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ABSTRACT

This study describes a program designed to improve student reading fluency. The targeted population consisted of first and third grade students in a growing urban community in the Midwest. Evidence for the existence of the problem included standardized test scores and independent computer reports that measured academic achievement, phonic assessments that measured phonemic awareness, reading assessments that measured fluency, a parent survey to determine home literacy experiences, anecdotal records and observations to measure student growth, and portfolios to display student achievement. Analysis of probable causes was evidenced by teachers' observations of students' inability to read fluently and sound out new words. Teachers reported that students could not spell well or recognize common vocabulary. Students displayed low levels of recreational reading. A review of solution strategies suggested by cited authors, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of four categories of intervention: Instruction in decoding skills to increase students' ability to sound out or recognize new words; use of a traveling book program to enhance recreational reading; practice with sight words to improve student vocabulary; and read orally to improve fluency. Post intervention data indicated an increase in student phonemic awareness, an improvement in home literacy experiences, an increase in student vocabulary, and an advancement of student fluency levels. The researchers recommend using reading instruction that develops phonemic awareness, sight word drills that practice grade appropriate vocabulary, and reading activities that promote family involvement. (Contains 24 references, 5 tables, and 5 figures of data. Appendixes contain fluency charts, word lists, first and third grade developmental screening instruments; survey instruments; sample lessons and games; checklists; charts; record sheets; and a sample book bag journal page.) (Author/RS)

IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING FLUENCY THROUGH THE USE OF PHONICS AND WORD RECOGNITION STRATEGIES

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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This study describes a program designed to improve student reading fluency. The targeted population consisted of first and third grade students in a growing urban community in the Midwest. Evidence for the existence of the problem included standardized test scores and independent computer reports that measured academic achievement, phonic assessments that measured phonemic awareness, reading assessments that measured fluency, a parent survey to determine home literacy experiences, anecdotal records and observations to measure student growth, and portfolios to display student achievement.

Analysis of probable causes was evidenced by teachers' observations of students' inability to read fluently and sound out new words. Teachers reported that students could not spell well or recognize common vocabulary. Students displayed low levels of recreational reading.

A review of solution strategies suggested by cited authors, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of four categories of intervention: Instruction in decoding skills to increase students' ability to sound out or recognize new words; use of a traveling book program to enhance recreational reading; practice with sight words to improve student vocabulary; and read orally to improve fluency.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in student phonemic awareness, an improvement in home literacy experiences, an increase in student vocabulary, and an advancement of student fluency levels. The researchers recommend using reading instruction that develops phonemic awareness, sight word drills that practice grade appropriate vocabulary, and reading activities that promote family involvement.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted first and third grade classes in a Midwestern community displayed a lack of reading strategies that inhibited their reading fluency. Evidence for the existence of the problem included standardized test scores which provided information on students with below average reading levels, computerized independent reports of student progress that calculated student scores in specific reading skill areas, assessments that displayed phonemic awareness through spelling and others that indicated fluency levels, anecdotal records and teacher observations that documented strategies being used by students, and portfolios that provided evidence of growth.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted school was a prekindergarten through sixth grade elementary school. The building was opened in September of 1939. In 1950, a front wing was added due to an increased enrollment. Historically, a school existed at that site since before the Civil War. The three story building with basement was one of two schools within the district to have a cafeteria. In addition to kitchen facilities, the building housed 24 classrooms, 5 small instructional rooms, a gymnasium with a stage, 2 computer labs with Internet access, and a library. The playground area consisted

of three large blacktop areas, a grass field, two baseball diamonds, and a mulched area with playground equipment.

With a total student population of more than 400 students, ethnicity was diversified as 86% White, 6% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% Native American. Of the total student population, 24% received free or reduced lunch. Students from low income families comprised 22%, and those of limited English Proficiency less than 1%. Busing was provided to those students involved in special education programs. According to the Illinois School Report Card, chronic truancy was 0%. The attendance rate was 95% with a 14% mobility rate.

One principal administered the school with a support staff of two secretaries, one nurse, one counselor, two lab managers, six hearing-impaired interpreters, six instructional aides, one library aide, five food service employees, and three custodians. There were 31 certified teachers whose combined teaching experience averaged 15 years. There were 15 classroom teachers, 4 hearing impaired teachers, 4 special education teachers, 2 speech pathologists, 2 Reading Recovery specialists, and 4 specialists in the areas of art, music, physical education, and library. Of the certified teachers, 29% had obtained a master's degree. An additional 3% of the staff were currently enrolled in a master's program at the time this research was conducted, and the remaining staff members had completed a bachelor's degree. Fifty-two females and seven males were employed within the building. The faculty were 97% Caucasian and 3% minority. Average class size for the building was 23 students, excluding the 7 special education and hearing-impaired classrooms.

The targeted school was the home for the hearing-impaired program for the surrounding area. This program addressed the needs of prekindergarten aged children through those of the sixth grade. Several staff members could communicate through sign language.

Faculty and parents offered many opportunities in the area of performing arts for students. Staff members directed the Spirit Choir, which involved students from different grade levels each semester. Students presented songs for parents, school, and local community events. Parents and teachers were involved with the Mini-Theater program by selecting the cast, leading the practices, and designing the sets and costumes for three performances per year. Mini-Theater had been in existence at this school for 27 years.

The local YMCA sponsored a before and after school program for students of working parents. This program provided a supervised environment for the children, offered at a small fee to parents.

A computer lab in the school had an Individualized Learning System (ILS) program. Students worked daily on individualized reading and math programs as they progressed at their own rate through the system. Teachers could access reports on student progress or problem areas within the reading or math program. The computer lab was used by the entire school on a daily rotation. The lab also had an after school program in which students could work. The second computer lab was available for classroom teachers to allow students experience with word processing. Both labs had Internet access.

Student Council and Chess Club were extra-curricular activities offered to sixth grade students. Sixth grade students acted as student patrol for the kindergarten and first grade classes. Older students made sure the younger children walked safely to the parking lot or buses.

The entire school benefited from the Junior Achievement Program. Every classroom had a local business representative visit to teach economic principles at each grade level. Several teachers participated in the Bowl-a-thon to raise funds for this program.

Parents were involved members of the school community. Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members supported an all school reading incentive program and planned activities which

included a carnival, book fairs, family togetherness night, skating parties, monthly spirit days, and an end of the year field day. In addition to PTA, Dad's Club members coached athletic teams, built parade floats, and led Boy Scout Den packs.

The Surrounding Community

In the targeted school's district, the ethnicity breakdown was 80% White, 5% Black, 13% Hispanic, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% Native American. The school district consisted of a high school, 2 middle schools, 13 elementary schools, a preschool special education building, and a special education center. The average kindergarten class consisted of 25 students, third grade 27 students, and sixth grade 25 students. The average teacher salary in the district was \$48,555.

The district had many unique services. All day kindergarten began in the fall of 1998. Elementary children received art, music, physical education, library services, and daily computer instruction. Schools within the district had Internet access. The district also provided a program for gifted and talented students.

The targeted school was located in a Midwestern urban community that was part of a larger metropolitan center made up of four neighboring cities divided by a river. This river city community was founded in 1832 and, over the next ten years, became a home for many families. Five factories and saw mills were developed in the area. Many people immigrated from Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Mexico, and the British Isles for the opportunity to take jobs in the farm implement factories. Immigrants helped to establish the rich heritage in the community today. People in the community traveled by rail, air, water, and many main interstate highways. Population was 42,757. The community in which the targeted school was located occupied approximately 39 square kilometers of land. The median age in the community was 37 years.

Headquarters of the single largest manufacturer of farm implements was located in this community. This manufacturer provided 3,200 jobs that produced approximately \$153 million dollars on annual payroll. Local businesses employed 1,312 people with a payroll of about \$45 million dollars. These industries produced nearly \$200 million in goods each year. The cost of living for the immediate community was slightly below the national average, and the median household income was \$46,508. Unemployment rate was less than 4%.

The hospital in the community was made up of a partnership of buildings spread between the principle community and an adjoining community. There were two institutes of higher learning in the community and four additional higher educational facilities within neighboring communities.

Social service organizations included Christian Friendliness, Bethany Home, Boys and Girls Clubs, and the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC). Staff offered programs that assisted students by offering many extracurricular activities.

Residents and visitors enjoyed cultural and recreational attractions in the community. Entertainment included concerts and sporting events at a 12,500 seat arena. There were many community theater programs in the area as well. The 720 acres of city park land included a biking and walking trail along the river.

National Context of the Problem

A decline in reading scores has been a national concern of educators for years. According to DeMoulin, Loye, Swan, Block and Schnabel (1999), standardized test results showed that children in national public schools were not learning the basic skill of the English language. The inability to read interferes with a child's ability to become a productive and fulfilled citizen. This is a problem for parents and educators alike since today's children will be tomorrow's leaders.

Several factors determine if a child is at risk for reading difficulties. Cunningham and Allington (1999) cited poverty and cultural differences as two of the predominant causes for low reading achievement. One out of every four students in today's classrooms is a child living in poverty which places him at risk for academic failure. The need to create classrooms in which all children learn to read and write is imperative.

When comparing literacy levels in the United States to those levels in other industrialized countries, levels in the United States ranked lower. This low literacy rate has negatively impacted our society (DeMoulin et al., 1999). Students who are not academically successful are not typically inclined to continue their schooling. In previous years, high school dropouts could have earned wages working at factories or on farms. Those jobs have rapidly decreased. Therefore, those citizens begin a life of poverty and the vicious cycle continues (Cunningham & Allington, 1999).

There is no single solution to the improvement of the nation's reading problem because the problem has many causes. Improving current reading instruction to include phonics and word recognition activities would create a more balanced, all-encompassing approach which has the possibility of reaching a greater number of students within the classrooms. A truly balanced approach to reading instruction should focus on all components of reading and literacy (Thompson & Nicholson, 1999). Reutzel (1999) described a balanced reading program as a mixture of whole language and phonics instruction.

For more than 50 years, educators have observed, researched, discussed, and worried about children who struggle as they learn to read (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Providing students with the proper reading literacy experiences may foster successful independent reading. A student who develops improved personal reading skills is more likely to become a life long learner and a fulfilled citizen.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Students in the targeted elementary classrooms displayed a lack of reading skills that showed an inability to read fluently. Students were unable to sound out unknown words and spell accurately using phonetic sounds. Their poor reading habits and sub-standard recognition of common vocabulary compounded their low reading abilities in their oral reading. Children need to read in order to function in school in all other academic areas. The ability to read is also necessary to become a fulfilled citizen and a lifelong learner.

Standardized tests displayed below grade level scores in reading skills of a large number of third grade students. Kindergarten screening tests indicated that many students were lacking the background knowledge necessary to become successful readers. Of the 26 students in the third grade classroom, 25 students participated in the testing during the spring of their second grade year. Of the 20 students in the first grade classroom, 18 students participated in the kindergarten screening. A summary of standardized test data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Standardized Test Results for Kindergarten and Second Grade Students for Spring 2000

Kindergarten	Low	Moderate	High
Boys	6	2	1
Girls	6	3	0
<hr/>			
Second Grade			
Boys	6	7	1
Girls	3	8	0

Note. Kindergarten: $n=18$, Second grade: $n=25$

As shown in Table 1, two-thirds of the students tested in kindergarten showed low verbal ability. Approximately one-third of the targeted students tested in second grade displayed low verbal ability. Less than one-third of the first grade students scored moderate verbal abilities when tested in kindergarten. Of the older students, three-fifths scored in the moderate range when tested in second grade.

Individual computer reports revealed that first and third grade students were unsuccessful in several reading categories. The first grade students mainly had trouble with oral comprehension skills, sight word recognition, and comprehension of passages, sentences, or individual words. The third grade students showed problems with comprehension skills and word recognition, but also had difficulty with word analysis and meaning. Of the 20 students in the first grade classroom, 19 students were involved in the computerized reading program. In the third grade classroom, 25 of the 26 students participated in the computerized reading program.

Table 2

Initial First and Third Grade Computer Reading Levels

First Grade	Below Grade Level	Grade Level	Above Grade Level
Boys	6	1	3
Girls	3	4	2
Third Grade			
Boys	4	8	2
Girls	8	2	1

Note. First grade: $n=19$, Third grade: $n=25$

As shown by Table 2, almost half of the targeted first grade students were below grade level. In third grade, close to half of the students were also reading below grade level. Approximately one-fourth of the first grade students were reading at grade level. The third grade students had two-fifths of the class reading at grade level.

Fluency tests showed that a majority of the first grade students were not reading accurately at an instructional level. Seventeen of the targeted first grade students participated in the fluency testing. The third grade class had almost one-fourth of the 25 tested students not reading successfully at an instructional level. Individual student charts (Appendix A) were utilized to aid in the recording of student performance. A summary of initial fluency scores is presented in Figure 1.

For the purpose of this study, 0 to 30 words per minute was considered low for first grade while 0 to 90 words per minute was low for third grade. The moderate level was 31 to 60 words per minute for first grade and 91 to 125 words per minute in the third grade. First grade high level was depicted as 61 to 80 words per minute while the third grade high was 126 words or above. As displayed by Figure 1, 82.4% of the 17 students tested in first grade were reading below an instructional level. Over 17% of the first graders were reading successfully at or approaching an instructional level. Of the 25 third grade students tested, 24% were reading below an instructional level. The targeted third grade had 40% of the students reading at an instructional level while 36% were reading above an instructional level.

Anecdotal records taken during oral reading activities across the curriculum documented students' inability to sound out unknown words. Of the 20 first grade students observed, all of the students had difficulty decoding new vocabulary. Of the 25 third grade students, 5 students consistently had problems decoding new words, 14 children occasionally had difficulty, and 7 students rarely had problems.

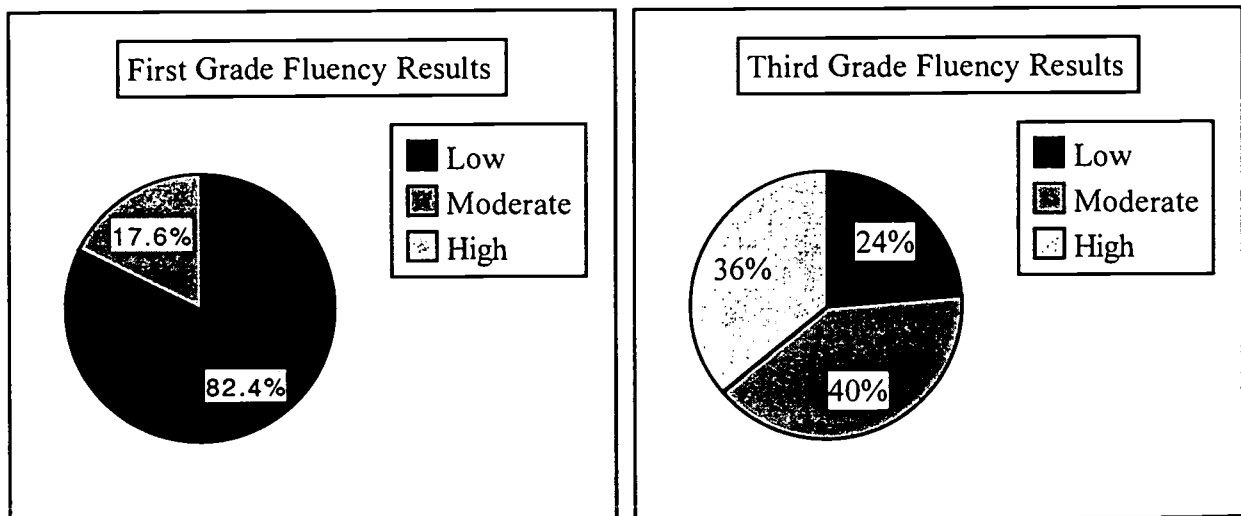


Figure 1. Fluency test results for first and third grade students, September 2000.

Sight word vocabulary drills illustrated a large number of students in both classrooms with deficient grade appropriate vocabulary. All 45 students were tested using grade appropriate sight words (Appendix B and C). Of the 20 first grade students tested, majority of the students were not able to correctly respond when drilled with sight word cards. Of the 25 third grade students tested, approximately one-third of the students did not respond correctly when tested.

An initial developmental spelling screening indicated a lack of letter-sound relationships necessary to produce grade appropriate words among both classes. A compiled list of grade appropriate words was used to determine levels of cognitive development in spelling (Appendix D and E). A summary of the developmental levels is presented in Table 3.

As displayed by Table 3, slightly less than one third of the 20 students in the first grade sampling were working at the semiphonetic level. Half of the targeted first grade students were functioning at the phonetic level. Almost one forth of the 25 third grade students performed at the phonetic level. More than half of the third grade students were spelling at the transitional level.

Table 3

Developmental Spelling Levels for First and Third Grade Students

	<u>Developmental Levels</u>				
	Precommunicative	Semiphonetic	Phonetic	Transitional	Conventional
First Grade	3	7	10	0	0
Third Grade	0	3	7	14	1

Note. First grade: n=20, Third grade: n=25

A parent survey illustrated that a number of students did not participate in reading activities at home (Appendix F). Of the 15 families surveyed in the first grade classroom, 13 families visit the library once a month or less. One third of the first grade families surveyed stated reading to their children occurred a maximum of two to three times a week. Out of 22 families surveyed in third grade, half admitted reading to their child once a week or less. More than a third of those surveyed in third grade reported that they never visit the public library.

The phonics inventory test examined initial student phonemic levels (Appendix G). There were 18 students tested in the first grade classroom and 25 students tested at the third grade level. In the first grade sample, half of the students did not show adequate phonemic skills. At the third grade level, more than one-third of the class did not have appropriate knowledge of phonemic skills. A summary of the initial phonics inventory is depicted in Figure 2.

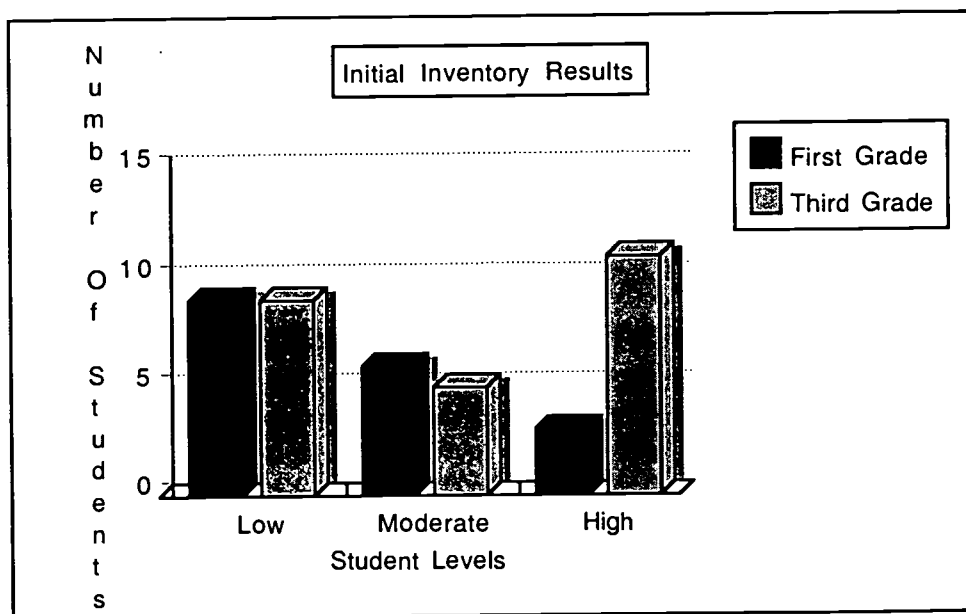


Figure 2. Phonics inventory results for first and third grade students, September 2000.

As shown by Figure 2, the majority of first grade students were functioning at low to moderate levels with very few students having a high level of phonemic awareness. Although the third grade had a larger number of students working at the high level, more than half of the class was found to be at low or moderate levels. Both classes displayed a great number of students lacking phonemic awareness.

Probable Causes

Several factors may contribute to the lower level of reading fluency seen in the classroom. As noted by the parental survey responses, many students lack home recreational reading experiences. Teachers observed that with the shift in the district to whole language instruction, direct phonics instruction decreased causing a lack of phonemic awareness in students. The increased number of single parent families along with an increased number of lower income families in the district has influenced the quality and quantity of reading experiences outside of school.

One of the most important steps to teaching children to read is offering a literate home environment where reading is not only important, but also enjoyable. Parent surveys indicated that several families do not spend quality time reading to their children or listening to their children read. Giving the child the opportunity to practice what they have learned at school at home is important to foster growth and improvement.

Over the past decade, district reading curriculum has focused mainly on the whole language approach to instruction. In order to have enough instructional time to read from trade books, several teachers eliminated much of the phonics instruction previously seen in the classroom. Whole language teachers assumed that their students would learn the basic phonic knowledge after being immersed completely in text. Although some students benefit from the whole language method of instruction, others need a direct phonemic approach.

More and more students have entered the classroom without the traditional family setting commonly found in the past. Children in today's schools come from a variety of home environments. Single-parents have a limited amount of time to spend engaging in worthwhile reading activities at home. Families that have lower incomes do not have the resources to provide their children with adequate home reading experiences.

After reviewing the site, teachers found three main probable causes for a decrease in reading achievement. There was a lack of prior reading experience at home. Because of a change to whole language instruction, there was an elimination of phonics instruction. Increasing numbers of non-traditional families and low income families caused a limited amount of reading experiences within the home. Addressing these three site-based issues could alter the current reading situation.

A review of literature suggested several possible causes for low reading skills found in today's students. One recurrent theme addressed the importance of home literacy. As stated by Siegel and Hanson (1992), particular experiences provided by parents throughout schooling years impacted literacy levels. Students without literacy opportunities at home tend to have lower reading achievement levels. If parents want their children to be literate citizens then they should promote participation in reading and related literacy projects.

Another probable cause suggested in the literature review was an inadequacy in reading instruction. Reutzel (1999) acknowledged that schools in the United States did not adopt a balanced set of reading practices when the whole language approach to reading instruction was implemented in the country. Researchers nationwide have debated over phonics and whole language because of low reading scores. In order to balance out reading instruction, Reutzel suggested a comprehensive instructional reading approach that includes: reading aloud, language activities, guided reading, partner reading, independent reading, and various writing activities. If

teachers want to reach all students within a classroom then they should try to balance their reading instruction by using these strategies.

A third viable cause for reading problems noted in the literature was a deficit in phonemic awareness. According to Lyon and Kameenui (2000), substantial evidence verified that significant problems in reading were directly linked to a lack of phonemic awareness. Reading is a learned behavior, and therefore, must be taught. This includes teaching students how to process words phonologically, especially at an early age.

Locating probable causes in literature for students' low reading achievement produced three prevalent concerns. Students without home literacy experiences tend to have lower reading abilities. A balanced reading approach is necessary to teach a larger number of students how to read. Limited phonemic awareness contributed to significant problems in student reading. By trying to address these issues in today's classroom, teachers may encourage students to become better more fulfilled readers.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Students across the nation have demonstrated below average reading skills which has raised concerns among educators and researchers alike. To be successful in all areas of academics and daily life, children need to be capable readers. The International Reading Association (1997) stated that reading is a complex process in which children need to have various experiences, printed texts and illustrations, and knowledge of the written language, including sound-symbol relationships. This suggests that teachers need to use a variety of methods to teach children how to read. Adams (1990) indicated that the goal of reading instruction should be to promote a willingness to read and enhance the disposition to read purposefully, reflectively, and productively. Educators need to foster the know-how, the desire, the curiosity, and the joy of reading. With student reading levels such a cause for concern, how can current reading instruction be modified to teach the fundamentals, increase fluency levels, and motivate students to read for their own pleasure or enjoyment? What can be done to improve overall reading levels within today's classrooms?

Suggested in the literature are several possible causes for low reading skills. One recurrent theme addressed the importance of phonemic awareness. Weaver (1994) suggested several ways

teachers can help children develop phonics knowledge. These strategies included discussing patterns of onsets and rhymes in the context of shared reading, engaging children in a limited number of activities that reinforce their learning of letter/sound relationships and patterns, emphasizing the use of letter/sound cues along with prior knowledge and context, encouraging the acquisition of phonics knowledge indirectly through reading, writing, and listening activities, and providing additional materials and help for individual children when necessary. Using these strategies to instruct students, teachers can increase students' phonemic awareness. By achieving higher levels of phonemic awareness, students may be more confident about their reading and, therefore, read more fluently.

As described in the study by Juel and Minden-Cupp (2000), students who participated in a structured phonics program during their reading instruction were typically reading at grade level at the conclusion of the school year. Instructional practices included modeling for students' strategies for improving word recognition by looking for chunks or syllables in words and searching for little words within larger words, identifying letter sounds and blending together, looking at letters and their sounds and what would make sense with the context of the literature, finger pointing in the text as it is being read aloud, actively participating to compare words, and instructing small group lessons addressed to the individual needs of students within the group. By using these strategies students gained phonemic awareness and were successful grade-level readers. Students participating in a strong phonics program utilizing various word recognition techniques typically improve their success with reading.

Jerger (1996) explained that classroom teachers can do many things to foster phonemic awareness. She described exposure to orally read literature as extremely valuable. By reading and rereading books that contain alliteration, rhymes, or assonance, teachers can help to highlight speech sounds. Students can then do a variety of things to internalize the phonemic knowledge.

Activities include letting students fill in the missing rhyming word, developing sentences with alliteration, clapping for words and syllables in nursery rhymes, and writing daily using inventive spellings. These activities can enhance decoding skills and phonemic awareness. Students may read more fluently after increasing these skills.

Sensenbaugh (1996) stated that working daily with oral reading activities focusing on word sounds can greatly help students become capable readers. Teachers should present lessons directed to help students increase their phonemic awareness. Lessons should be directed at rhyming activities, activities focusing on blending and segmenting sounds, activities in letter-sound relationships, and teaching students to transfer to different tasks and examples. Yopp (as cited in Sensenbaugh, 1996) listed suggestions for activities on phonemic awareness: Keeping activities playful and fun, grouping children to bolster interaction, inspiring curiosity with language and encouraging students to experiment with it, allowing for student differences, and keeping lessons fun and relaxed. By using lessons and activities based in phonemic awareness on a daily basis, students may become successful readers. Improving student reading strategies with these daily activities will, in turn, increase their reading fluency.

Stanovich (1994) suggested using simple tasks to increase phonemic awareness among students. One example was phoneme deletion. Phoneme deletion asks a student what word would be left if the initial sound were taken away. Another task was word to word matching. This is when students are asked if two words start with the same sound. Blending was described as creating a word using individual letter sounds. Phoneme segmentation is the opposite task where students need to identify the individual sounds heard within a word. This accompanies phoneme counting or counting the number of sounds in a word. The final task mentioned was rhyming, having students come up with all the words that rhyme with a given word. By incorporating these activities into text situations, students may become more aware of the various

phonemes making reading easier.

Diamond and Mandel (1996) agreed that there is a positive correlation between phonemic awareness and performance in reading in later years. Adams and Calfee (as cited in Diamond & Mandel, 1996) explained the importance of making decoding and spelling instruction active. Calfee encouraged word work daily in which small groups of children play or manipulate words to construct other new words. Games or other interactive lessons can teach phonemic awareness and integrate decoding with spelling while treating the students as problem solvers. By teaching the students to be problem solvers when dealing with written language, students may become more aggressive readers. These activities may foster the desire to become life-long readers.

Fitzsimmons (1998) stated that students who exhibit phonological awareness have greater success in their reading. Participating in phonological awareness activities provided strong fundamentals for reading success. Several authorities (When to begin Phonics Instruction, 1997) indicated phonics instruction enhances initial reading achievement and nurtures students' life-long desires for writing and spelling.

Developing phonemic awareness in linguistically-rich environments where students are motivated to play with the sounds of language was encouraged by Diamond and Mandel (1996). By adding engaging phonological activities to current literature-based instruction, students may increase their overall knowledge of the written language. Students with heightened levels of phonological awareness may, therefore, become better overall readers. By becoming better overall readers, students may be more academically successful and become life-long learners.

Another possible cause for students' low reading abilities is a lack of a balanced approach to reading instruction. Balanced reading is defined as an equal mixture of whole language and phonics instruction (Reutzel, 1999). To help students become well-rounded readers, reading instruction should be integrated and taught from all angles. Utilizing a balanced approach to

reading will extend across all areas of reading and writing, will integrate across the curriculum language and literacy, and will address reading and writing as well as other strategies in context (Anonymous, 1999). By combining the assets of both a whole language approach and phonics instruction in teaching reading, students will develop a greater understanding for reading and stronger reading behaviors.

As stated in Carbo (1998), improving reading fluency among students helps them to become more motivated readers. A fluent reader is able to focus on word meaning instead of constantly stopping to decode basic sight words on each page. Sight words should be recognized immediately. Often these words can not be sounded out or defined with the rules of phonics. This does not take away from phonics instruction, but only illustrates the necessity for a balanced reading program. Students lacking knowledge of sight words can increase their reading fluency with review and testing using sight word cards. By improving student fluency through the use of sight word recognition using word card drills students will be more competent readers.

In her research, Nelson (1994) indicated grouping students should be done to facilitate learning for effective classroom reading instruction. To improve student reading fluency educators can group students as determined by their performance. These cooperative learning groups are sometimes used to allow better readers to share their strengths and model good behaviors for other readers. Johnson and Johnson (as cited in Nelson, 1994) stated that students typically achieve more in an environment where they are working together in a collaborative setting, than when working alone. When working in a group, students can encourage and support other members of the group in their efforts towards achievement. Grouping students during reading instruction for purposes of cooperative learning allows low ability readers to learn appropriate reading behaviors being modeled by other students. Grouping can also benefit students by focusing lessons on skills that need reinforcement or an area that a particular group is deficient in

(Nelson, 1994).

Weaver (1996) stated that creating successful readers can best be achieved by combining phonics with a whole language approach into a balanced reading program. When improving low reading abilities in students, phonics is a key component for success, although it is important to present phonics instruction integrated with the reading, writing, and literature curriculum, as opposed to teaching phonics mainly through isolated skills lessons. Fluent readers using good reading skills will utilize prior knowledge and context in addition to looking at the relationship of letters and sounds when decoding words and determining their meanings. Therefore building a balanced program of instruction to include the whole language approach and integrated phonics lessons within it, students will become more fluent readers.

Pearson (as cited in Hopkins, 1997) looked to the research describing classes that scored well on state and national tests. Teachers whose students had success on these tests used a balanced approach of instruction including literature, phonics, and writing. Routman (as cited in Hopkins, 1997) added that when phonics is the main strategy for reading instruction, less emphasis is placed on a love for reading, personal reading habits, and comprehension skills. She also points out that the whole language approach does not have to be without phonics instruction. Studies have shown students with low reading ability have scored well on state and national tests when teachers have employed a balanced reading approach in their classroom. A balanced approach to reading improves fluency and help students gain the tools needed to become successful readers.

Providing children with a balanced reading program will help them to develop into successful readers. A balanced approach can be accomplished when teachers combine explicit phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, as well as both direct and integrated approaches to reading and comprehension skills in their reading curriculum (Lyon & Kameenui, 2000). Balancing

whole-language and phonics instruction provides students with opportunities to apply the strategies and skills they have learned in authentic reading and writing experiences (Pressley, 1998). The balanced approach to reading instruction gives students all the tools they need to help them become strong and successful readers.

A lack of home literacy experiences was stated throughout literature as another possible cause for low reading abilities. Siegel and Hanson (1992) indicated that educational experiences provided by parents and teachers could make a significant difference in the reading ability of children. They suggested that specific experiences provided by parents were clearly related to literacy at every schooling level. Parents need to encourage participation in reading and reading-related activities. Ideas for reading experiences at home were providing books and magazines, taking students to libraries, museums, or concerts, and providing necessary support and encouragement. Students who spend more time reading at home may have higher reading achievement levels.

In a report on children's literacy, Macfarlane (1994) offered many ways parents could become involved in furthering their children's reading levels. She presented numerous activities parents could do with their children. Three of the most important things that parents can do with their children were to read aloud to them, listen to them read, and have conversations with their children about books that have been read. By showing children that reading is important, parents can inspire children to read recreationally. By reading for their own pleasure, students make increase their love of reading throughout their life.

Purcell-Gates (2000) discussed home-literacy programs started around the country in an effort to increase students' motivation to read. These programs were described as collaborative approaches between teachers, parents, and schools to improve students' academic achievement. Purcell-Gates suggested that students who had books at home and were read to daily were more

interested in books. By providing a program that offers books to all children and parents within a classroom, students are given an equal chance to have literacy experiences in the home. This may lead to increased motivation among students to read. The more students read, the better readers they may become.

Cunningham and Allington (1999) painted the image of a picture perfect literacy environment at home. In order to motivate young children to read, an enriched reading environment is extremely important. This environment should include numerous books within the child's bedroom. The nightly ritual of having a bedtime story read by a parent would be observed. During this reading, parents would ask questions about pictures, rhyming words, and making predictions. There would also be several books checked out on weekly or biweekly trips to the library. A newspaper would be around so that the child could see the parents reading as well as reacting to the written texts. Television guides, billing statements, announcements, and letters were other forms of information sometimes read aloud. The omnipresence of reading materials, opportunities to read in daily life, and reading models help to start children experimenting in reading. Starting this motivation at home may increase the eagerness in children to learn to read well in school.

As seen by the review of literature, having the opportunity to read at home in a literate environment is extremely important in forming a child's knowledge and interest in written text. By offering a home-literacy program through school, many communities have tried to improve the reading environment at home, and engage parents in their children's learning process. Educators need to reach students through as many means as possible. By asking parents to read with their children at home the importance of reading will be stressed and much needed practice will take place. This can boost the reading abilities of students and help them to see the joy of reading for a lifetime.

Offering children the correct reading and literacy opportunities in early years will likely provide the foundation for successful reading and citizenship in years to come (Lyon & Kameenui, 2000). Children in today's schools need to be able to read in order to succeed academically in all areas. They also need to learn to enjoy reading for all the pleasures and opportunities it can offer them throughout their lives. Teachers need to strive to help all students acquire this knowledge and desire for reading. Although there are many possible causes for low reading abilities among children, some causes may have attainable solutions. Throughout the review of literature, three recurrent themes were noticed. The first was a lack of phonics instruction in today's classroom.

Another possible problem noted was the unbalanced approach to reading instruction. An absence of an adequate home-literacy environment was also blamed for childrens' lack of reading interest. Attempting to improve these three areas might raise children's attitude toward reading throughout their lives, and increase their abilities to read fluently at appropriate levels.

Many researchers stated that current reading instruction seemed to be missing the fundamental phonics base that many students need. Although some children seem to be able to learn to read no matter what manner they are taught, several achieving students tend to benefit from some sort of direct phonics instruction. Adding engaging activities that deal with phonetic sounds to current reading instruction should advance student reading abilities and fluency.

Once children have mastered the basics of reading, offering reading lessons using several different strategies ranging from direct phonemic instruction to group reading and text manipulation helps children remain interested in reading. By creating a balance between instruction and reading experience within the daily routine, students can be assisted and encouraged simultaneously. Using the best known strategies from whole language classrooms and direct phonics instruction classrooms, teachers can attempt to deliver balanced reading lessons

which invite children to participate, learn, grow, and enjoy the wonders of reading. After igniting the sparks of interest among children, they can become successful life-long readers.

Children learn from many sources throughout their lives, the first and possibly most influential teachers being their parents. It stands to reason then that children who come from homes rich in literacy experiences tend to be successful readers who enjoy reading. Parents who read to and with their children share the belief that reading is important. By modeling desirable habits, parents teach their children to love written texts. Encouraging parents to become more involved with their child's reading at home could improve children's reading habits and abilities.

Although there seems to be no one solution to the reading problems found among children today, there are some logical steps to take towards helping those who need it. Involving phonics in a whole language classroom is one way to try to balance current reading instruction. Inviting parents to participate in a take home book program may boost current home reading experiences. By working towards these goals to improve student reading habits, fluency, and ability levels may increase. In doing so, students may grow to love reading and become successful, productive citizens as a result.

Project Objectives and Processes

Taking into consideration the many strategies available from which to design an effective plan of action to promote change among first and third grade readers, 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: specific decoding skills, traveling books, sight word recognition, and biweekly individual oral readings.

As a result of teaching specific decoding skills during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted elementary students will increase their ability to sound out or recognize new words while reading as measured by reading assessments and teacher

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

1. Develop a series of lesson plans using word decoding skills (Sample lesson in Appendix H).
2. Design word games that focus on decoding skills (Sample in Appendix I).
3. Utilize reading assessments to measure changes in student learning.

As a result of implementing a traveling books program during the period from September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted elementary students will increase their recreational reading in the home as measured by student journal writing and teacher observations.

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

1. Design parent reading survey and informational letter about traveling book program (Appendix F and J).
2. Collect a series of appropriate reading materials to provide students with recreational reading materials.
3. Develop a checklist to monitor participation in the traveling book bag program (Appendix K).

As a result of practicing sight word recognition during the period of September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted elementary students will increase their knowledge of grade appropriate vocabulary as measured by ongoing word card drills and teacher observation. In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Develop individual sight word flash cards.
2. Practice sight words in numerous word manipulating activities.
3. Create a sight word checklist to assess student recognition (Appendix L).

As a result of individual oral reading during the period of September 2000 through December 2000, the targeted elementary students will increase their reading fluency as measured

by reading assessments. In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Implement individual oral reading sessions.
2. Compile series of reading examples (Sample in Appendix M).
3. Utilize a chart to assess student growth in fluency (Appendix N).

Project Action Plan

WEEK 1

1. Look at standardized test scores and initial computer comprehension levels
2. Administer Developmental Spelling Screening
3. Students will complete Phonics Student Inventory
4. Send home parent survey and informational letters

WEEK 2

1. Begin oral reading conferences
2. Send home first two traveling book bags
3. Conduct four phonics lessons in the first grade classroom
4. Conduct two phonics lessons in the third grade classroom
5. Complete two sight word activities in the first and third grade classrooms
6. Screen sight word recognition

WEEK 3-WEEK 13

1. Continue oral reading conferences
2. Proceed with sight word screening
3. Plan four weekly phonics lessons in first grade
4. Plan two weekly phonics lessons in third grade
5. Engage in two sight word activities per week
6. Continue traveling book bag program on a biweekly rotation

WEEK 4

1. Introduce phonics game folders

WEEK 14

1. Send home parent survey for comparative results

WEEK 15

1. Administer Spelling Screening
2. Administer Phonics Student Inventory
3. Tabulate survey results

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of decoding techniques, phonics assessments and teacher-made reading assessments will be utilized. A traveling book program will be designed and a student journals and checklist will be developed. Activities using sight words will be created and a sight words recognition checklist will be formulated. Individual oral reading sessions will occur and student scores will be charted.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve the reading strategies used among first and third grade students in order to increase reading fluency. Standardized test scores which provided information on students with below average reading levels, computerized independent reports of student progress that calculated student scores in specific reading skill areas, assessments that displayed phonemic awareness through spelling and indicated fluency levels, anecdotal records and teacher observations that documented strategies being used by students, and portfolios that showed growth provided evidence for the existence of the problem. The implementation of individual oral readings, sight word recognition activities, traveling books, and lessons on specific decoding skills were selected to effect the desired changes in fluency and reading strategies used.

One objective of this project was to increase phonemic awareness among students. A phonics assessment was given prior to any phonics instruction in the classroom (Appendix G). Phonics lessons were used to teach phonemic awareness and decoding skills. The phonics lessons were taught weekly. A developmental spelling screening was given to students twice during the research period (Appendix D and E). Initially it was used to identify levels of cognitive development in spelling. The final testing was used to determine student progress. Spelling

instruction also reinforced phonics strategies previously taught. File folder games were developed to allow manipulative practice with skills covered in class. Several phonemic activities were graded during the fifteen week period to monitor student phonemic awareness. The original phonics assessment was readministered at the conclusion of the research period to create an overall record of student mastery.

Another objective of this research was to improve sight word recognition. In order to evaluate the student knowledge of grade appropriate vocabulary, a checklist was used to record individual student scores (Appendix L). Sight word cards were used weekly to drill and practice sight words in an attempt to build recognition. Activities utilizing grade appropriate sight words were used to strengthen word recognition. Testing was ongoing throughout the 15 week period with students progressing at their own rates.

Increased fluency was a third objective in this research project. Periodic one minute oral readings were scored for accuracy to determine fluency levels (Appendix M). These tests were administered at students' instructional reading levels. Charts were developed to display and monitor student growth (Appendix N). Students were monitored on a biweekly basis throughout the implementation and progressed at their own instructional levels.

During the first week of implementation in the first grade classroom, informational letters and permission slips were sent home to parents briefly describing the program and asking for their children's participation. A parent survey was also distributed inquiring about recreational reading experiences outside of school (Appendix F). Standardized test scores and initial computer lab scores were examined. The initial developmental spelling screening was administered and classroom phonics lessons began (Appendix D and E). The first phonics lessons consisted of an alphabet review identifying both the letter names and letter sounds. Students began work in the computer lab on the Independent Learning System (ILS). They worked daily for 10 minutes in

the reading program. Their work in the ILS lab was ongoing daily throughout the implementation program.

The second week phonics lessons continued focusing on the beginning sounds of words and pictures. Whole class oral practice of phonic cards that reviewed various phonemic sounds were introduced. The phonics cards contained only the consonant and vowel cards. Additional cards were added throughout the implementation process. Small group reading started as the rest of the class completed work independently at their seats. The class participated in a making words activity where students make words using their phonics sounds. The group of six or more letters used in the activity are derived from a larger word that uses all of the letter cards. A second developmental spelling screening was given to the first graders using an alternate list of words more appropriate for the first grade level (Appendix D). The traveling books program started. Books were sent home nightly with all students for additional reading practice and home literacy experiences with parents.

During week three, centers began within the classroom, with reading groups rotating to the small group reading table as one center. Whole group practice with the phonics cards continued and another making words activity was completed utilizing the letters from the word “lights.” Phonics lessons included the ending sounds of words and pictures. Students began practicing and drilling sight words during the small group reading time. A different list of basic sight words, more appropriate for first graders, was used during implementation than those used by the third grade students (Appendix B). Testing for initial phonemic awareness levels started using the Phonics Inventory Assessment (Appendix G).

In the fourth week of implementation centers and small group reading continued. Students continue individual practice of sight word cards moving at their own pace and were tested for mastery of each list before moving on to the next. Phonics lessons this week covered vowels and

sounds concentrating on the short “a” vowel. Students also learned a song about short vowels. Phonics cards were again practiced. File folder games were introduced for practice of specific phonics sounds (Appendix I). Students could play these games when work was completed. Traveling books continue to rotate among students nightly.

Phonics lessons in the fifth week included the short “e” vowel. As a class, students helped to brainstorm words with the short “e” sound. They also worked together to write words dictated from the teacher using their phonics sounds for help with the spelling. Another making words activity was completed. Vowel cards were added to the phonics cards and whole group practice continued. The traveling books program continued.

Starting in the sixth week the first graders used a journal daily to write ideas to share with the class. Students were encouraged to use their phonics sounds for assistance in spelling unknown words. Once their writing was completed, they could draw a picture to accompany their written text. Some students volunteered to read their journals to the class. Daily practice of the phonics cards continued and another making words activity took place. Phonics lessons for the week were centered on the short “i” vowel. The class shifted from rotating centers to reading packets of work that included activities relating to phonics lessons covered. As students worked independently at their seats on the packets, the teacher met with small reading groups. The switch from centers to packets kept students on task more often with less disruptions to the teacher while she worked with the reading groups. This week students started daily spelling lessons, practicing a list of six words. These weekly lists typically focused on a specific phonics sound. The week’s list contained short “a” words, providing a review of phonics sounds previously taught. On the last day of the week, students were tested on these words and given a dictation sentence containing words from the spelling list, previous spelling lists, and other developmentally appropriate words. This week students began using the Curriculum Based

Measurement (CBM) system, orally reading passages while the teacher charted the number of words read accurately in one minute (Appendix M). According to the action plan this assessment was to take place biweekly. Due to the difficulty level of the reading samples used in the CBM, the first grade students were assessed monthly.

In the seventh week packets and small group reading continued as scheduled. Phonics lessons focus on the short vowel “o.” The class worked together to brainstorm and record words containing the short “i” sound. Another making words activity was completed using the word “sleeping.” Traveling books were again rotated daily. Spelling lessons proceeded. The week’s list concentrated on the short “a” sound.

During the eighth week of implementation phonics lessons continued, practicing short vowel u and consonant digraphs, “ch,” “sh,” “th,” “wh,” were all introduced. The phonics cards remained a part of the schedule with practice daily. Packet work continued as did small group reading. Students practiced and were drilled on the sight word cards. That week’s spelling list contained short “e” words and the traveling books program remained in action.

During the ninth week phonics cards were reviewed and phonics lessons revisited the short vowels as well as the “th” and “ch” consonant digraphs. Students participated in a making words lesson using the word “peanuts.” A seasonal story was written by each student using phonics sounds when writing unknown words. The week’s spelling unit again used short “e” words. Students continued to rotate books for recreational reading through the traveling book program. Students completed packets and small group reading remained a part of the schedule. Work with sight word cards was still covered during this small group time.

During week ten, phonics cards were practiced and phonics lessons centered on long vowels with silent “e” at the end of words, long “a” words and activities, and “wh” and “sh” consonant digraphs. Spelling list five was review of the previous lists. Small group reading along

with sight word card practice and packet seat work proceeded. Rotated books were still traveling home with students.

Ongoing work with small reading groups and sight word practice took place in the eleventh week. Additional phonics sounds had been added to the phonics cards as whole group practice continued. Spelling list six looked at short “i” words. Phonics lessons for the week worked on reviewing all consonant digraphs and the long “e” vowel. Students worked together to brainstorm and record long “e” words. Traveling books were exchanged throughout the week and sent home. A second reading assessment was given to students using the CBM program.

Phonics lessons in the twelfth week looked at the long “i” sound, long “o” sound, and “r” controlled words. Phonics cards were practiced and a making words lesson was conducted. Reading packets and small group reading instruction was ongoing as was the practice of the sight word cards. The list seven spelling words focused on the short “i” vowel sound. Traveling books continued their daily trip home with students. This week was parent-teacher conferences.

In the thirteenth week phonics cards were practiced as small group reading, sight word cards, and work packets continued. No new phonics skills were introduced as it was a shortened school week for Thanksgiving break. Students engaged in a writing activity about what they are thankful for. They were encouraged to use their phonics sounds to help spell unknown words. The week’s spelling words studied the short “o” sound and a lesson was conducted composing sentences using six words from the previous week’s spelling list. The activity was done as a whole group. After which students were asked to write six more sentences on their own using that week’s list of words and phonics sounds for words they were unsure of how to spell. A third assessment was taken using the CBM measuring student’s reading fluency. Traveling books continued.

During week fourteen of implementation, the spelling list concentrated again on the short “o” sound. The traveling books continued to travel. Phonics lessons for the week worked with the long “u” vowel and a review of the long vowels and silent “e.” Phonics cards continued to be practiced and additional cards continued to be added to the stack. Packets, small group reading, and sight words practice carried on. Students wrote letters to Santa and used phonemic spellings for words when necessary. The principal was a celebrity reader in the classroom to read a story and answer questions about his job as principal.

Week fifteen phonics lessons centered on the hard and soft “c” sounds and the hard and soft “g” sounds. Phonics cards were once again reviewed. The spelling list reviewed the previous four lists. Traveling books went home with students nightly. Small group reading with word card practice and work packets continued daily. This week first grade had two professional hockey players as celebrity readers to share a book with the class and talk about their jobs as athletes. The parent reading survey was sent home for comparative results.

The sixteenth week students participated in a making words activity. Phonics cards practice with the whole group continued. Small group reading and reading packets were ongoing. Phonics lessons for the week concentrated on rhyming word activities and brainstorming long vowel words. Students kept the traveling books moving. The spelling list for the week centered on the short “u” sound. Students were again assessed using the CBM program.

During the final week of the project the developmental spelling screening was readministered for comparison (Appendix D). Students were tested again using the Phonics Student Inventory. The instructor tabulated the results from these two assessments and collected ending reading scores from the ILS lab. Due to days lost from the project because of conferences, institute days, snow days, and other such disruptions two additional weeks were added to the implementation plan.

During the first week of the research project, the third grade teacher collected baseline data on students by reviewing student test scores from the previous year. The developmental spelling screening was given to students on the first day of school to achieve accurate beginning phonetic levels of awareness (Appendix E). Students were observed during oral reading in a round-robin class setting to provide the teacher with a more complete perspective of each child. This aided in the formation of the reading groups to be used throughout the rest of the research project. The students attended the computer lab daily and participated in 10 minutes of individualized reading practice. Informational letters and surveys were sent to parents to acquaint them with the program and request participation. Due to the fact that the phonics inventory needed to be administered to students orally on an individual basis, this test did not occur during the first week of the implementation as planned. Instead, the testing was started and completed during the second week of implementation.

Week two of the project began with a week long phonics/spelling lesson on short “a” and short “i.” Children were given a test at the end of the unit to note mastery of the skill. This process continued throughout the remainder of the project. Two other individual phonics lessons were taught during the week. The first dealt with initial consonants, and the second covered ending consonants. The phonics inventory test was given to each student individually (Appendix G). This took more time than originally anticipated. Sight words were introduced for the week with a cooperative activity on alphabetizing and another on counting syllables. During open house, 80% of the students and parents attended. The research project was covered in discussions several times. Students again attended the computer lab for ten minutes of individualized reading instruction. The traveling book bag program did not start during the second week because reading materials had not been completely collected. Sight word flash card testing began. Each child was tested on the lowest level and scores were recorded on the checklist

(Appendix L). Oral reading conferences were started during morning center time. The teacher had half-hour contact with each of five reading groups during the week. Each group had five to six members. The groups were named with letters. Anecdotal records were used to keep track of activities and student performances within the group.

The third week of the research project was a continuation of structures established within the first few weeks of school. The phonics/spelling lesson for the week was on short “o” and short “e.” Non-spelling related phonics lessons focused on hard and soft “g” and “c.” Sight word cards were tested at the next two levels for all students. Results were entered into checklists in student portfolios. The sight words were used in activities involving making sentences and grouping words. Traveling book bags did not go home during the third week, but an informational letter went home to parents to explain the process (Appendix J). Curriculum Based Measurement Fluency testing began. Each child was given the same initial reading to determine their individual instructional level (Appendix M). These scores were charted for each student and kept in their portfolios. Students had ten minutes of computerized reading instruction and practice each day.

Throughout the fourth week of the implementation, morning centers continued to be used for guided reading activities in the classroom. Phonics folder games were added to the morning centers to allow individual and small group practice of phonics skills covered in previous lessons (Appendix I). Phonics lessons continued with hard and soft “g” practice. The phonics/spelling unit was on short “u.” Fluency testing continued on a weekly basis with students reading orally at their own instructional level and being scored for accuracy. Some sight words were used to do word making activities. Sight word flash card testing continued with the next two levels. Children had 10 minutes of reading practice in the computer a limited number of days due to a morning assembly and a fire drill during computer time. These results continued to be calculated by the lab

managers on an individual basis for the teacher to review and watch for growth.

Week five became a review week. Phonics lessons were based on previously taught concepts. Morning centers continued with guided reading groups. Students read orally for fluency testing on a weekly basis. This deviated from the biweekly original plan. The third grade students showed so much variance and growth from week to week in fluency levels that the testing frequency was increased to show more complete results. Sight word testing did not occur due to an unforeseen absence of the teacher. Computer lab reading continued with all students having some progress. Centers continued in the morning with students working cooperatively and independently while the teacher conducted guided reading groups and kept anecdotal records for students. The traveling book bag program started at the third grade level with two bags containing the same book and a blank journal log for parents and students to respond. Students had the bag for one night each. Then the book and journal continued to another home in hopes of increasing family recreational reading. The phonics/spelling unit dealt with the “ou” and “ai” vowel blends.

The schedule during week six needed to be altered due to the kickoff of a Peacebuilders program within the building. Multiple assemblies were held during the week which interrupted the blocks of time set aside for reading activities within the third grade classroom. Therefore, centers only occurred three times during week six. This limited the time spent with each of the five reading groups. Phonics activities were on short vowel sounds and silent “e.” The phonics/spelling unit was on the “ew” and “oo” vowel blends. Sight word testing continued with the next two levels. Some students were beginning to have difficulty recognizing the words. Fluency testing continued on a weekly basis. Students also continued their normal reading exercises in the computer lab.

By the seventh week, the third grade teacher was having difficulty testing all of the students’ fluency in the allotted time. Therefore, the amount spent weekly on testing was

increased to be sure everyone was tested weekly. Classroom reading time was again shortened due to a day off for Columbus Day, and a half-day for homecoming. Traveling book bags continued to make their way through the class. Computer lab was being visited, and results were being tabulated. Phonics lessons were done on blends at the beginning of words, and words ending with consonant blends. The phonics/spelling lesson for the week was about vowels with a silent “e.” Sight word testing continued. Sight words were also used in activities on syllables and alphabetizing. Reading group sessions were doubled up so that each group got the same amount of time as usual.

Week eight was when the Book It reading program was started at the targeted building. This program, although not formerly mentioned in the plan, was added to the project in third grade as another way to increase home literacy. Students at the third grade level were required to read 15 minutes for each of 3 days a week. At least one of the readings needed to be oral. Parents kept track on weekly slips that were turned in on subsequent Mondays (Appendix O and P). This continued throughout the remainder of the program. Phonics lessons were on other two letter consonant blends at the end of words, and words that end in “dge.” The phonics/spelling lesson targeted long a spelled “ai” and “ay.” Fluency readings were done twice during the week to cover all students efficiently. Sight word testing continued. Parent visitation day was on Friday. Parents participated in the reading activities during the morning. Sight words were used in a guessing game activity. A few parent volunteers were incorporated into the classroom to assist with sight word card testing and fluency readings because the teacher was having difficulty meeting all of the requirements. The students proceeded with the computerized reading program.

During the ninth week, there was a day off due to teachers’ institute. The phonics/spelling unit for the week was on long “e” spelled “ee” and “ea.” The other phonics lessons were on the vowel pairs of “ai” and “ay.” There continued to be two fluency testings per

week with a parent volunteer watching to learn how to administer the test accurately. Sight word testing was done by a parent volunteer for the first time. The computer lab was used again daily for reading exercises. Sight words were used to make sentences and group words. The traveling book program continued. Book It slips were collected to keep track of at home additional reading.

Due to the Halloween party and parade, fluency testing did not occur during the tenth week. Guided reading groups were skipped one day. "Ea" and "ee" were the focus of the phonics lessons. The phonics/spelling unit was on long "i" spelled "i" and "igh." Sight word testing continued. Traveling book bags continued to travel to various families within the room. The Book It portion of the home reading assignment continued. Computer lab visitation was limited due to technical difficulties within the lab twice during the week.

Week eleven was shortened due to parent-teacher conferences on Thursday and Friday. The phonics/spelling lesson centered on long "o" spelled "ow," "oa," or "o." The regular phonics lesson was on the vowel pairs of "oa" and "ei." Sight words were tested by the teacher this week. Fluency testing was done by a parent volunteer with teacher supervision. Centers and guided reading groups proceeded as planned. The computer lab was once again used daily to allow students individual practice at their own pace. Sight words were used in activities to make other words.

The twelfth week was a full week of school. Phonics lessons zeroed in on the vowel pairs of "ie" and "ey." The phonics/spelling unit worked on "sh," "ch," "tch," "th," "wr," and "ck." Sight word card testing was performed by a parent volunteer while fluency testing was conducted by the classroom teacher. The teacher switched from week to week to maintain close proximity to all testing being done. Guided reading activities were done regularly since it was a full week. Sight words were used in activities to alphabetize and count syllables. The computer lab was

seen regularly. The traveling book bag program continued. The teacher added a note to the journal each time a new book was placed in the bag (Appendix Q). Students were still required to read at home for Book It.

Week thirteen was yet another shortened week due to Thanksgiving break. Centers ran back to back so all groups could be seen. The computer lab was only visited twice due to technical difficulties. The phonics lessons were on the vowel pairs “oo,” “au,” “aw,” and “ew.” The phonics/spelling unit was on the consonants “j” and “s.” One of the parent volunteers had to stop participating due to a change in work schedule. Sight words were tested by the teacher. Fluency testing was done by a parent volunteer. Book It and the traveling book bag program continued.

In the fourteenth week, practices for the Christmas program began. These practices interfered with reading time. The computer lab was up and running normally again. Sight words were used to write sentences. The teacher tested student fluency. A parent volunteer worked with students on sight word testing. The phonics/spelling unit was on digraphs and clusters. The independent phonics lessons taught the “r” controlled vowels of “a,” “e,” “i,” “o,” and “u.” The traveling book program was still working its way into homes.

The fifteenth week was supposed to be the end of the research project. However, due to the large number of days missed for numerous reasons, the research continued for two additional weeks. The phonics/spelling unit for the week was on the schwa sound. Independent phonics lessons targeted the consonant digraphs of “ch,” “sh,” “th,” “ph,” and “gh.” Fluency testing was conducted by a parent volunteer. Sight word flash card testing was done by the teacher. The sight words were used in an activity to reinforce counting syllables and alphabetizing skills. Computer reading scores continued to be tabulated and reported by the lab managers. Santa’s Workshop disrupted two days of reading. Book It slips were still being collected on a weekly basis. The

traveling book bags proceeded as usual.

Week sixteen began with two snow days. No sight word testing was done that week. The phonics/spelling unit was an overall assessment and review. Individual phonics lessons introduced the silent letters of “k,” “gh,” “b,” “c,” and “w.” The computer lab reading took place only three days due to the snow. Children used grid paper and sight words to make crossword puzzles. Fluency testing was done by the teacher. The traveling books and Book It activities continued normally. The Parent Survey was sent home for comparative results (Appendix F). This differed from the original plan with the project extension.

The final week of the research project was the week prior to Christmas break. The final spelling screening was administered (Appendix E). Students took the individual oral Student Inventory tests again (Appendix G). Finally, the researcher tabulated parent survey results.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess student success with several reading strategies, an computerized Independent Learning System (ILS) was utilized to measure oral comprehension skills, sight word recognition, comprehension of passages and word analysis. A starting reading level was determined for each child after participating in the computer lab for one week. These results were collected as baseline data in September 2000. Results were cumulatively figured as students continued to use the ILS lab on a daily basis throughout the implementation program.

Table 4 illustrates final computer reading levels taken in December 2000 in comparison with the initial results from September 2000. First grade students showed marked improvement by the final assessment date. All but one student were reading at or above grade level. The third grade class also experienced increases in reading levels. Four children were still reading below grade level at the time of the project’s termination.

Measurement of student fluency was gauged by the Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM). Student instructional levels were determined by the first oral reading. Subsequent readings showed increases or decreases in fluency by denoting the number of words read correctly per minute.

Table 4

First and Third Grade Computer Reading Levels

First Grade	Below Grade Level		Grade Level		Above Grade Level	
	September	December	September	December	September	December
Boys	6	0	1	3	3	6
Girls	3	1	4	0	2	9
Third Grade						
Boys	4	2	8	3	2	9
Girls	8	2	2	6	1	3

Note. First grade: $n=19$, Third grade: $n=25$

The pre-assessment and post-assessment were administered using identical factors to determine fluency levels of low, moderate, and high. Students within the first grade class had improved. Only 17% of the first graders still had low fluency levels. However, 83% of the students were achieving fluency levels in the moderate to high range. In the post-assessment, over 50% of the third grade students originally displaying low levels of fluency had tested at a higher

level. Overall, 88% of the third grade students were reading with moderate to high fluency levels.

As presented by Figure 3, first grade students dramatically improved. In September, no students displayed high levels of fluency. Whereas, in December, almost 30% of the first grade students were reading with high fluency levels.

Figure 4 reflects third grade student growth. The results vary from the first grade scores due to the fact that the third grade readers were reading at various instructional levels at the time of the final assessment. This explained why the percentage of students reading with high fluency levels showed a decline. Although student fluency was improved, the reading material was more difficult. This tended to skew the third grade results.

Anecdotal records were used during oral reading activities to document students' inability to sound out unknown words. These records were used to determine the number of students that rarely had difficulties, occasionally had difficulties, and consistently had difficulties decoding unknown vocabulary when reading. At the beginning of the project, all of the first grade students were having difficulty sounding out words. At the end of the implementation, 2 of the 19

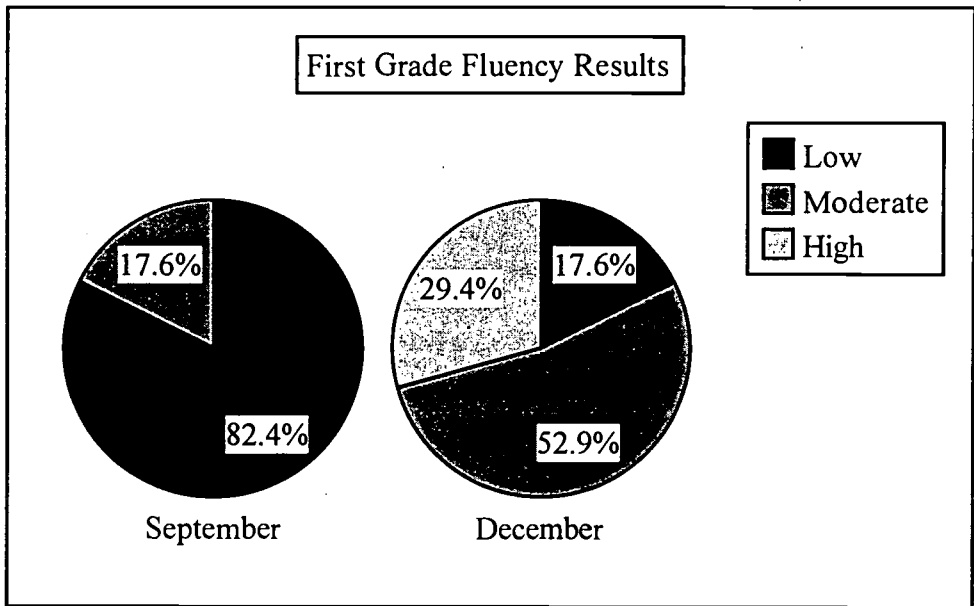


Figure 3. Overall fluency test results for first grade students.

students in the first grade room consistently struggled when faced with unfamiliar words. Ten of the first graders were reading with occasional decoding problems. The remaining seven children rarely had difficulties decoding text. During initial testing in the third grade room, five children consistently had problems decoding words. Those same five children continued to have consistent trouble at the end of the project. Fourteen students originally showed occasional struggles when sounding out words. That number decreased to nine children in that category during final analysis. Children rarely having trouble in third grade numbered 11.

Sight word vocabulary drills were used to determine grade appropriate word recognition. During initial testing within the first grade classroom, majority of the students could not respond correctly. By the end of the project, only two of the first grade students were still having problems recognizing first grade sight words. Almost one-third of the third grade class did not accurately respond when first tested. However, by the end of the implementation, only two students could not answer correctly.

A developmental spelling screening was used to detect a lack of letter-sound relationships in both classes. In the first grade sampling's original screening, less than one-third of the students

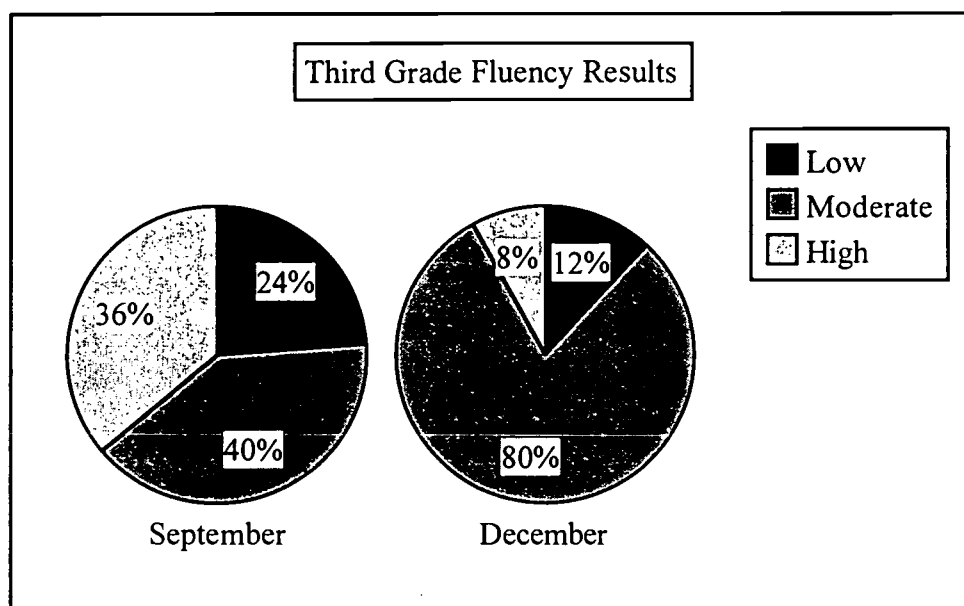


Figure 4. Overall fluency test results for third grade students.

were functioning at the semiphonetic level while half of the class was performing at the phonetic level. During the final first grade screening, all students gained one developmental level. Almost one-fourth of the third grade students were functioning at the phonetic level initially. More than half of the third graders were performing at the transitional level in September. At the conclusion of the project, 60% of the third grade children were successfully spelling at the conventional level. Slightly more than one-fourth of the students still spelled at the phonetic level.

Table 5

Overall Developmental Spelling Levels for First and Third Grade Students

	<u>Developmental Levels</u>				
	Precommunicative	Semiphonetic	Phonetic	Transitional	Conventional
<u>First Grade</u>					
September	3	7	10	0	0
December	0	3	7	9	0
<u>Third Grade</u>					
September	0	3	7	14	1
December	0	1	7	2	15

Note. First grade: $n=20$ during initial testing, First grade: $n=19$ during final testing, Third Grade: $n=25$

The parent reading survey was used to gauge reading activity within the homes of all students. Upon initial questioning, 13 of 15 surveyed first grade families visited the library once a month or less. During December, 14 of the 15 surveyed families reported visiting the library once

a month or less. One third of the first grade families initial remarked that they read to their children a maximum of two to three times a week. After the second survey, slightly less than half of the families stated that they read to their child a maximum of two to three times a week. In the third grade class only 22 families responded to the beginning survey. Half of those parents admitted to reading to their child once a week or less. More than a third of the third grade parents said they never visited the library. The second survey had 24 responses. Reading to their child once a week or less was reported by 52% of parents. However, less than one-quarter of the families reported never visiting the library.

The phonics inventory was utilized to measure student phonemic levels. During the beginning testing of the 18 first grade students tested, half were functioning at the lowest phonemic level. In the third grade class of 25, initially approximately one-third of the students were working at the lowest phonemic level.

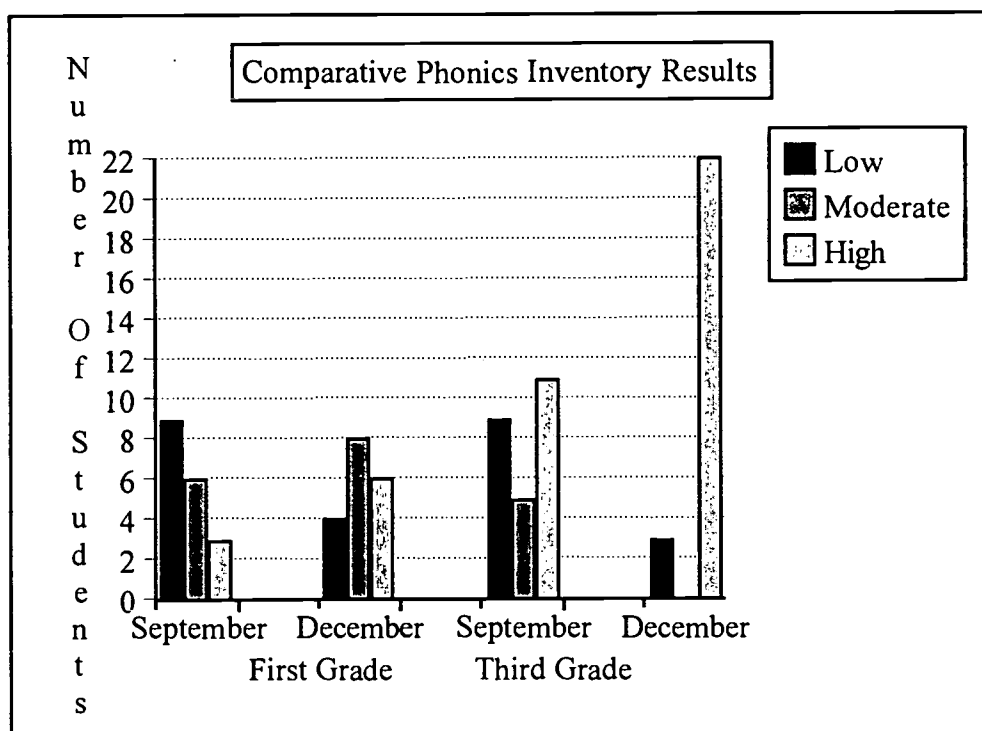


Figure 5. Comparative phonics inventory results for first and third grade students.

As shown by Figure 5, final testing in both first and third grades had marked improvement. First grade had a majority of its students functioning at the moderate or high levels of phonemic awareness. The third grade class had all but three students working at a high level of phonemic awareness.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data concerning the Independent Learning System (ILS), the students showed improvement. It was assumed that student scores within the ILS lab would increase slightly over time due to the repetitive nature of the reading program. However, the strategies learned in classroom phonics lessons appeared to have had a positive influence on the reading lessons completed in the lab.

The data presented and analyzed from the Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) fluency test displayed an overall improvement among students. Perhaps the consistent format of the assessment contributed to student success. Increased one-on-one student-teacher time may have had a favorable impact on student achievement. Charted data may have assisted teachers in recognizing immediate improvements in student fluency levels.

Anecdotal records kept track of student reading behaviors. These records documented a greater number of children using reading strategies reinforced in the classroom. The small group setting where these records were taken could have fostered higher student comfort levels. In turn, students may have been more likely to recall proper reading strategies.

Based on the collected and analyzed data on sight word vocabulary drills, student recognition of grade appropriate vocabulary expanded. Regular drill and practice of the sight words possibly caused children to identify these words in their reading. This might also have had a positive effect on student fluency.

Original data gathered using the Developmental Spelling Screening showed low levels of phonemic awareness in both classes. Upon final assessment and analysis, students had made improvements. Weekly phonics lessons could have influenced student phonemic knowledge. Small reading groups may have helped further develop student phonemic levels.

According to parent surveys administered at the completion of the research project, there were mixed results concerning home literacy experiences. Library visitations showed a slight decrease which may have been caused by increased family activity during the school year. The amount of times parents read to their child also had a decline. This might have been due to the fact that students were becoming more capable readers. Teacher expectations for student reading at home could also have influenced the decrease. The traveling book program encouraged student reading at home, and provided books for all families. Journals from the third grade book bags had notes written by parents, siblings, and other relatives which may have shown evidence of increased family literacy.

Based on data presented and analyzed on the phonics inventory test, students in both classes showed positive gains. Perhaps the weekly spelling units in conjunction with weekly phonics lessons contributed to this growth. Continued practice in reading at home and school also could have influenced student phonemic awareness as measured by the assessment.

Originally there were three probable causes listed as possible reasons for low student achievement in reading. One of the probable causes was a lack of home literacy experiences. In order to address this problem, traveling book bags were implemented in both classrooms. Book It! was also used in the third grade class to encourage reading at home. Both implementations seemed to increase the amount of reading done within the home. The researchers recommend using a traveling book program to introduce families to various forms of literature. Traveling books also allowed students to have additional practice with strategies learned within the

classroom.

A second possible cause for low reading scores was low phonemic awareness. Students were assessed in this area in two ways. The Developmental Spelling Screening was used to determine levels of phonemic awareness. Both researchers felt the test was a good measurement tool. It offered initial information at the start of the program that was useful. It also was easy to administer and check for growth. The Phonics Inventory was also used to determine individual knowledge of phonics skills. This test needed to be administered orally and individually which took an extreme amount of time. The test was also broken into sections that were used to determine levels. Once a student missed two problems in a row, the score was supposed to be calculated. This caused some student scores to appear artificially low due to the content within each section. Therefore, the researchers would not recommend giving this test to an entire class. It may be beneficial in a small group setting where more information is needed about a student.

Lessons on specific phonics skills were used in both classrooms. This was used to increase current levels of awareness. Reading scores within the room and the computer lab may have reflected an increase due to the lessons being taught in the class. For this reason, both researchers would recommend using phonics as part of classroom reading instruction. In addition to actual phonics lessons in the class, folder games were used to increase practice of the skills in a more relaxed setting. These seemed to be additionally useful for two reasons. First, they allowed review of skills previously covered. Secondly, they were done as independent work, so the students were not relying on the teacher for information. However, the time put into making the games was lengthy. It was beneficial to have the games laminated so that they would last. Overall, the researchers felt this portion of their plan was worthwhile.

A final cause listed as being a factor in students' low reading ability was the need for a more balanced approach to reading instruction. By adding phonics instruction to the classrooms,

both researchers attempted to do that. The fluency testing allowed individual measurement and opportunity for growth. In a whole class situation, too much time was needed for this to be done successfully. The sight word cards also worked in a one-on-one format. This provided the teacher with useful information concerning student vocabularies. It did not take an exorbitant amount of time to complete. It also allowed students to work at their own pace. Reading groups were used to allow students a small work group for increased individual attention during reading. The teachers were able to notice difficulties easily, and address individuals on a need basis. Researchers felt this more balanced approach to reading may have had a positive effect on student reading.

In conclusion, the researchers felt the program may have had beneficial impact on the targeted students. Overall recommendations would include creating balanced reading instructions that develop phonemic awareness, using sight word cards to practice grade appropriate vocabulary, and initiating reading activities that promote family involvement. Together, these interventions seemed to have increased student fluency.

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Appendix A

Individual Student Fluency Charts

Appendix B

First Grade Sight Word List

Sight Words for First Grade

List 1

I
a
is
and
in
boy
girl

List 2

the
will
he
on
it
no

List 3

she
not
you
we
to
go

List 4

get
help
can
see
come
stop

List 5

here
where
are
have
this
me
big

List 6

with
want
real
going
I'm
way

List 7

best
into
ride
what
said
were

List 8

my
do
of
like
look
there

List 9

after
am
at
away
be
did
find
for
long

List 10

how
jump
many
now
one
out
play
please
run
some

List 11

take
that
today
work
your
all
but
cold
fall
good

List 12

been
day
did
got
people
funny
saw
or
can't
than

List 13

green
had
him
hot
know
little
make
much
put
read

List 14

show
tell
then
up
us
walk
yes
about
an
any

List 15

around
as
ask
before
by
call
could
would
should
down
eat
every

List 16

fast
first
other
its
found
from
her
his
if
just
laugh
let

56

List 17

made
may
must
never
new
come
called
open
out
over
ran
right

List 19

very
was
went
were
when
who
because
been
bring
does
an
time

List 21

clean
part
were
own
pull
start
their
those
try
under
use
warm

List 23

well
which
both
buy
done
where
shall
draw
write
always
don't
full

57

List 18

saw
say
so
soon
them
they
think
each
more
three
two
too

List 20

five
gave
give
grow
has
hold
keep
kind
live
long
off
only

List 22

why
carry
drink
wish
far
fly
once
pick
pretty
small
these
together

List 24

myself
thank
better
hurt
upon
old
round
water

Appendix C

Third Grade Sight Word List

1 a
2 and
3 can
4 go
5 he
6 I
7 in
8 is
9 it
10 like

11 look
12 not
13 the
14 to
15 will
16 with
17 you
18 are
19 at
20 big

21 but
22 do
23 down
24 for
25 get
26 help
27 jump
28 little
29 me
30 my

31 on
32 play
33 run
34 said
35 see
36 we
37 what
38 all
39 am
40 away

41 ball
42 blue
43 boy
44 come
45 did
46 dog
47 eat
48 find
49 from
50 funny

51 girl
52 good
53 green
54 happy
55 have
56 here
57 home
58 house
59 let
60 man

61 no
62 put
63 ran
64 red
65 ride
66 saw
67 she
68 so
69 something
70 stop

71 surprise
72 that
73 then
74 they
75 this
76 up
77 want
78 was
79 where
80 who

81 yes
82 your
83 about
84 again
85 back
86 be
87 by
88 call
89 came
90 car

91 dad
92 day
93 fast
94 father
95 fun
96 give
97 had
98 has
99 her
100 hide

101 him
102 his
103 how
104 if
105 know
106 make
107 many
108 mother
109 must
110 new

111 of
112 one
113 pet
114 sat
115 show
116 some
117 soon
118 take
119 thank
120 their

121 them
122 there
123 too
124 two
125 us
126 walk
127 went
128 were
129 woman
130 work

131 would
132 yellow
133 after
134 an
135 any
136 as
137 ask
138 before
139 could
140 don't

141 first
142 found
143 got
144 just
145 long
146 made
147 may
148 never
149 now
150 off

151 old
152 or
153 our
154 out
155 over
156 right
157 three
158 under
159 very
160 when

161 why
162 around
163 been
164 better
165 does
166 every
167 far
168 gave
169 hand
170 head

171 into
172 it's
173 more
174 much
175 other
176 own
177 say
178 still
179 tell
180 than

181 these
182 thing
183 think
184 those
185 time
186 told
187 took
188 try
189 water
190 way

191 well
192 which
193 always
194 another
195 because
196 began
197 black
198 both
199 bring
200 brown

201 cat
202 children
203 cold
204 cry
205 cut
206 didn't
207 done
208 enough
209 even
210 eye

211 fall
212 five
213 fly
214 four
215 friend
216 going
217 hard
218 hold
219 keep
220 kind

221 last
222 laugh
223 light
224 live
225 men
226 morning
227 Mr.
228 Mrs.
229 next
230 night

231 nothing
232 oh
233 once
234 only
235 open
236 part
237 people
238 place
239 please
240 read

241 school
242 should
243 sing
244 sit
245 sleep
246 small
247 start
248 thought
249 tree
250 upon

251 use
252 while
253 white
254 wish
255 airplane
256 along
257 animal
258 baby
259 bag
260 balloon

261 bark
262 barn
263 bear
264 bed
265 bee
266 behind
267 bird
268 birthday
269 boat
270 book

271 build
272 bus
273 cage
274 cake
275 catch
276 color
277 cow
278 dark
279 farm
280 fat

281 feet
282 fight
283 fire
284 fish
285 food
286 fox
287 game
288 goat
289 gone
290 grass

291 hair
292 hat
293 hear
294 hello
295 hen
296 hill
297 hop
298 horse
299 hurry
300 ice

301 I'll

302 kitten

303 leg

304 letter

305 maybe

306 met

307 miss

308 money

309 name

310 paint

311 pan

312 peanut

313 penny

314 picnic

315 picture

316 pig

317 pocket

318 pony

319 prize

320 rabbit

321 race

322 rain

323 road

324 rocket

325 seen

326 shoe

327 sister

328 sound

329 stay

330 step

331 store

332 story

333 street

334 sun

335 talk

336 tomorrow

337 town

338 toy

339 train

340 truck

341 turtle

342 TV

343 wagon

344 wet

345 window

346 won't

347 word

348 zoo

349 door

350 grand

351 king

352 side

353 turn

354 wait

355 ate

356 best

357 buy

358 carry

359 clean

360 draw

361 drink

362 eight

363 full

364 goes

365 grow

366 hot

367 hurt

368 myself

369 pick

370 pretty

371 pull

372 round

373 save

374 seven

375 shall

376 six

377 ten

378 today

379 together

380 warm

381 wash

382 write

383 begin

384 each

385 end

386 fact

387 few

388 great

389 himself

380 knew

391 left

392 less

393 life

394 might

395 most

396 number

397 same

398 set

399 state

400 year



Appendix D

First Grade Developmental Spelling Screening

The Developmental Spelling Test

Administer the test

Administer the developmental spelling test printed below to a five-, six-, or seven-year-old. The test is designed for pupils in kindergarten through second grade. When you administer the list, you will obtain spellings that can be categorized roughly into five developmental stages: precommunicative, semiphonetic, phonetic, transitional, and conventional. Once you have analyzed one or two tests, you will be an expert at noticing the same patterns of spelling in young children's free writing.

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Here are the directions. Call out each word; give the sentence provided; and call out the word again. Explain that the words may be too difficult for most kindergartners and first graders to spell. What you want your pupils to do is invent the spelling or use their best guess at what the spelling might be. Explain that the activity will not be graded as right or wrong, but will be used to see how children think certain difficult words should be spelled. Be encouraging, and make the activity challenging, playful and fun.

Here are the ten words in the test:

1. **monster** The boy was eaten by a monster.
2. **united** You live in the United States.
3. **dress** The girl wore a new dress.
4. **bottom** A big fish lives at the bottom of the lake.
5. **hiked** We hiked to the top of the mountain.
6. **human** Miss Piggy is not a human.
7. **eagle** An eagle is a powerful bird.
8. **closed** the little girl closed the door.
9. **bumped** The car bumped into the bus.
10. **type** Type the letter on the typewriter.

TABLE 4-1 Possible Test Responses

Word	Precommunicative	Semiphonetic	Phonetic	Transitional	Conventional
1. monster	random letters	MTR	MOSTR	MONSTUR	monster
2. united	random letters	U	UNITD	YOUNIGHTED	united
3. dress	random letters	JRS	JRAS	DRES	dress
4. bottom	random letters	BT	BODM	BOTTUM	bottom
5. hiked	random letters	H	HIKT	HICKED	hiked
6. human	random letters	UM	HUMN	HUMUN	human
7. eagle	random letters	EL	EGL	EGUL	eagle
8. closed	random letters	KD	KLOSD	CLOSED	closed
9. bumped	random letters	B	BOPT	BUMPPED	bumped
10. type	random letters	TP	TIP	TIPE	type

Appendix E

Third Grade Developmental Spelling Screening

Learning to spell requires more than rote memorization and drill work. A useful vehicle for analyzing a student's stage in terms of his/her spelling ability exists in the five developmental stages of spelling described by recent research. Such research supports the fact that spelling levels of achievement change over time. Developmental spellings are defined spelling patterns resulting from different strategies that children use at various stages of cognitive development.

The following is an example of a screen to be used with children to assess their current level of spelling. Young spellers should spell differently than older spellers. This screen can be given to the whole class or individually. I give it in the fall and again in the spring. Yes, I use the same words! At the spring conference, I show both screens and make note with the parents of spelling growth. I point out new skills gained since the last screen.

STAGE 1: PRECOMMUNICATIVE OR PREPHONEMIC STAGE

This earliest stage is generally not readable. The student may demonstrate some knowledge of the alphabet, but has no knowledge of sound-letter correspondence. Such representations may include number symbols as well as letters or may use a few alphabet symbols repetitiously. At this level, the student may not know the principle of left-to-right directionality and may mix upper-and-lower case letters indiscriminately, generally showing a preference for the upper case.

STAGE 2: SEMIPHONETIC OR EARLY PHONEMIC STAGE

Unlike the first stage, stage 2 includes a clear link between the letters a child writes and some speech sounds in the words being spelled. It is clear, however, that the spelling is incomplete. Only one or two phonemes are spelled for each word. These will usually appear at the beginning or end of a word. At this stage, students begin to understand left-to-right arrangement of letters and exhibit alphabet knowledge, and mastery of letter formation is more complete.

STAGE 3: PHONETIC OR LETTER-NAME STAGE

From being able to represent only one or two sounds in a word, students in stage 3 reflect most or all sounds they hear. Their productions may look somewhat bizarre at first, but when considered carefully these productions do make sense. They analyze the words they want to spell into their component sounds and then find a letter name to represent each sound. To spell each sound, they choose the letter name that most closely resembles the sound they want to represent. The student is able to provide a total mapping of letter-sound correspondence for the surface sound features of words.

STAGE 4 : TRANSITIONAL STAGE

During this stage, the speller undergoes a transition from having a great reliance on phonology or sound to having a greater reliance on the visual or morphological. The speller adheres to basic rules of English orthography, such as vowels appearing in every

syllable, the use of silent letters, and inflectional endings like *s*, *'s*, *ing*, and *est* spelled conventionally. However, the speller may reverse some letters because he/she does not recognize what "looks right." Generally, at this stage, alternatives for representing sounds are only partially understood, and the speller tends to use the words he or she knows how to spell in greater abundance.

STAGE 5 : CORRECT STAGE

At this stage, the speller knows the English orthographic system and its rules. He/she has an extended knowledge of word structure: prefixes, suffixes, contractions, compounds, and homonyms; has a growing accuracy in using silent consonants, doubling consonants, and structures; and accumulates a large body of learned words.

SAMPLES AT THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

1	2	3	4	5
brtss	mtr	mostr	monstur	monster
opsp	e	egl	egul	eagle
mprmrhm	j	gagin	dragun	dragon

The following lists can be used with students to assess their individual spelling stage. These are usually used with students in grades K-4. These spelling samples offer much information to the instructor, especially when used at least two times in a given year. Stages of development can be charted and watched. If growth is not occurring, then more extensive testing is required.

Test words - primary set

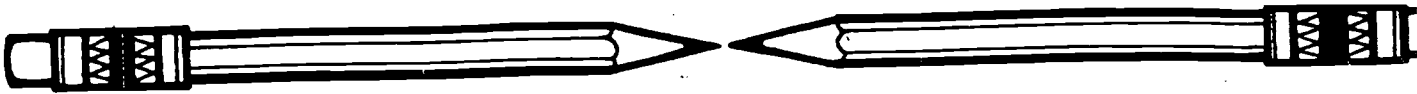
late
wind
shed
geese
jumped
yell
chirped
once
learned
shove
trained
year
shock
stained
chick
drive

Test words - elementary set

setter
shove
grocery
button
sailor
prison
nature
peeked
special
preacher
slowed
sail
feature
batter

©Ellen A. Thompson

Appendix F
Parent Reading Survey



Parent Reading Survey

1. How often does your child read at home daily?

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 0-1 time a week | 2-3 times a week | 4-5 times a week | 6-7 times a week |

Comments:

2. Do you enjoy reading as a leisure activity?

- | | | | |
|-------|--------|------------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Never | Seldom | Frequently | Daily |

Comments:

3. How often do you read to your child?

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 0-1 time a week | 2-3 times a week | 4-5 times a week | 6-7 times a week |

Comments:

4. How often does your family visit the public library?

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------|-------------------|--------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Never | Once a month | 2-3 times a month | Weekly |

Comments:

5. Does your child ask for help when they have trouble in their reading?

- | | | | |
|-------|--------|------------|--------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Never | Seldom | Frequently | Always |

Comments:

6. Do you ask your child questions about what they have read?

- | | | | |
|-------|--------|------------|--------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Never | Seldom | Frequently | Always |

Comments:

Appendix G
Phonics Inventory Test

Student Inventory

Reproduce this inventory for each student. Give it orally to individuals, stopping at the point where the student misses two in a row. Record student responses on the page.

66

Name _____ Date _____

Level 1: Rhythm and Rhyme

Whole Word Discrimination

Ask, "Are these words the same?" Record response: **y** for yes and **n** for no.

cat - cat _____ pan - pat _____ big - bug _____

fly - fly _____ day - way _____ tree - tree _____

Rhyming Words — Recognition

Ask, "Do these words rhyme?" Record response: **y** for yes and **n** for no.

run - sun _____ play - ball _____ hook - book _____

Rhyming Words — Application

Ask, "What word rhymes with _____?" Record the response.

bat _____ eat _____ skip _____

Syllable Counting

Ask, "How many syllables (word parts) do you hear?" Record the response.

lion _____ horse _____ elephant _____ tyrannosaurus _____

Level 2: Parts of a Word

Syllable Segmentation

Say, "I'll say a word, you repeat it slowly."

Demonstrate: cowboy = cow-boy

Mark ⊕ if student is successful, mark ⊖ if not.

sandwich _____ hammer _____ grasshopper _____

Oral Synthesis — Blending Speech Sounds

Say, "Listen and tell the word. /p/ /u/ /p/ — pup." Record the response.

/g/ /o/ _____ /t/ /e/ /n/ /t/ _____ /c/ /a/ /t/ _____

Level 3 Sequence of Sounds

Approximation

Ask, "Do you hear the /m/ sound at the beginning, middle, or end of _____?" 67
Record student response.

ham _____ mud _____ lemon _____ gum _____

Phoneme Isolation

Ask, "What sound do you hear first?" Record response.

yarn _____ rose _____ teepee _____

Ask, "What sound do you hear last?" Record response.

tent _____ bird _____ wagon _____

Ask, "What sound do you hear in the middle?" Record response.

bake _____ rat _____ net _____ cook _____

Level 4 Separation of Sounds

Say, "Repeat each word slowly so that I can hear each separate sound."
Demonstrate: grass = /g/ /r/ /a/ /s/. Record response.

red _____ pink _____ black _____

Level 5 Manipulating Sounds

Phoneme Deletion

Say, "Take the word _____, leave off the _____." Demonstrate: big - ig.
Record response.

top _____ net _____ fun _____ cap _____

Phoneme Substitution

Say, "Change the first sound in pig to /b/. What's the new word?"

Record response. _____

Say, "Change the middle sound in bat to /i/. What's the new word?"

Record response. _____

Say, "Change the last sound in hop to /t/. What's the new word?"

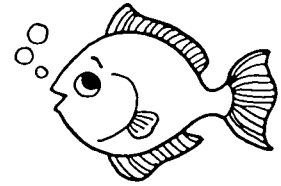
Record response. _____

Appendix H

Sample Phonics Decoding Lesson

Short I

Name _____



Read each sentence.  the correct words on the lines.

 the words in the puzzle.



bib pig

I have a _____

six wig

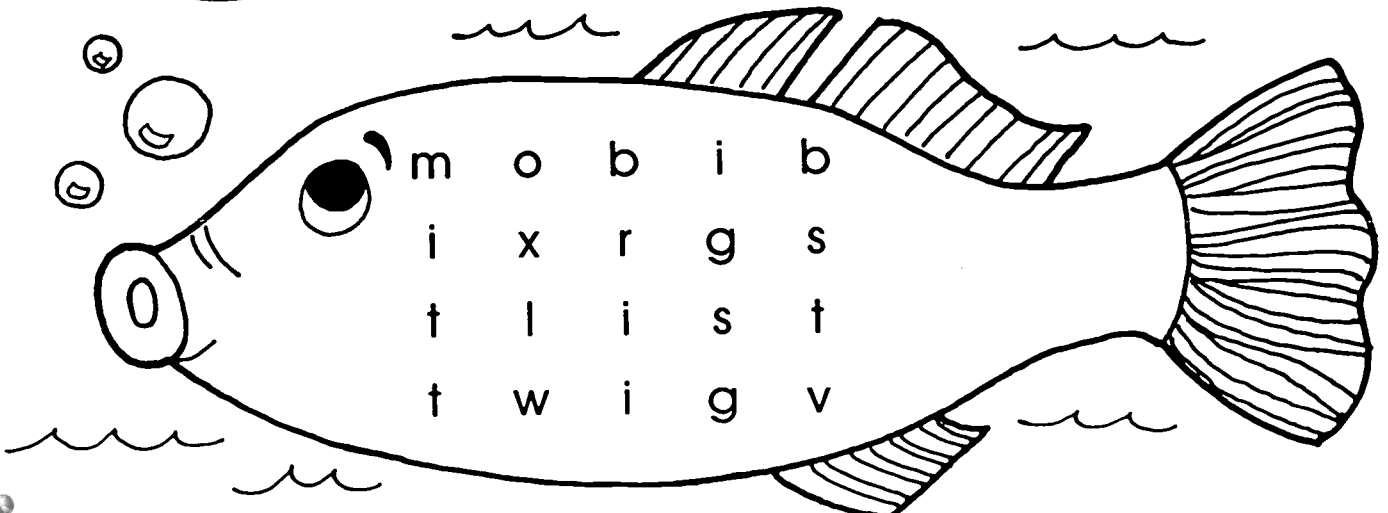
I have a _____

list pin

I have a _____

mitt lid

I have a _____



Name: _____ Date: _____

Learning About Consonants: Consonants in the Beginning Position

69

Sight Words to Know: there was who had and
 from ate more than by pets
 down street in were they

Place one of the following consonants on the blanks to form a word that makes sense in the stories.

c d m f p t

1. There was a ___an who had ___wo ___ets. He had a ___at and a ___og. The ___an ___ed the ___at and ___og ___ilk from a ___an.

c d m

2. The ___at ate more ___ilk than the ___og.

p t s m

3. The ___wo ___ets ___at by the ___an.

two five

4. There was a man who had a cat and dog. He had _____ pets.

g r b

5. A ___oy and ___irl ___an down the street.

b g c

6. The ___oy kicked a ___an, and the ___irl carried a ___ag.

c d b p h

7. In the ___ag were two ___ot ___ogs and a ___an of soda ___op.

p k r

8. The ___ids stopped to ___est at the ___ark.

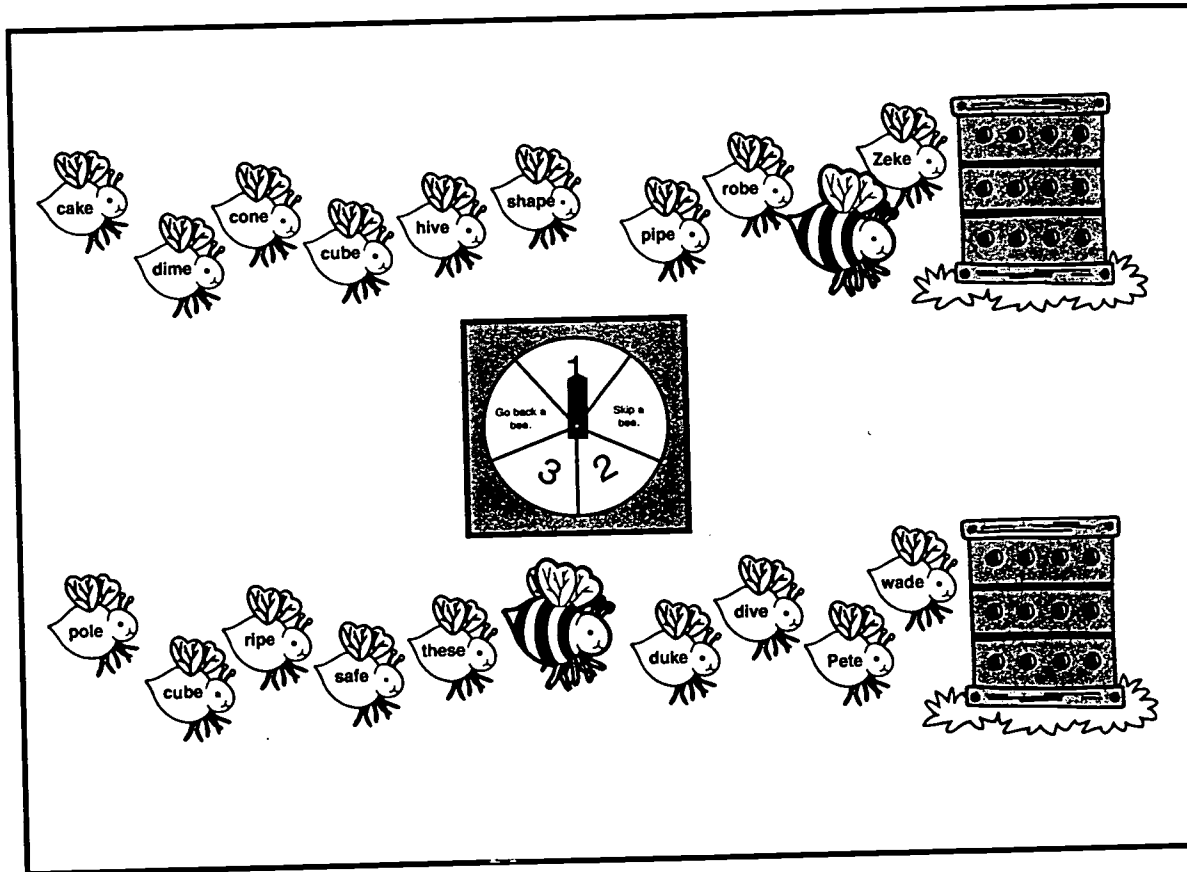
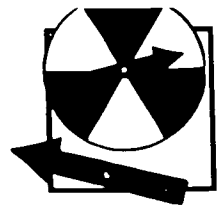
s f l

9. They ___at on a ___og and ate the ___ood.



Appendix I

Sample Phonics Word Game



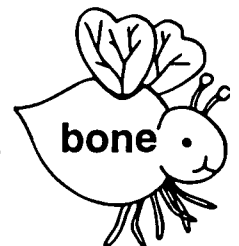
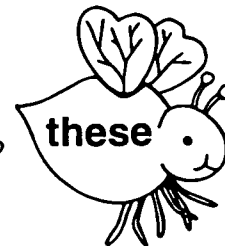
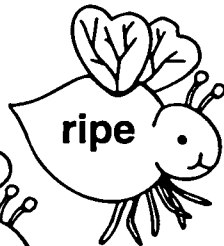
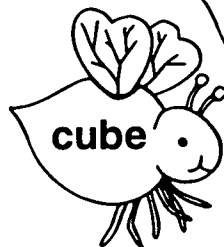
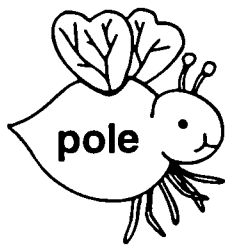
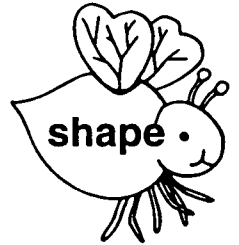
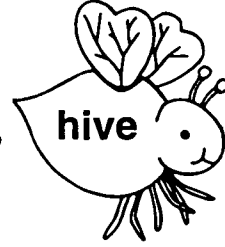
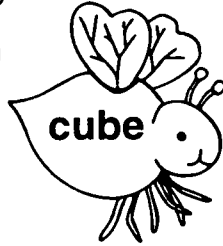
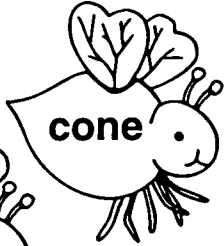
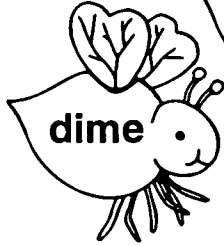
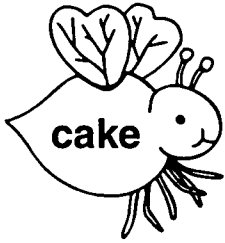
Bees to the Hive

Final e words: a-e, i-e, o-e, u-e, e-e

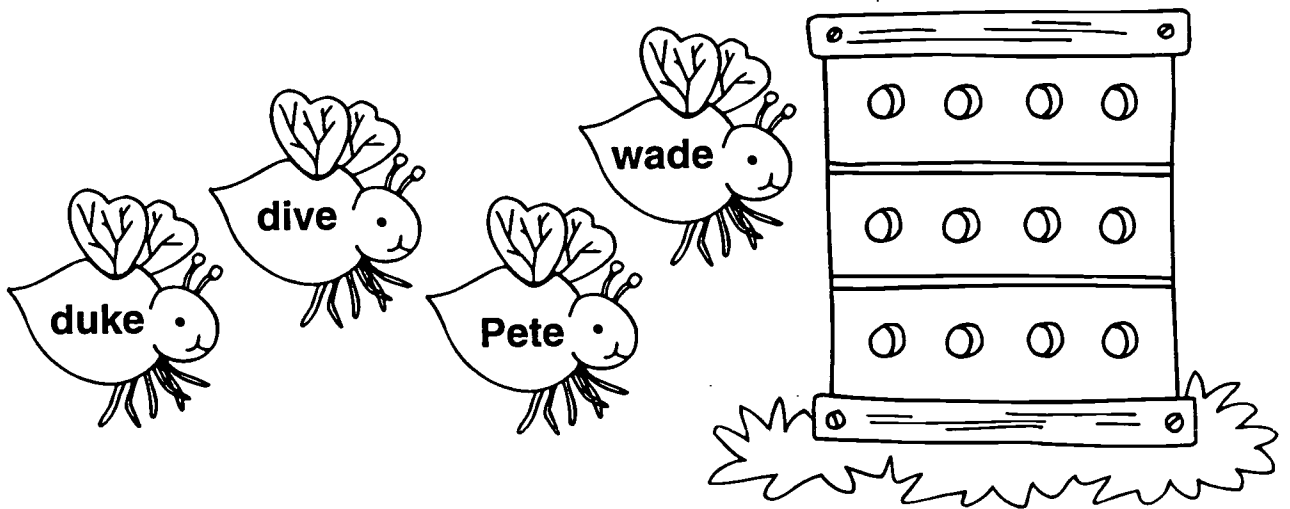
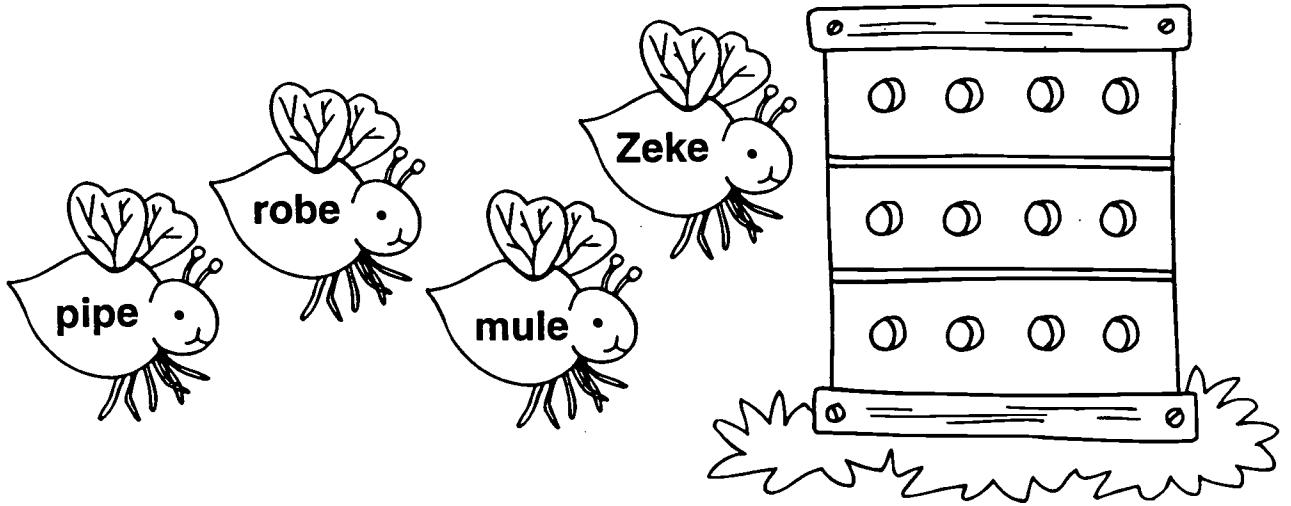
Directions: Two children may play. Take out the spinner and the two bee markers. Open the folder and choose a bee line. Take a bee marker. Spin the spinner in turn. If the spinner points to a number, go that many bee spaces. If it points to a direction, follow the direction. Read the word you land on and put your bee on the bee space. See whose bee gets to the hive first.

A book to read: All Kinds of Bees by Dorothy E. Shuttlesworth

Bees to the Hive

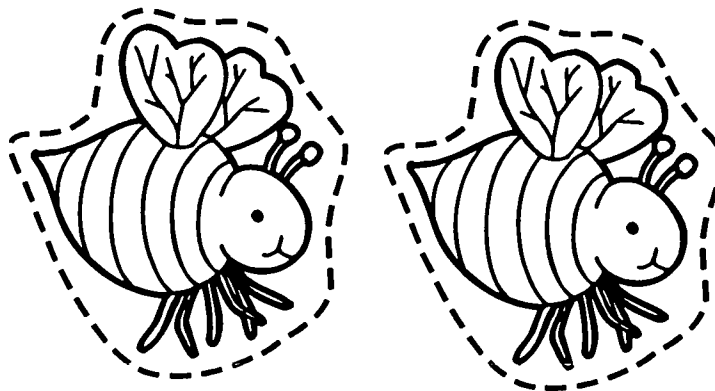
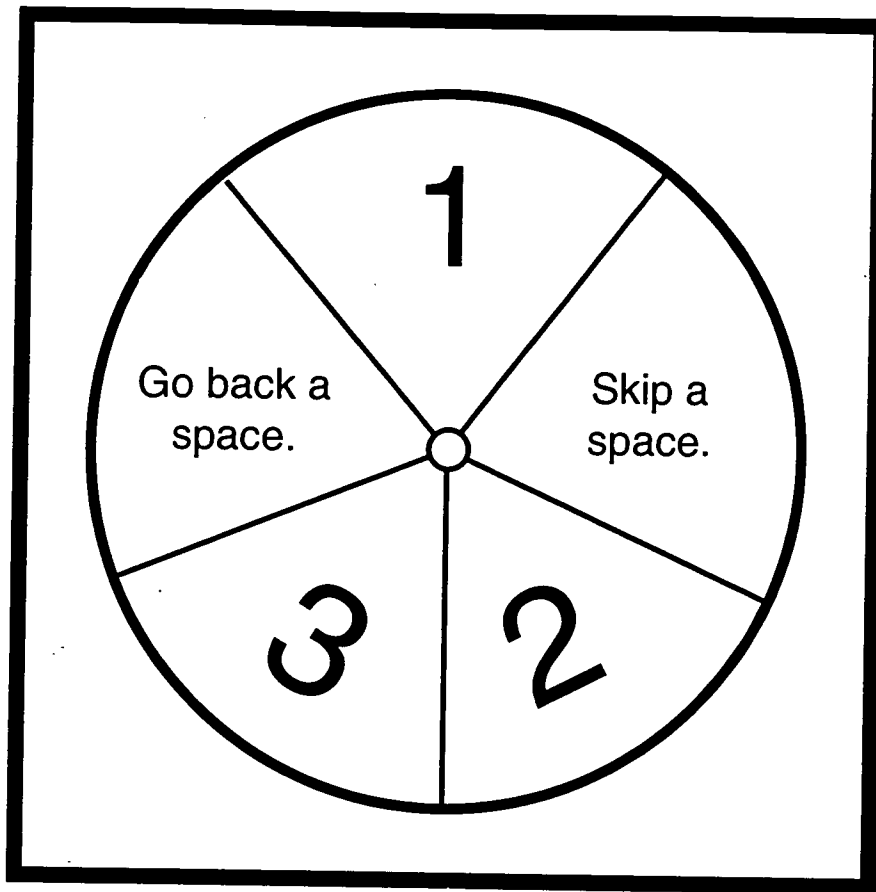


Bees to the Hive



Bees to the Hive

73

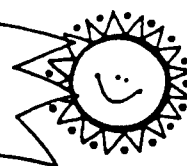


Appendix J

Informational Letter About Traveling Book Program



Traveling Book Bag



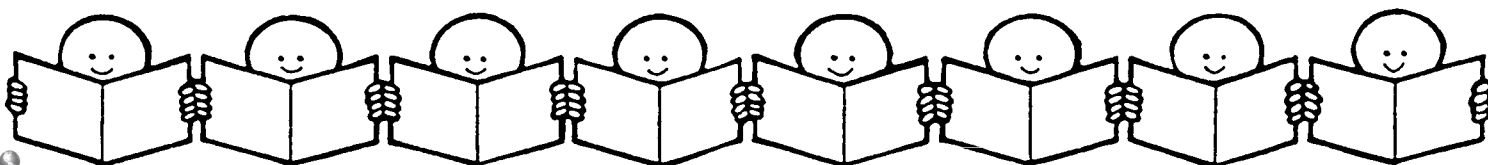
Soon your child will be selected to take home a *Traveling Book Bag*. This bag contains a book to share at home with the family. It may be a book to compliment our theme, or a time of the year.

When the book bag arrives at your house, find a warm, cozy spot to read the book together. This is a great book for you to hear your child read, or to read to your child. In fact, you could do both! After reading the book, talk about it with your son or daughter. Enjoy the story together!

Your only job is to write in the *Traveling Book Journal*, which you will find in the bag. You will notice that this is a blank journal. Your child should write a message, and, of course, you can add a message too! Be sure to date the entries, and sign at the end. Write about your favorite part-what made you laugh, or what made you think.

Next, put the book and its journal back in the bag, and have your child return it to school the next day. Then, the book will travel again-this time to another child and his/her family. Thus it is indeed a *Traveling Book Bag*.

As you can see, it will take several weeks before everyone gets to bring the book home. When the book completes the circuit, another book will be chosen for you to enjoy.



Appendix K
Traveling Book Checklist

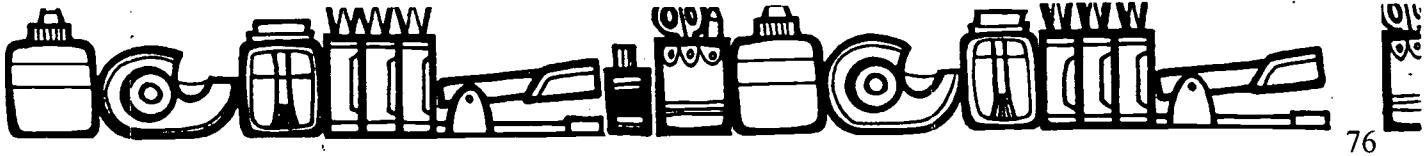


Traveling Book Checklistst
Name _____

Title Of Book	Date Read	Student Response	Parent Response

Appendix L

Sight Word Checklist



Individual Sight Word Checklist

Name _____

Word List	Date	Score	Word List	Date	Score	Word List	Date	Score

Date Passed																				
List •																				
Date Passed																				
List •																				

Appendix M

Sample Curriculum Based Measurement Leveled Reading

Name: _____ Date: _____ 77

Words Read Correctly/Errors (WRC/E): _____

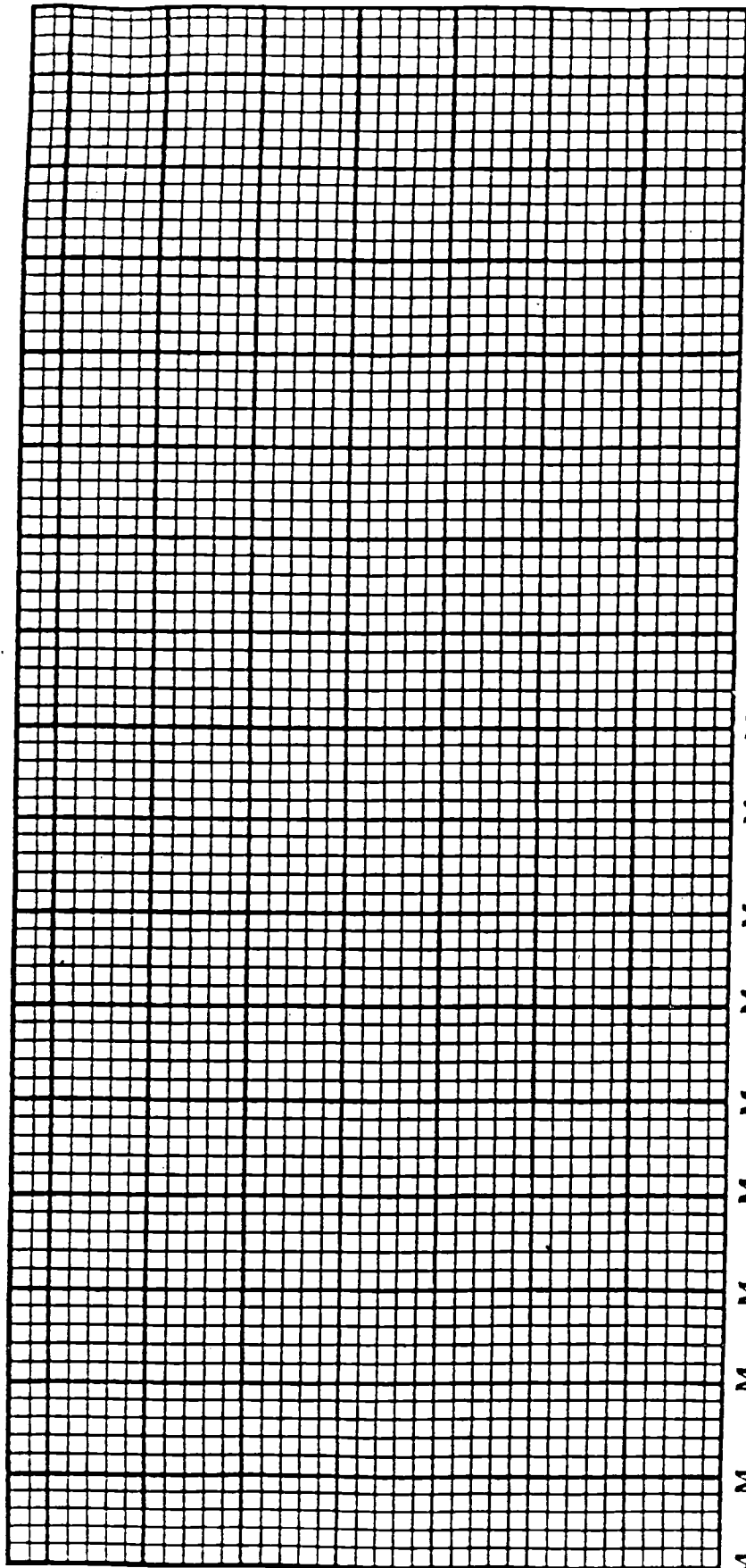
Grade: _____ School: _____ Teacher: _____

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom 8
ruled by a king who was so fond of food that 19
he couldn't bear to be without it for very long. 29
Eating was his hobby. He began with a big 38
breakfast at eight o'clock, had a light snack at 47
ten, and a large lunch at twelve. Then he 56
exercised by watching two tennis players, and 63
since exercise gave him an appetite, he ate a 72
small snack at about two in the afternoon. 80
At four o'clock, he had sandwiches and at 88
seven in the evening he happily sat down to a 98
royal banquet. There was one of these every 106
evening, even if the king was the only one at the 117
table. 118
Eating was so important to him that it af- 127
fected everything he did, and sometimes it got 135
him in trouble. For example, he was always 143
losing his royal cooks. He just couldn't keep 151
from telling them how to improve their cooking. 159
He insisted on making changes in every dish. 167
Since royal cooks are very proud, they resented 175
this. Six cooks had already left in a huff. 184
One evening the king entered the banquet 191
hall and saw a sandwich on his plate. He knew 201
what had happened. "Oh, my," he sighed, "I see 210
that royal cook number seven has left!" 217
"Yes, your Majesty," replied the head cook. 224
"He said he could no longer cook for a king who 235
kept changing all his recipes. And now there are 244
no more royal cooks available! 249

Appendix N

Curriculum Based Measurement Student Chart

Student:	Gr/Age:	Sch:	Tch:	Academic Area:	--Correct X-Error
----------	---------	------	------	----------------	-------------------



M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

m/d													

Appendix O

Weekly Book It! Record Sheet

BOOK IT BEAR PAW READING SLIP

79

Name _____

Week Of _____

Please
Fill In
of
Minutes
Read

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Read 15 minutes 3 days a
week, at least 1 oral reading.

Parent Signature _____

BOOK IT BEAR PAW READING SLIP

Name _____

Week Of _____

Please
Fill In
of
Minutes
Read

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Read 15 minutes 3 days a
week, at least 1 oral reading.

Parent Signature _____

Appendix P

Monthly Book It! Record Sheet

BOOK IT!

E_xcited

A_bout

R_eading

B_e

!!

Name _____

Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			

Month _____

Bear Paw

Appendix Q

Sample Book Bag Journal Page

10/4 I hope you enjoy these scary stories. I thought they would be perfect for the month of October. Please let us know what you thought of them.

10 400 I really enjoyed the book. I read the book two times. My favorite chapter was The Green Ribbon. My Brother's favorite chapter was The Green Ribbon also. My moms favorite was The Green Ribbon too. My mom, brother and I liked the book very much.



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