question writing techniques, time was devoted to strengthening these areas through teacher modeling, guided practice, and group activities.

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on the Four Block Method, graphic organizers, and questioning techniques, the interventions appeared to have had a positive effect on

reading achievement for the students at the targeted site. The teachers believe that the implementation of the action plan strategies were very beneficial in helping students acquire decoding and comprehension skills necessary to become proficient readers.

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# Appendix A
## First Grade High Frequency Words

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | from | me | this | a |
| away | her | his | long | put |
| where | an | get | mom | time |
| all | go | my | to | am |
| going | no | too | and | good |
| not | tree | are | got | now |
| two | as | had | of | up |
| at | has | on | very | back |
| have | one | was | be | he |
| or | water | but | here | over |
| went | by | home | red | what |
| came | house | said | when | cat |
| in | see | with | come | into |
| she | you | dad | is | so |
| your | day | it | some | did |
| just | that | do | like | the |
| dog | little | them | down | look |
| then | eat | made | there | for |
| make | they | can | how | saw |
| will | big | help | out | we |

Student's Name _____

1. Knows Address _____

2. Knows Telephone Number _____

3. Knows Birthday_____

4. Knows Upper Case Letter Names _____/26 correct
   D  H  J  S  U  A  F  B  I  C  E  K  G  L  Z  T  P
   M  O  V  N  X  Q  R  W  Y

5. Knows Lower Case Letter Names _____/26 correct
   x  e  k  v  s  u  f  w  c  i  m  p  t  d  h  j  a  g
   b  l  z  o  r  y  n  q

6. Knows Consonant Letter Sounds _____/21 correct
   d  x  h  j  s  f  b  c  g  l  z  t  p  m  q
   k  v  n  r  w  y

7. Clap & Tell How Many Syllables _____/10 correct
   telephone (3)
   music (2)
   pencil (2)
   book (1)
   Saturday (3)
   surprise (2)
   American (4)
   recess (2)
   homework (2)
   calendar (3)

8. Identify Rhymes _____/10 correct
    house/mouse (y)
    man/can (y)
    car/mop (n)
    hook/book (y)
    door/read (n)
    bike/bell (n)
    tree/bee (y)
    snow/feet (n)
    nine/no (n)
    cheese/please (y)

9. Generate Rhymes _____/10 correct
    mat/
    can/
    pin/
    tug/
    bark/
    ride/
    well/
    cake/
    back/
    mop/

10. Identify Beginning Sounds _____/10 correct
    tin (t)
    sit (s)
    nice (n)
    pencil (p)
    work (w)
    boy (b)
    kind (k)
    vase (v)
    race (r)
    zoo (z)

11. Identify Ending Sounds _____/10 correct
    pat (t)
    cup (p)
    big (g)
    head (d)
    tan (n)
    park (k)
    dream (m)
    will (l)
    bear (r)
    class (s)

12. Segment Words into Sounds _____/10 correct
    sock (s-o-ck)
    zoo (z-oo)
    bike (b-i-ke)
    fan (f-a-n)
    she (sh-e)
    cake (c-a-ke)
    zip (z-i-p)
    soup (s-ou-p)
    fight (f-i-ght)
    sheep (sh-ee-p)

13. Knows Kindergarten Words _____/19 correct
my said I the have go in put it did a like and we not get can you but

14. Prints First & Last Name

## Four Components of a Balanced Reading & Language Arts Classroom

| Guided Reading 30 - 35 Min. | Self-Selected Reading 30 - 35 Min. | Word Study 30 - 35 Min. | Writing 30 - 25 Min. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher guides children's reading. | Teacher reads aloud to class - poetry, fiction, or nonfiction. (10 minutes) | Primary Goal - Learn to read and spell high frequency words needed in their reading & writing. | Mini-lesson. Teacher demonstration of conventions, writing for various purposes & audiences, or a prewriting activity. (5 - 10 minutes) |
| Grade Level materials from basal readers, anthologies, or multiple copies of trade books. Students also read something at their instructional level or easier each week. | Students read silently. Teacher monitors & observes. Conferences with students, makes anecdotal records. (15 - 20 minutes) | Intermediate Goal - Learn to read, spell & develop meaning for multisyllabic words that are part of content area study & most frequently misspelled in their writing. | Student writing. Self-selected or teacher directed topics. (15 - 20 minutes) |
| Whole-class pre-reading strategy instruction - i.e. activate prior knowledge, vocabulary instruction, think aloud strategy, K-W-L. | Students of the day tell about or read a favorite part of their book to the class. (5 - 10 minutes) | Add five new words to Word Wall each week. Practice & review. (10 - 15 minutes) | Students share works in progress or finished pieces of writing. (5 - 10 minutes) |
| Flexible, heterogeneous groups to read story, apply strategies, complete reader response activity. | | Daily word making activity. (10 - 15 minutes) | |

Adapted from:
Cunningham, P. & Allington, R. (1994) Classrooms That Work: They Can All Read & Write. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers.

44

45

# ☆ Story Summary Guide ☆
Name _____

**• Setting:**
where: _____
when: _____

**• Main Characters:**
_____
_____
_____
_____

**• Main Problem:**
_____
_____
_____

**• Main Events:**
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**• Conclusion:**
_____
_____
_____

# Levels of Questions Recording Chart

## •Knowledge:
| define | label | outline list | identify | reproduce | |
| describe | match | identify | name | count | trace |

Number of questions at this level:_____

## •Comprehension:
| give examples | rewrite | contrast | summarize | convert |
| compare | explain | interpret | predict | distinguish |
| estimate | paraphrase | compute | | |

Number of questions at this level:_____

## •Application:
| change | practice | apply | demonstrate |
| utilize | employ | manipulate | construct |

Number of questions at this level:_____

## •Analysis:
| break down | develop | create | diagram |
| design | construct | arrange | formulate |

Number of questions at this level:_____

## •Synthesis:
| categorize | combine | compile | reorganize | compose | create |
| devise | integrate | design | explain | generate | revise |
| relate | organize | plan | rewrite | rearrange | reconstruct |
| modify | | | | | |

Number of questions at this level:_____

## •Evaluate:
| appraise | select | rank | judge | evaluate | assess |
| test | rate | measure | grade | critique | determine |

Number of questions at this level:_____

# Oral Reading Assessment

| Needs Improvement | Improving | Satisfactory | Outstanding |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recognizes <70% of the current sight words. | Recognizes 70-79% of the current sight words. | Recognizes 80-95% of the current sight words. | Recognizes >95% of the current sight words. |
| Reads <70% of grade appropriate text. | Reads 70-79% of grade appropriate text. | Reads 80-95% of grade appropriate text. | Reads >95% of grade appropriate text. |
| Reads one word at a time. | Stops at periods. | Uses proper voice for periods, question marks, and exclamation marks. | Uses voice to portray characters. |
| Rarely uses taught skills to decode words, ex. beginning sounds, ending sounds, blends, digraphs. | Sometimes uses taught skills to decode words, ex. beginning sounds, ending sounds, blends, digraphs. | Usually uses taught skills to decode words, ex. beginning sounds, ending sounds, blends, digraphs. | Always uses taught skills to decode words, ex. beginning sounds, ending sounds, blends, digraphs. |
| Rarely corrects own reading errors. | Sometimes corrects own reading errors. | Usually corrects own reading errors. | Always corrects own reading errors. |

## ⋆ Summary Rubric ⋆

Name_____  Date_____

| | Improvement Needed | Satisfactory | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Setting:** (where/when) | The setting is less than half correct. | The setting is half or more than half correct. | The setting is completely correct. |
| Tallies/ Comments: | | | |
| **Characters:** | Less than half of the main characters are included. | Half or more than half of the main characters are included. | All of the main characters are included. |
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| **Problem:** | Less than half of the problem aspects are included. | Half or more than half of the aspects of the problem are included. | All aspects of the problem are included. |
| Tallies/ Comments: | | | |
| **Main Events:** | Less than half of the main events are included in the correct order. | Half or more than half of the main events are included. | All of the main events are included in the correct order. |
| Tallies/ Comments: | | | |
| **Conclusion:** | Less than half of the main points of the conclusion are included. | Half or more than half of the main points of the conclusion are included. | All of the main points of the conclusion are included. |
| Tallies/ Comments: | | | |

**A key will be created for each assigned summary to determine the correct information to be included.
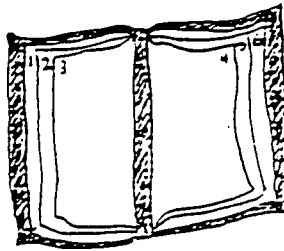
A story map guides you through a story.
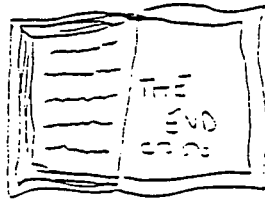
Setting

Characters

Problem

Main Events

Conclusion

## Knowledge
- count
- label
- identify
- describe

## Comprehension
- explain
- predict
- compare
- summarize

## Synthesis
- plan
- compose
- categorize
- modify

## Evaluation
- rank
- judge
- select
- evaluate

## Application
- change
- practice
- construct
- demonstrate

## Analysis
- diagram
- develop
- create
- break down

54

53

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