

INCREASING READING/LITERACY PERFORMANCE OF AT-RISK
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS THROUGH INCREASED ACCESS
TO FICTION/NON-FICTION RESOURCES AND
INCORPORATING READERS THEATER ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This action research project was developed in order to increase student literacy, particularly in the area of reading, for students who were considered at-risk. The targeted student population was 2nd grade students who were served within a primary cross-categorical special education program. The classroom was housed in an elementary (K-2) school, located in a small Midwest community.

The literature showed many reasons for low literacy development, including lack of reading opportunities at home, lack of background knowledge, and lack of exposure to both fiction and non-fiction resources. The initial analysis of data was determined by looking at the results of DIBELS scores. In phoneme segmentation fluency, one-third of the second-grade students fell below the fall first-grade benchmark. Star Reading scores results showed that all of the second grade students measured ranged in performance from one to one and one-half years behind grade level.

The review of literature showed a number of suggestions for improving literacy, including increased reading time, and providing more interesting reading and activities, such as Readers Theater. Also suggested was providing related fiction and non-fiction activities. The teacher researcher chose to focus on increasing fiction/non-fiction resources and using Readers Theater activities.

During the 14-week research period, the teacher researcher developed the classroom library with more and often related fiction/non-fiction resources. Students were initially exposed to more visits to the school library, and then offered large selections of school library books within the classroom, as available library time decreased. Readers Theater activities were selected for use each week during the research period.

Post intervention analysis of the DIBELS assessment showed increase in reading/literacy areas of phoneme segmentation, and non-sense word fluency. The Star Reading assessment showed growth in grade level performance. However, only half of the students showed growth in percentile rank. Growth or lack thereof, can not easily be attributed to the interventions as there were many factors during the school day that may have impacted performance, positively or otherwise.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research project was to increase student literacy, particularly in the area of reading. Targeted students were served within a primary cross-categorical classroom.

Immediate Context of the Problem

This action research project was conducted at a public primary (PK-2) elementary school. Documentation and intervention was conducted within a cross-categorical classroom, serving students from K-2 grade levels. Information for the site was obtained from the Illinois School Report Card (2005).

The total enrollment for the school was 365 students, grades PK-2. The Caucasian population consisted of 71% (n=259) of the students, making it the largest ethnic/racial group. The Hispanic population of 20% (n=72) of the students, was the second largest. In addition, 6% (n=22) of the student population was multi racial. Table 1 shows the school breakdown of the student single ethnic/racial background by percentage for the school, followed by the district's percentage. The percentages for both the school and district ethnic/racial breakdowns were comparable, the major differences being in the Caucasian and multi-racial student percentages. The total enrollment for the district was 982 students, grades PK-8. The Caucasian population consisted of 74% (n=727) of the students, making it the largest of the groups. The Hispanic population consisted of 19.5% (n=191) of the students, making it the second largest of the racial/ethnic groups. In addition, the multi-racial population consisted of 2.8% (n=27) of the students.

Table 1*School Ethnicity by Percentage:*

<u>Total Enrollment</u>	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>African-American</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Asian/Pacific</u>	<u>Native-American</u>
365	71.0	2.2	19.7	0.3	0.8

District Ethnicity by Percentage:

<u>Total Enrollment</u>	<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>African-American</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Asian/Pacific</u>	<u>Native-American</u>
982	74.0	2.0	19.5	0.9	0.8

A total of 250 students in the school were from low-income households. Low income is described in the Illinois School Report Card (2005) as including “families receiving public aid; live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; are supported in foster homes with public funds; or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches” (p. 1). Fifteen of the students were limited English proficient. The truancy rate was 0.0%. Chronic truancy is described as “students who are absent from school without valid cause for 18 or more of the last 180 school days” (p. 1). The mobility rate was 23.2% with an attendance rate of 95.9%.

In the district, 66.4% of the student population came from low-income households. The limited English proficiency rate was 2.2%, chronic truancy was 1%, and the mobility rate was 16.1%. The attendance rate was 94.9%.

Teacher information on the 2005 Illinois School Report Card shows a total of 59 teachers for the district. The Caucasian population consisted of 57 teachers, by far the majority, with only two teachers of Hispanic racial/ethnicity in the district. There were no other racial/ethnic groups represented in the teacher population. Table 2 shows the racial/ethnic breakdown for teachers by percentage.

Table 2

Ethnicity by Percentage:

<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>African-American</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Asian/Pacific</u>	<u>Native-American</u>
98.3	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0

The gender split for teachers was 20.3% (n=12) male and 79.7% (n=47) female. The average teacher salary was \$52,805 for full time. This was slightly below the state average of \$55,558. The average administrator's salary for the district was \$102,135. This was somewhat higher than the state average administrator's salary of \$97,051.

The 2005 Illinois School Report Card shows that district teachers have taught for an average of 18.5 years. The percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree was reported to be 44.1% (n=26), while the percentage of teachers with a master's and above was 55.9% (n=33).

Average class size was reported for grades K and 1. Grade K had an average of 26.8 students, while Grade 1 had an average of 27.5 students. The pupil-teacher ratio was 1:18.4. The 2003-2004 instructional expenditure per pupil was \$4,040 for the district as compared to the state average of \$5,216. Instructional expenditure was described in the report as including "the direct costs of teaching pupils or the interaction between teachers and pupils". The 2003-2004 operating expenditure per pupil was \$7,012.00 as compared to the state average of \$8,786.00. The report describes operating expenditure as including "the gross operating cost of a school district excluding summer school, adult education, bond principal retired, and capital expenditures".

The school is reported as making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the 2005 report. This includes both reading and mathematics. In the area of reading, 99% of the 2nd grade students took the state adopted test, the Terra Nova. The minimum state AYP for taking the reading test had

been set at 95%. That means that 95% of the student population was expected by the state to take the test. In actuality, 99% of the school population took the test, or 4% more than the minimum requirement. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards was 62.9%. The state minimum AYP target was set at 47.5%. In the area of mathematics, 99% of the 2nd grade students took the state adopted test. That was 4% more than the state requirement of 95%. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards was 73%. The state minimum AYP target for students meeting or exceeding standards in math was set at 47% of the school population.

The school used a Scott-Foresman reading curriculum. Students served in the cross-categorical special education classroom used the same reading curriculum with modification and supplementation. Both regular and cross-categorical classrooms used the same writing curriculum. Time spent on language arts ranged from 80 minutes to 120 minutes, dependent upon the classroom. The math curriculum for regular classrooms was Everyday Math. The students served in the cross-categorical classroom used Math Worlds.

Students in the regular classrooms spent approximately 60 minutes per day on math. Students receiving math instruction in the cross-categorical classroom spent 30-40 minutes per day on math. These students were to be included in any math instruction taught during the time that they were in the regular classroom. Since this time was determined by the individual teachers, additional math time varied from room to room.

The school's administrative structure included a principal, an office secretary, a full time counselor, two nurses, an unofficial part time librarian, an in-house person to support technology on a part-time basis, as well as a technology director from the district. This person was essential for keeping the computers system running smoothly. There was a custodian for the school day, an evening custodian, and three lunchroom attendants. The school also had

an ELL teacher and two speech and language pathologists. The teaching staff included a regular pre-school classroom teacher, two pre-school teachers for students with special needs, a K-2 teacher for students with special needs, and five aides. There were four kindergarten teachers, one for each kindergarten class. Five women from the grandma's program supported the kindergarten teachers, another worked with first grade. Four AmeriCorps workers also supported the kindergarten classrooms. There were eight first grade teachers for five first-grade classrooms. Most of these teachers were also Reading Recovery teachers. There were four second grade teachers, one was supported by a volunteer who had retired from teaching. One physical education teacher taught the gym class. Music was taught by two teachers who shared their time with the other schools in the district. Only five males were included in the staff and support staff. They were the principal, both custodians, one AmeriCorp worker and the physical education teacher.

The school offered an environment conducive to students' feelings of well-being, security, confidence, and happiness. Breakfast was available to students every morning before school. Free lunches were available for those eligible. Parents had an opportunity to have lunch with their student and the principal at least once during the school year. Grandparents had an afternoon in which they could join in classroom activities. A counselor was available for students in need of the service.

Students could join before or after-school clubs. One club provided students with care and activities while parents or guardians were working. Another program offered assistance with homework after school. Girls could join a scout-type program. A non-denominational church used a classroom, after school hours, to share their inspirational message with students.

The school had a family reading night every month of the school year. On that night, students

were allowed to read a book, and then answer questions on the story through the use of a computer program. Each student passing the test was allowed to choose a free book for his or her home library. Then, the student and family were invited to join in for a pizza and pop dinner.

Teachers at the school were encouraged to reach out to parents and guardians in order to support healthy home/school relationship. They were asked to send home notes with positive messages about the student, or to make positive phone calls home. Teachers were also asked to recommend names of students in need of a free, new coat for the cold winter months.

The school presented itself in a park-like setting, with a playground on both ends of the school and a park district playground and ball park across the street. The school was built around a rarely used, but pleasant to see courtyard. Three of the student classrooms had window access to the courtyard, as did the counselor's room, the room of the reading teacher, and the speech room.

The front entrance and school foyer were located in front of the gymnasium. To the left of the foyer were the school and principal's offices. Next to the principal's office was the school nurses' room. The K-2 special education classroom, four kindergartens and a preschool were also on that part of the school. To the right of the foyer, were the rooms for the reading teacher, Reading Recovery, counselor, music, ELL, speech and one first grade. The next hall contained two pre-school rooms serving students with special needs, four more first-grade rooms, two second-grade rooms and a library. The last hall contained two second-grade classrooms along with a room for the before-and-after-school daycare.

The problem to be addressed is increasing reading performance of the students in the primary cross-categorical classroom. This is particularly difficult in the sense that students of

various disabilities are taught within the classroom. This allows for a greater range of reading levels than might be found in a regular classroom, as well as a greater range in age levels. Many researchers stress the importance of allowing all students exposure to both fiction and non-fiction resources, particularly within the classroom. Often, the classrooms for students with disabilities have the least amount of fiction/non-fiction resources available to the students. Many of the regular teachers build their classroom library with free or reduced priced books received as bonuses from their students' book orders, including those students, although receiving services for reading/language arts within the cross categorical classroom, do participate most of the school day in the regular classroom. A greater effort needs to be made to build a classroom library within the classroom that these students receive their main reading/language arts instruction, allowing for easier access to the genres. As far as visits to the school library, the students from the cross-categorical classroom generally are to visit the library with their regular classrooms. A great attempt is made within the school to allow the students with disabilities to be placed evenly throughout the regular classrooms. For example, eight students with disabilities would be placed two to each of the four second-grade classrooms. Scheduling does not always allow for the students with disabilities to be included in library visits. Often these students receive related services, such as speech and language, which will take them out of the regular classroom. If they receive counseling services, this will take even more of the time during which they could be included in regular education. Often, it is library time that is sacrificed.

Local Context of the Problem

The school was located on the south central edge of this mid-western town. The demographics from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) describe the total population as 9,580, of

which 4,570 were male and 5,020 were female. The median age of the community was 36.1 years. There were 703 under the age of five years, 7,134 were 18 years and over, while 1,525 were 65 years and over.

Table 4 shows the population breakdown by ethnicity. The Caucasian population was the largest at 91.8%, followed by the Hispanic or Latino population, consisting of 11.5% of the local residents. The other ethnic/racial groups each reported a population of less than one percent of the community.

Table 4

Ethnicity by Percentage:

<u>Caucasian</u>	<u>African American</u>	<u>American Indian and Alaska Native</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander</u>	<u>Hispanic or Latino</u>
91.8	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.0	11.5

In the Census Bureau report, median household income was reported to be \$34,443.00 for 1999. The median family income for 1999 was cited as \$41,803.00. The income per capita, also for 1999 was \$16,524.00.

The average household size was 2.41, as reported to the U.S. Census Bureau. The average family size was 2.99. The labor force was 4,732.

The district consists of a primary school, an intermediate school and a middle school. There is one principal at each school. The district has one superintendent. The mission statement for the primary school was taken from the primary school improvement plan for 2006-2007.

Our vision at . . . Primary School is to provide opportunities for all children to be successful and impress upon them the power in choosing to do what is right. At . . . Primary School we will strive to create an environment that will challenge our

students to want to learn, make good decisions, and to respect and care for others.

Through the combined efforts of students, teachers, staff, parents, and administration, we will create a learning environment in which the whole child is nurtured.

The local property tax revenue for the district during 2003-2004 as reported in the 2005 Illinois District Report Card was 34.2% as compared to 57.0% for the state. With uneven distribution of funding of education in the state of Illinois, along with the fact that 66.4% of the children in this district come from low income families. It is understandable that resources for funding classroom libraries within the district are low. The Committee to Defend Public Education (www.teacherschalkboard.org) suggests that the differences between the districts with the lowest funding and those with the highest differ by \$18,000 per student in state expenditures.

National Context of the Problem

Children's weakness in the areas of literacy development has been an ongoing problem. Biancarosa and Snow (2004) as cited by Werderich and Pariza (n.d.) support the notion that children's reading often decreases over time. Corcoran and Davis (n.d.) suggest that by third grade, three-quarters of students with deficits in reading skills, reach adulthood lacking in reading literacy. The 2003 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) showed that 37% of fourth graders were reading below level. These reports suggest that not enough is being done to encourage literacy development, as well as development that lasts throughout a lifetime.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Evidence of the Problem

The problem area addressed in this study was the low literacy rate of primary at-risk students. The purpose of this study was to increase the literacy performance of five second-grade students from a cross-categorical classroom. The students had various disabilities, including OCD, Speech and Language, OHI and LD. Reading needed to improve. Although available instructional material in the classroom included direct instruction reading material and the general education curriculum, more was needed to help the students develop a personal interest in reading for both pleasure and knowledge. The students received pull-out services in the area of reading and language arts. These students were included in the general educational second grade science and social studies classes. There, they often did not have the background knowledge as well as reading ability to efficiently and enthusiastically participate in the content areas of science and social studies. Implications were that when the students would advance to the third grade where reading and concepts would be more advanced, the students with special needs would have even more difficulty.

The tools used to give insight to the teacher researcher regarding the reading aspect of student literacy included parent surveys of availability of books at home, DIBELS for a measure of basic literacy skills, and the STAR assessment for reading. Pre-documentation was conducted from August 27, 2007 to September 10, 2007.

Parent Survey

During the week of August 27, the teacher researcher mailed home a reading survey to the parents. The purpose of the survey was to help the teacher/researcher gain insight into the home

reading attitude and environment. Parents were asked to respond by September 10. Seven surveys were sent out, each in a manila envelope with a return envelope enclosed. Four parent surveys were returned. The rate of return was 57%. The survey contained five questions. Table 5 states the questions and the responses. Parents were asked to report on the approximate number of books available to students at home, time spent reading, whether or not the student enjoyed reading to the parent, how often the students were taken to the public library, and whether or not the students had a library card. Please refer to Appendix A.

Table 5

Parent Survey (n=4)

On average, how much time do you and your child spend reading together daily?

<u>0-10 minutes</u>	<u>10-20 minutes</u>	<u>20-30 minutes</u>	<u>30+ minutes</u>
0% (n=0)	50% (n=2)	25% (n=1)	25% (n=1)

Does your child enjoy reading to you?

<u>no</u>	<u>a little</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>very much</u>
0% (n=0)	75% (n=3)	25% (n=1)	0% (n=0)

Approximately how many books does your child have available to read at home?

<u>0-15</u>	<u>6-15</u>	<u>15-25</u>	<u>26 or more</u>
25% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	75% (n=3)

How often do you take your child to the public library?

<u>1-2 times/week</u>	<u>1-3 times/month</u>	<u>6-11 times/year</u>	<u>1-5 times/year</u>	<u>never</u>
0% (n=0)	25% (n=1)	50% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	25% (n=1)

Do you have a public library card?

<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>
75% (n=3)	25% (n=1)

On average, 50% (n=2) of the students read for 10-20 minutes. One quarter (n=1) of the students read for 20-30 minutes, and another quarter (n=1) read for 30 or more minutes per day. Seventy-five percent (n=3) of the students enjoyed reading only a little. Twenty-five percent (n=1) said that they did enjoy reading. When asked how many books were available for the child to read at home, 25% (n=1) of the parents reported 15 or fewer. Seventy-five percent (n=3) of the parents reported 26 or more books. When asked how often the child was taken to the public library, it was reported that 25% (n=1) of the parents take their child to the library one to three times per month, 50% (n=2) of the parents reported taking their child six to eleven times per year, while 25% (n=1) reported that their child never went to the public library. When the parents were asked if they had a public library card, 75% (n=3) reported that they did have one. Twenty-five percent (n=1) did not have a public library card.

DIBELS

The students were administered the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Assessment. DIBELS was not used as a district or local school measure. It had not been approved for Respond to Intervention (RTI) use at the school. It was being used in this case as a simple before and after measure of students' early literacy skills. The teacher/researcher was not formerly trained to use the DIBELS and did not report student scores to the official website. Although the students were in the second grade, they were administered the first grade level DIBELS. Six students were administered DIBELS during their language arts period. This assessment was not used as a standardized measure, but as a measure intended simply to give an

informal assessment of basic skills. The Benchmark I Beginning/Fall was administered to each student. Skills measured included letter naming fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, and nonsense word fluency. Please refer to web site at <http://dibels.uoregon.edu/> to find out more about DIBELS.

Figure 1 shows the number of phonemes correctly segmented from three or four phoneme words, as described in the DIBELS Administration and Scoring Guide. The guide cites Kaminski and Good (1996) as promoting the DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency assessment as a “good predictor of later reading achievement”. Students B and D, both second grade students, scored well below the fall first grade benchmark of 45 correct phonemes. The mean for the six students was 49 correct phonemes.

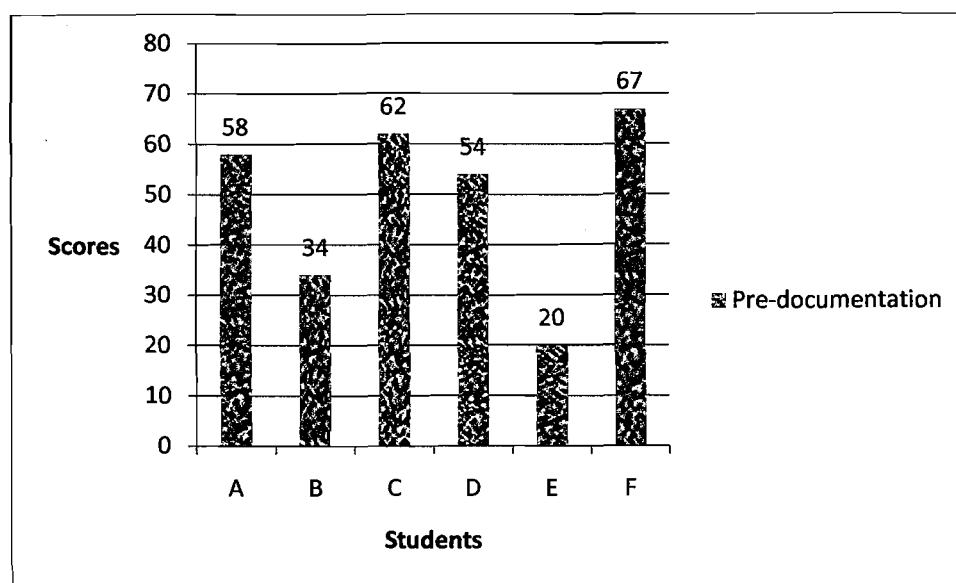


Figure 1: *Phoneme Segmentation Fluency*

Figure 2 shows the correct sounds recorded for each student during the one-minute timing for nonsense word fluency. For students in mid-first grade, the DIBELS Administration and Scoring Guide places the benchmark goal at 50 correct letter sounds. The students taking this test are beginning second grade students. Only student B scored above the mid-first grade benchmark. The mean for the group of six students was 32 correct sounds, a score well below the mid-first grade benchmark.

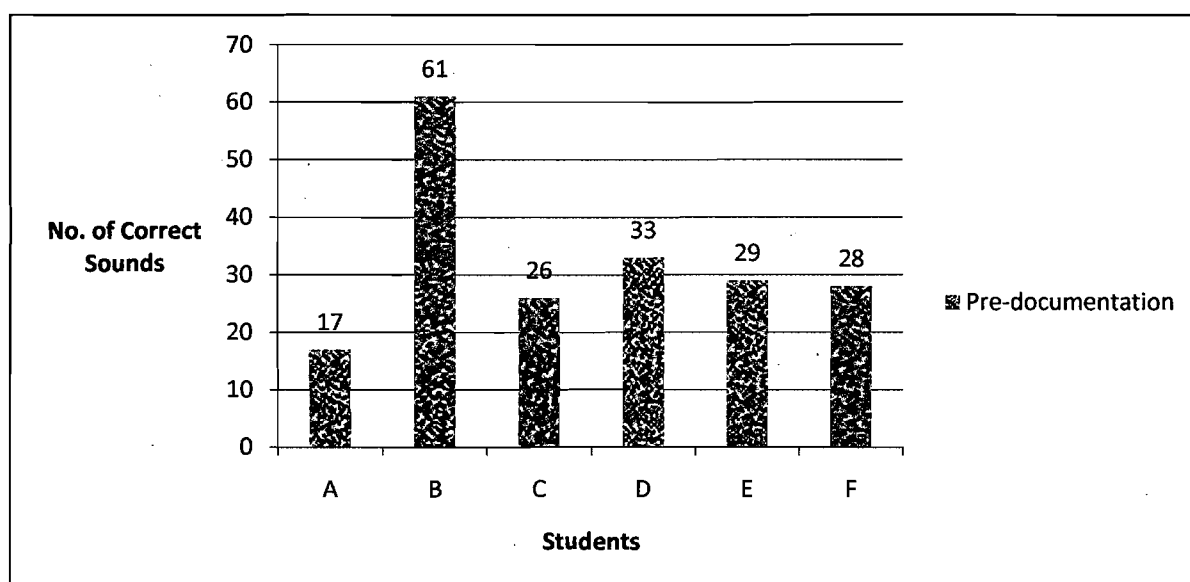


Figure 2: *Nonsense Word Fluency*

STAR Reading

Originally, the students were to take the STAR reading test during the week of September 17. However, the test had not been installed in classroom computers or in any of the school computers for the school year, due to priority issues per the technology director. The school then received a new server; and the program was installed on October 23, 2007. The teacher researcher had the students take the test immediately, due to the lateness of test installation. Figures 3-7 shows the results of the assessments. Although not a true pre-documentation at this

point, the STAR tool could be taken up to five times per year. Each student tested answered a total of 25 questions. A post-test at the end of the research period would determine whether growth had occurred during the time between the original measurement on October 23rd and the post-test. Please refer to www.renlearn.com/starreading/overview/benefits.htm to find out more about STAR Reading.

Figure 3 shows the Scaled Score (SS), which is used to show growth, or lack of, across time. The Score Definition Report, which can be printed out through the computer program, describes the SS score for the STAR Reading tests as used for the first grade through the twelfth grade, with a range from 0 to 1400. The mean for the students' first STAR test of the year was 79.

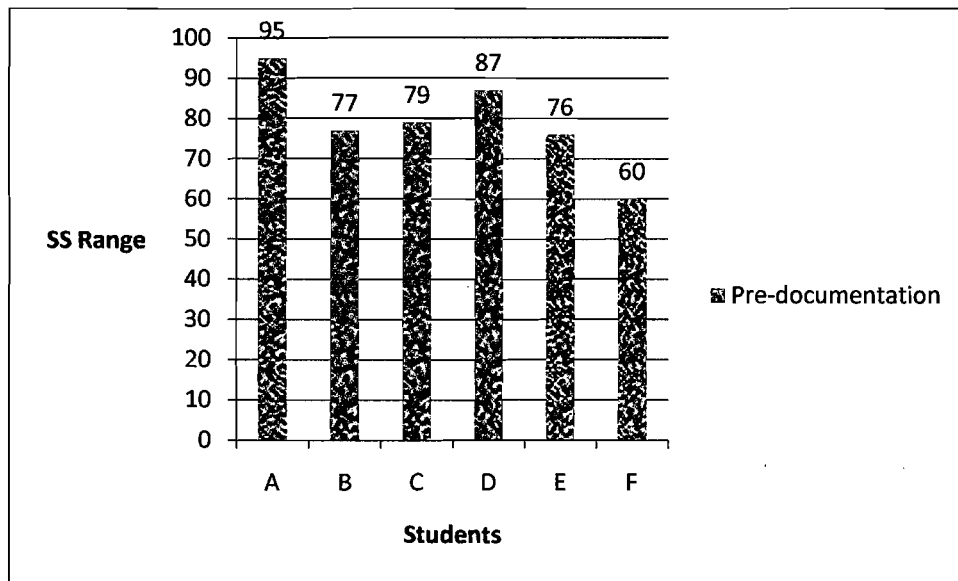


Figure 3: Scaled Scores

Figure 4 shows the Grade Equivalent (GE) score. The GE shows where the students reading scores fall as compared to other student scores throughout the nation. The mean for the tested students was .9, a pre-primer reading level. The reading range for the group of second grade students was from .4, a pre-primer reading level, to 1.2 which refers to the second month of first grade.

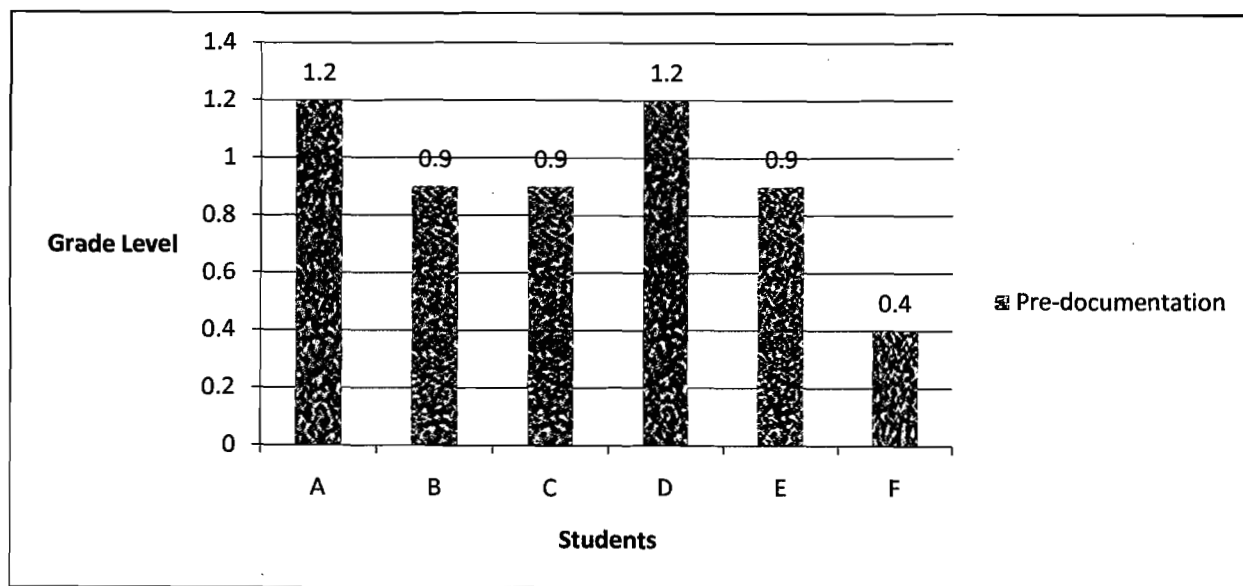


Figure 4: *Grade Equivalent (GE)*

Figure 5 shows the Percentile Rank (PR). The PR has a range of 1 to 99. The mean for the students was 7, showing that the test group's average score was below that of 93% of the students tested at the same grade level nationally.

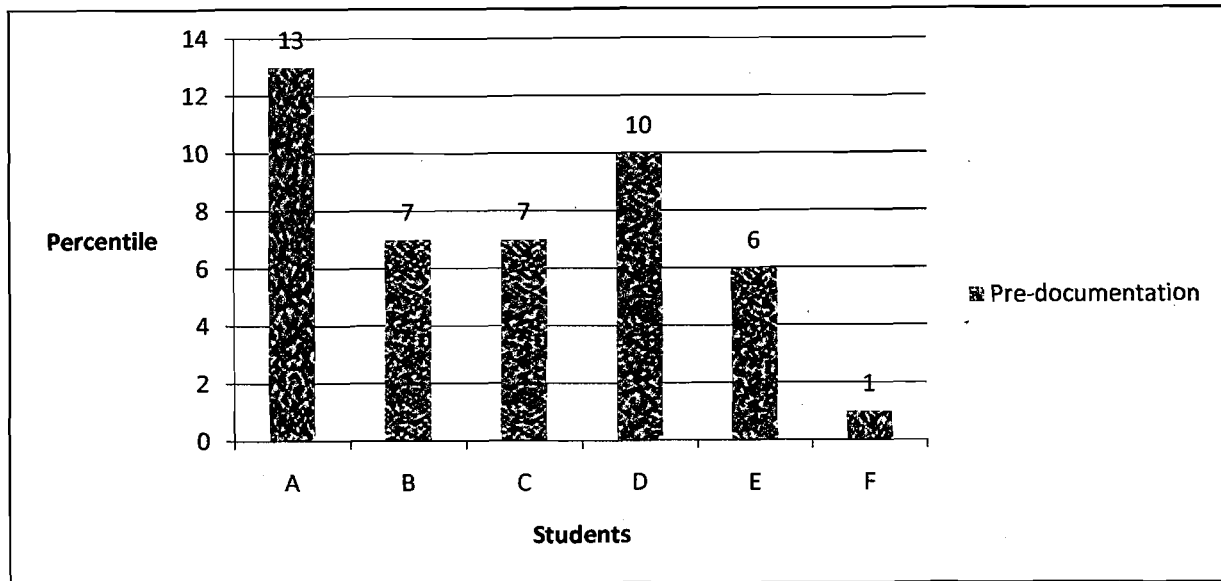


Figure 5: *Percentile Rank*

Table 6 shows the Zone of Proximal Development ZPD for the students. The ZPD, as described in the STAR Reading Diagnostic Report, is the reading range level recommended for book selection for the students if using the Accelerated Reader program.

Table 6

Zone of Proximal Development:

<u>STUDENTS</u>	<u>ZPD</u>
A	1.3-2.5
B	0.9-1.9
C	0.9-1.9
D	1.2-2.2
E	0.9-1.9
F	0.4-1.4

The students in this particular test group were all reading well below grade level. The independent reading level range, which is the low end score of the ZPD, was at a pre-primer level for all students.

Reflection

Given the data, it was apparent that all students in the test group (n=6) were reading approximately one to one and a half years below grade level. All were receiving reading/language arts instruction within the primary cross-categorical special education classroom. Since disabilities varied, an intervention intended to stimulate literacy development across disabilities, that would not only positively impact reading within the reading classroom but also support content area reading, would be beneficial.

Probable Causes

There are a number of reasons for which reading/literacy performance is negatively impacted. It is no secret that there are those who believe in first focusing primarily in the building of emergent readers' basic reading skills, including letter/sound correspondence, sight word recognition, decoding skills and fluency. This reading philosophy is supported by Douetil (2005), who wonders how children can enjoy reading if they are unable to read. Beyond that, there are the skills and desires necessary for application to texts of increasing difficulty. These skills include intonation, as well as, developed and related background knowledge in areas such as living things and habitats, geographical locations and cultural differences, historical background, and scientific and technological terms and definitions. These are the skills that some consider of utmost importance in helping to turn students, including struggling readers, into readers for a lifetime.

Some researchers have a strong belief in combining what once were felt to be conflicting approaches in the development of reading achievement. These methods include both the direct instruction of basic skills, and the whole language approach. Johnson (2004) supports the mutual inclusion of these methods in what could be considered a "Constructivism" and "Instructionism" spiral, whereas one concept supports the progress of the other in the building of literacy skills. The combination or blended approach of basic skill building and the whole language is also supported by Brooks-Harper and Shelton (2003) for enhancing both children's reading and writing skills and pleasure.

It is true that fewer children, today, are reading for the simple pleasure of it (Clark & Rumbold, 2006; von Rembow, n.d.). At one time, reading for pleasure was a primary pastime. Now, it is easy to assume that increased time spent watching television and interacting with the

internet impacts the amount of reading that children do (Kenney & Gunter, n.d.). There is only so much time available after school and on weekends, yet today's students have a greater amount of technological hardware, as well as software, available to them. One might wonder if kids today have replaced the concept of kicking back with a good book with a new concept of reading a book either on-line or downloaded. With parental and media concerns of kids' on-line gaming and addictions to gaming, it is doubtful that children are using this technological medium for the purpose of literary development and satisfaction. It has been suggested, however, that the decrease in reading activity could be a reaction to the lack of color available in printed text, which does not compare with the bright graphics available through technology (Kirschenbaum, 2006).

There are those, however, who feel that teachers are simply not meeting children's interests in reading. Some teachers may not be aware of student interests (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). For beginning readers, interests may not be developed enough to positively impact comprehension (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005). At the primary level, many of the books available in our school libraries have little to show for content that might stimulate interests of early learners with the focus being on developing word-attack skills. These trade books contain numerous consonant, vowel consonant (cvc) words (i.e. dog, cat); consonant, vowel, consonant and e (cvce) words (i.e. game, came); and high-frequency words (i.e. the, to, my)--readable, yet dull. Also, teachers may not be reading to students enough, particularly to those that are struggling readers who may enjoy attempting to re-read a simple, yet familiar text of interest (Cunningham, 2005).

Some researchers feel that there are gender differences in students' reading interests. When these reading interests are not met, students attitudes towards reading, as well as their reading

performances, suffer (Brozo, 2006; Cavazos-Kottke, 2005; Cunningham, 2005; Dreher, 2003; Merrisuo-Storm, 2006). Boys, in particular, are interested in non-fiction topics, yet little non-fiction is available in classroom libraries (Young & Moss, 2006).

Lack of non-fiction may also slow down the building of background knowledge, thereby impacting comprehension (Soalt, 2005). This may also extend to the support of content areas. A firm foundation for building literacy in those areas may be difficult to provide without increased exposure to informational texts (Schachter, 2006).

Many researchers suggest that the unavailability of books, in general, plays at least a partial role in students spending minimal time reading (Sanacore, 2006; Shin, 2004; Werderich & Pariza, n.d.). Whether it be lack of books at home, lack of a classroom library, or few appropriate selections within the school library, it is difficult to improve on reading without something to read.

The avoidance of graphic or comic books within the classroom may be withholding even another means of spreading reading enjoyment, particularly to students at-risk who may benefit from the visual clues (Thompson, 2007). Cunningham (2005) hints that a lack of informational journals (i.e., *Weekly Reader* & *Time for Kids*) available to students in the classroom, as well as the lack of classroom availability of favorite children's magazines (i.e., *Sports Illustrated for Kids* & *Nickelodeon*) may also minimize opportunities for children to reach for text of interest. These journals and magazines may impose an upbeat and current atmosphere to the school and classroom libraries when subscriptions are kept up. Some schools may not subscribe to certain journals/magazines (i.e. *National Geographic for Kids*) due to expense or fear of content that some parents or board members may not appreciate.

Another factor negatively impacting student reading performance is the lack of discourse on

reading and writing topics. Perhaps some children are not given verbal support and/or encouragement to read, thereby allowing for diminished confidence (Shin, 2004). Others may have difficulty with book selections, perhaps unaware of books relating to a particular topic (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006). They may be given little time to critique books, either verbally or in writing (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Hiles, n.d.).

An uncomfortable classroom environment is also not conducive to the promotion of literacy. A stark classroom may not give the feel of cozying up to a book that a warm and welcoming classroom might. Not only the furnishings, but also the attitude of the teacher towards reading may leave a related or mirrored impression on the children (Werderich & Pariza, n.d.).

Without interesting activities and strategies, at-risk students may have difficulty attending to the material, thereby negatively impacting comprehension. Without interesting material to read, as well as time to read, whether it be a book that is read to the students, or books that the students read during shared or silent reading, lifetime literacy skills will not be developed (Sanacore, 2006).

With students at-risk, it is often difficult for teachers to find activities interesting enough to keep the students on task; as well as provide the essential repeated readings necessary to allow for the improvement in reading fluency, which, in turn, helps with reading comprehension (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). When a teacher offers the same mind-numbing reading/literacy lessons day after day, students will turn their attention to anything of greater interest to them.

For students with different learning modalities, such as the visual/spatial or kinesthetic learners, Armstrong (2004), implies that teachers may not be meeting the students learning needs by not using reading/literacy activities influenced by Gardner's multiple intelligences theory. For example, after a short reading, visual learners may need to get a picture in their mind to help

clarify what had happened in the paragraph or story.

To recap, probable causes for low reading/literacy performance are numerous. Included are lack of basic skills and background knowledge, interference of reading time due to technology-related pastime, lack of stimulating reading resources, discourse and related activities.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

There are numerous strategies a teacher can utilize in the effort to improve student literacy. The goals of these solutions range from development of the basic reading skills at the primary level, to the skills needed for students to not only become involved in content area reading and writing, but also to develop the skills and desires necessary to become life-long learners.

To increase students' reading performance, it is important to increase positive reading opportunities for students. These may include reading programs, silent reading, and shared reading (Cunningham, 2005; Sanacore, 2002; Sanacore, 2006). Constructive and upbeat reading sessions may also improve the likelihood of students not only attending to task, but also to their actual involvement and processing of information.

Readers Theater

One possible strategy that has received a lot of focus is the use of readers theater as a supplement to the reading curriculum. Readers theater provides a fun way to encourage students to read and re-read, thereby developing their reading skills (Casey & Chamberlin. n.d., Yopp & Yopp, 2003). Readers theater can be beneficial for both reading and content areas (Dreher, 2003). Reading fluency can be enhanced through the use of Readers Theater. "Reading fluency is the ability to read accurately, quickly, effortlessly, and with appropriate expression and meaning" (Rasinski, 2003; as cited by Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). "Reading fluency is important because it affects students' reading efficiency and comprehension", (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004).

There is plenty of Readers Theater material available through purchased scripts and topic related anthologies. Many stories, either fiction or non-fiction, could be adapted. Material is also

available on-line.

Although a number of researchers support the use of readers theater to improve reading performance for intermediate level and older students, there are those, such as Moran (2006), who support the use of readers theater for the beginning reader. Through readers theater, students are allowed the opportunity to have the multiple repetitions necessary to master most or all of the words in the script. The reading levels can vary just as the reading curriculum and trade books do. Students may also get involved in creating additional scripts for the plays. Content area, that may seem otherwise dull, can quickly be enlivened through the creation of a script, and student participation (Powell-Brown, 2006). Appealing to various learning modalities, students may be more likely to retain information learned. Positive social interactions are another benefit of introducing readers theater to the classroom. Student choice could play a part in the selection of plays to incorporate into the classroom lessons.

Students may also benefit from the inclusion of readers theater into all area of the curriculum. Using “curriculum-based readers theater” or CBRT” is highly recommended by Flynn (2004). Scripts can be developed for the content areas such as math, science, and social studies. The repeated readings allow for greater retention (Flynn, 2004) of the areas that students at-risk for failure have major difficulty in. For greater enhancement of literacy performance, students can help to develop the scripts used based on curriculum topics. Flynn (2004) suggest that “students use prewriting strategies (e.g., making lists, clustering or mind-mapping; answering the questions of what, when, where, who and why) to generate, select, elaborate on, and organize ideas, vocabulary, and information.”

Choral and Echo Reading

For children at-risk, interactive activities are crucial, as many have difficulty attending to

task when left to read independently. Choral reading allows groups of students to read together (Yopp & Yopp, 2003). This allows the teacher to observe more students reading, as well as saving valuable class time that would otherwise be used on a one-to-one basis. Also recommended by Yopp and Yopp (2003), is echo reading, where “the teacher reads aloud the same portion of the selection, attempting to mimic the reading rate, expression, intonation, and phrasing of the teacher.”:

Classroom and School Libraries

Many researchers also stress the importance of providing students with a variety of genres and topics of interest through a broad range of books (Dreher, 2003). This could include both the classroom library as well as the school library (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). Another way to increase student reading performance in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension, as well as build a platform for building background knowledge, is to increase the amount of non-fiction trade books or fiction/non-fiction sets available (Young & Moss, 2006). Many students simply do not have the exposure to non-fiction because teachers and school libraries often fill their shelves with fiction, perhaps hoping to trigger a desire to read through providing cute or endearing characters. It is important to have a well-stocked classroom library with equal amounts of fiction and non-fiction to promote student engagement (Cunningham, 2005). Choose books that have visual appeal, accurate and age-appropriate content (Young & Moss, 2006). The non-fiction reading material could be used for the silent reading, shared or paired, and guided reading opportunities available to students.

Supportive Setting

Of course, children also need a supportive setting in which to learn. Naturally, the reading environment should have a relaxing atmosphere, conducive to learning, with a comfortable

reading area (Werderich & Pariza, n.d.; Ezarik, 2004). It is essential to also provide a rich learning environment respective of culture, heritage and social-economic status (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005). It is within a safe setting that students are more likely to be motivated to take on reading challenges. Help students to build basic reading skills. Give tasks where students can succeed, but are not too easy (McCabe, 2006; Cheak & Wessel, n.d.).

By providing a safe environment in which to learn, firming up basic skills, building upon what students know, and following the basic classroom reading strategies for shared, paired and guided reading, as well as introducing engaging activities such as Readers Theater, and meeting student interests by adding more non-fiction to the already available reading material, student will be likely to show improvement in their reading performance.

Project Objectives and Processing Statements

As a result of the use of increased exposure to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater during the period of September, 2007 through December, 2007, the targeted second grade students in the primary cross categorical class are to increase their literacy performance as measured by the Star Reading and DIBELS assessments. In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Add an assortment of appropriate Fiction/nonfiction selections to the classroom library.
2. Match students with appropriate leveled fiction/non-fiction selections from the school library.
3. Review Readers Theater activities
4. Select Readers Theater scripts based on general group ability.

Project Action Plan

After reflecting upon the project objectives and processes, the teacher researcher created the following project action plan. This plan describes the steps of the research. The action plan spans a time frame of 14 weeks and addresses the requirements of the study.

What Task?	How?	When?	What?	Comments
Send home parent reading surveys & self-addressed envelope	Mail through school office	September 4, 2007	Cross Cat. Teacher	Should be returned by Sept. 10, 2007
Directions for library book selections	Discuss/Discover	Beginning September 4, 2007	Reg. 2 nd grade & Cross cat. Teachers	Individually Take notes
Discover student reading interests	Discuss/Discover	September 10, 2007	Cross-Cat. Teacher	Should be collected as soon as completed.
DIBELS	Administered Individually	Week of September 10, 2007	Cross-Cat. Teacher	Missed tests due to absence will be taken within two days of return.
STAR Pre-Doc. Taken by each of the eight students.	Cross-Cat Classroom Computers	Week of September 17, 2007	Overseen by Cross-cat. Teacher	Missed tests due to absence will be taken within two days of return.
To increase reading/literacy through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and readers theater.	Introduce fiction/non-fiction selections available in classroom and library.	Week of September 17, 2007	Cross-Cat. Teacher to Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	Discuss materials added to classroom.
To increase reading/literacy through increased access to fiction and non-fiction and readers theater.	Continue with fiction/non-fiction selections. Add Readers Theater activities.	Week of September 24, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	Assign rolls for readers theater selection.

To increase reading/literacy through increased access to fiction and non-fiction and readers theater.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers Theater activities.	Week of October 1, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy through increased access to fiction and non-fiction and readers theater.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers Theater activities.	Week of October 8, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater activities.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers theater activities.	Week of October 15, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater activities.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers theater activities.	Week of October 22, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers theater activities.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers theater activities.	Week of October 29, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater activities.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers theater activities.	Week of November 5, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	

To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater activities.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers Theater activities.	Week of November 12, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater activities	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers Theater activities.	Week of November 19, 2006.	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater activities.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers Theater activities.	Week of November 26, 2007.	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
To increase reading/literacy performance through increased access to fiction/non-fiction and Readers Theater activities.	Use fiction/non-fiction selections from school library and classroom library. Continue with Readers Theater activities.	Week of December 3, 2007.	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students.	
DIBELS Post-Doc. administered to students.	Administered individually.	Week of December 3, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	
STAR post-doc. administered to students.	Administered individually.	Week of December 10, 2007	Targeted 2 nd Grade Students	

Methods of Assessment

The following assessment tools were given to approximately six second grade students during a 14-week study: a) DIBELS an assessment of basic skills, and b) STAR Reading, a computer program assessment of reading comprehension.

The first instrument, DIBELS was administered for pre-documentation and post-documentation of the students to determine growth in basic reading skills. The one-minute assessments were given by the teacher individually to each student.

The second instrument, STAR Reading, was administered for pre-documentation and post-documentation, and was used to determine growth in reading comprehension. Students used a computer program to answer 25 questions. A printout was then provided showing the students' scaled scores, grade level scores, and zone of proximal development.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase reading/literacy performance of a small group of students who were considered to be at-risk. Throughout the course of the research, the students were given greater exposure to both the classroom library and school library, and access to fiction/non-fiction reading and activities. The students were also involved in Readers Theater activities. Student improvement was measured through DIBELS and STAR assessments.

The teacher researcher began the research process by sending home parental permission slips explaining the research project. Six of seven permission slips were returned. Parent surveys were sent home during the first week of September, 2007. Four parents responded.

Trade books were ordered for the classroom. Many were non-fiction, based on concerns that the second-grade teachers had shared at a grade level meeting, that the students would not be prepared for the more difficult reading, concepts and vocabulary they would encounter in the third grade. Some of the fiction books ordered were by endearing authors that the students had been, or may have been, introduced to in earlier grades. Both fiction and non-fiction topics were ordered with keeping the science curriculum in mind. Reference books and book sets were ordered. Collections of readers theater scripts were also ordered. One contained scripts with high-frequency and sight words. Another contained scripts that were re-tells of old favorites.

During week two, students reviewed library rules, so that they would be prepared for future activities. The concepts of fiction and non-fiction were shared with the students. Students were allowed to work on Accelerated Reading (AR) since they did have goals to meet that were set by

the second grade teachers. Students shared their reading interests. More books were ordered for the classroom.

During week three, students were administered the DIBELS in order to establish baseline data of early literacy skills. The STAR reading was to be administered, also to be used as baseline data; and to establish approximate independent and instructional reading levels of the students. However, the program hadn't been installed by the technology director due to obligations of higher priority. The teacher researcher did request that the program be installed as soon as possible. Since the assessments could be used up to five times per year, they could still be useful for showing reading levels and growth.

Once the available baseline data was established, students were introduced to the new materials and routines. Many of the new trade book selections were placed in the browsing bins cart which is at an appropriate height for the students. To begin with, books were separated by fiction and non-fiction. Related fiction and non-fiction topics were placed near each other. The original plan for school library visits was that the students would visit the library not only with their general educational classrooms, but also with their pull out language arts resource class and the teacher/researcher. Unfortunately, however, the librarian did not start her day in the library until the afternoon. Since the teacher researcher's language arts class for the second grade students met in the morning, the group would not be able to benefit from the librarian's knowledge and support.

The routine for the Readers Theater activities was also introduced. The students were very happy and excited about it. However, even the easiest scripts found appeared to be difficult for the students. The students did not appear to mind, and worked diligently on the first script that

was a retell of the favorite *Three Little Pigs and The Big Bad Wolf* folktale.

At the beginning of week four, all but one of the students had lost their scripts which they had taken home in order to practice their parts. Fortunately, extra copies were made and handed out. Those were “lost” by the next day. The teacher researcher’s mother came for her monthly visit to the class and was kind enough to make enough copies of all scripts so that there were three of each title for every student. One for home, one for school, and a spare.

Students also continued to have fiction/non-fiction activities associated with concepts taught in the general classrooms. For example, students enjoyed listening to non-fiction books about amphibians. They also had the opportunity to read or listen to a number of the *Froggy* books, which were fiction. This was followed by individual Accelerated Reader tests on the selections, which helped the students to work toward the grade level AR point goals established by the second grade level teacher team. Students also worked on the writing aspect of literacy by developing a paragraph about frogs. At this point, it only seemed natural to pull out the science curriculum big-book to go over the unit on amphibians. The students were extremely attentive. Since they came from various general education second grade classrooms within the building, some had already been exposed to the unit, and others would be during the first semester. The teacher researcher felt that the increased number of repetitions provided by the curriculum, fiction and non-fiction trade books may have made it easier for the students to re-call terms and concepts.

By week five, the students were showing a preference for non-fiction books. They also seemed to be taking more accelerated reading tests than in previous years. The library had added quite a few new non-fiction selections with topics of high-interest to the students. One other

interesting note on the children's choices of reading activities was that although they appeared to enjoy more non-fiction, they would choose a fiction selection over non-fiction, if the non-fiction was not on the AR test list. The students were also eager to review the previous week's Readers Theater Script. One student, who generally hated schoolwork, enjoyed playing the part of the Big Bad Wolf. The children all smiled and giggled when she growled "Little pig, little pig, let me come in." Unfortunately, however, not all of the students had practiced their lines over the weekend. It was very slow going throughout the script. A couple of students had missed their medication on one of the mornings, and were very difficult to keep on task. Even though it was literally a "rocking group", the students wanted to continue working on the script. They were only able to get about one-third of the way through the script at the time, although it was a familiar retell. During week six, the students were still enjoying their first script, but were given a second script as well. It was a retell of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. All hands went up as parts were handed out. The whole group seemed to come together at Readers Theater time. Unfortunately, scripts were still being lost. Students were not practicing their parts at home. If the classroom was a general education classroom, where the students were in the room all day, more time could be allowed for the students to rehearse. However, the students all had IEP's, and not all student goals were the same. The students were in the cross-categorical classroom for only ninety minutes for language arts. They had to go over the general reading curriculum, the direct instruction material for some, as well as the general curriculum writers workshop. As far as the fiction/non-fiction activities, the students still continued to enjoy non-fiction selections for their Accelerated Readers. Some students attempted to read *Froggy* books on their own, even though the reading levels of these fiction selections were higher than might normally be recommended.

The students also began to recognize the author's voice in his writing, as a lot of the lines showed up in every book.

By week seven, the students were reading more fluently throughout their first two Readers Theater scripts. The students would eagerly run with excitement to the special rehearsal area whenever it was announced that it was Readers Theater time. Most students were still not practicing their parts at home, even though notes had gone home to parents, requesting their support. As for the fiction/non-fiction, the class finally made a transition from amphibians/frogs to fall. The "Frog and Toad" stories from the classroom reading curriculum as well as from the classroom library, were shared and discussed. "The Surprise" from the classroom reader was about raking fall leaves and allowed for the smooth transition from amphibians/frogs to fall. Moving from one topic to another seemed to be a slow process. It took a long time for the students to get through a book, even when it was at a low reading level. The teacher researcher had to remind herself that some of the students were basically non-readers at the beginning of the school year. They had just started receiving special education services. From that viewpoint, it was nice to see that the students were starting to enjoy reading. Another concern the teacher researcher had was the original tools chosen for measurement of improvement in literacy performance. Perhaps they would not give a full and true picture.

About half of the students started working on their scripts at home by week seven. There were a number of absences, which meant a lot of make-up work for students. Therefore, less time was spent on Reader's Theater activities. In the general classrooms, teachers reported that some of the students were participating more in discussions about living things during science. Students were also taking more interest in the new reading selections within the special education

setting, whether or not they had an associated Accelerated Reader test in the data base.

By the end of week eight, the Star Reading assessment had been installed on one of the computers. The teacher researcher had the students take the assessments immediately. The fiction/non-fiction activities no longer correlated with the majority of the second grade classrooms, as the teachers turn to their own preferences of units during the end of October.

The Readers Theater scripts were still not rehearsed at the students' homes. However, the students still enjoyed Readers Theater and were slightly showing improvement in their fluency. Some of the students were also starting to read their parts with a little more expression.

Week nine was conference week. Data had to be collected for the students' quarterly reports. The students were free to enjoy reading selections of their own choice. Time was found to rehearse for Readers Theater. The students were still eager to participate.

The teacher researcher started taking a large assortment of the school library books to the classroom library for the students to choose from. A few of the general education classroom teachers were using the school library as a place to work one-on-one with some of their students. Since the library was quite a distance from the cross-categorical classroom, the teacher researcher felt that her students would have more time on task if the books were more easily accessible to them. Another change to the classroom was that new computers, or similar computers with new parts were added to the classroom. Unfortunately, the Star Reading Program did not remain. Promises were made to install it later. Also, new students at the kindergarten and first grade levels were added to the classroom environment. The additions impacted time that the second grade students had available for the Readers Theater activities. There was a positive note for the fiction/non-fiction activities. A couple of the general education classrooms were working on the

topic area of communities. Although the cross-categorical classroom was limited in some of the topic areas addressed by the general education classrooms, the research group did have access to books about communities, a subject addressed not only at the first and second grade levels in social studies, but also in the general reading curriculum at both levels. Therefore, curriculum connections were made during the week.

For the remainder of the research period, week 10 through week 14, a routine was kept as much as time allowed due to holiday activities in the various classrooms, as well as Thanksgiving break which presented a shortened school week. The general education reading and writing curriculum with modifications was presented at the beginning of the school week, followed by fiction/non-fiction reading, writing and cooperative group activities with time found for Readers Theater near the end of the school week.

The following week, the teacher researcher administered the final DIBELS and STAR assessments. The research data was compiled and analyzed.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Students in the second grade cross-categorical classroom perform behind the general second grade population in the areas of reading literacy. Evidence of this problem include the DIBELS and STAR assessments. The interventions used to address the students lack of growth in the area of reading literacy were increased access to fiction/non-fiction resources found not only the school library, but also in the classroom library. Also, Readers Theater activities were added to the weekly reading and language arts routine as further incentive for literacy improvement.

Figure 6 shows the results of the DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency assessment. By the end of first grade, students should have a PSF ≥ 35 . Since the test group of students were in the second grade, yet at risk for failure and receiving special education services in the literacy areas, it is important to note that although four of the students initially met the criteria for end of first grade, at the end of the research period, all of the students met the criteria, placing them at less than a half-year deficit in phoneme segmentation skills. Student D decreased in score from September to December, although not markedly, still meeting the criteria for end of first grade.

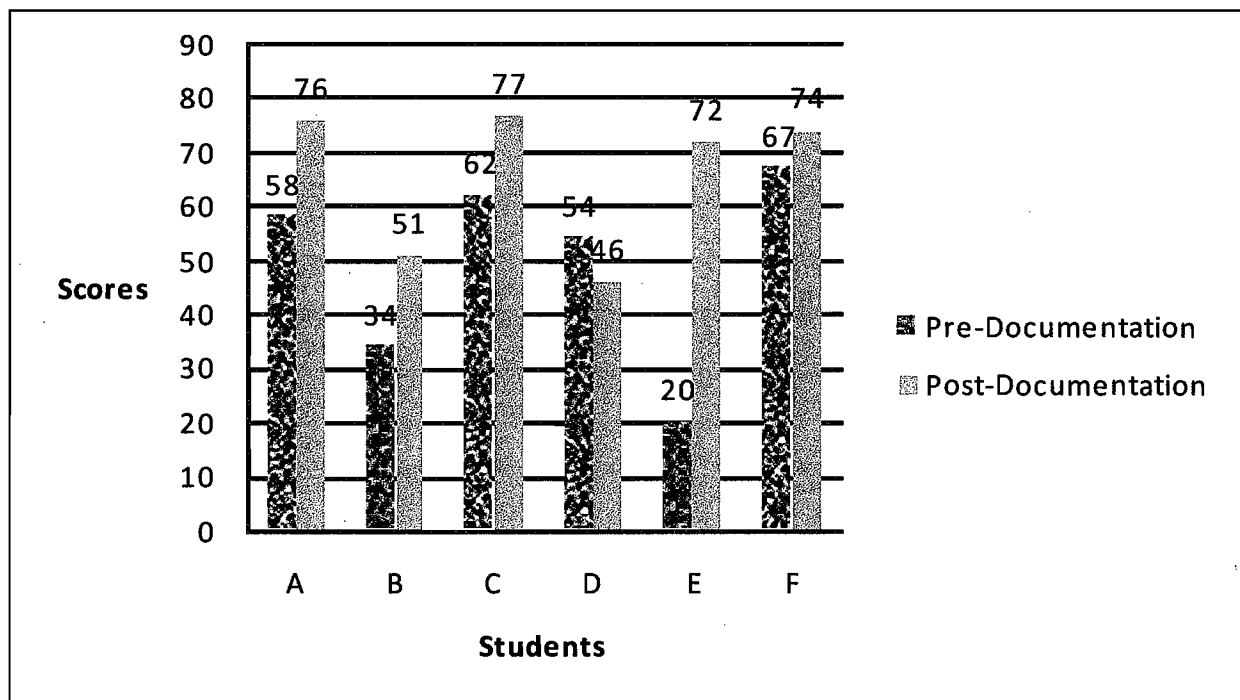


Figure 6: *Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (n=6)*

Figure 7 shows the results of the DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency assessment. By the end of first grade, a NWF score of < 30 would be considered deficit in the skill. A student with a score of $30 \leq \text{NWF} < 50$ would be considered to be emerging in the skill. A student with a NWF score ≥ 50 would have met the criteria for establishing the skill for the end of first grade. Again, the DIBELS assessment was not taken as a standardized measure, but as an informal assessment intended to measure where the test group of students with special needs were in their development of these basic skills which are known to impact reading performance, and literacy development. In analyzing the data, the assessment shows that all five students showed growth in this skill area, with five of the students considered to have met the criteria for establishment of the skill at the end of first grade level. One student was still in the emerging zone but only by one point, which was not remarkable. The mean as measured during the NWF assessment in September, was 32.3, or emerging in the skill. The mean at the end of the research period in December was 70.7, highly influenced by student C. All students would be considered to be established in the skill at the end of first grade level.

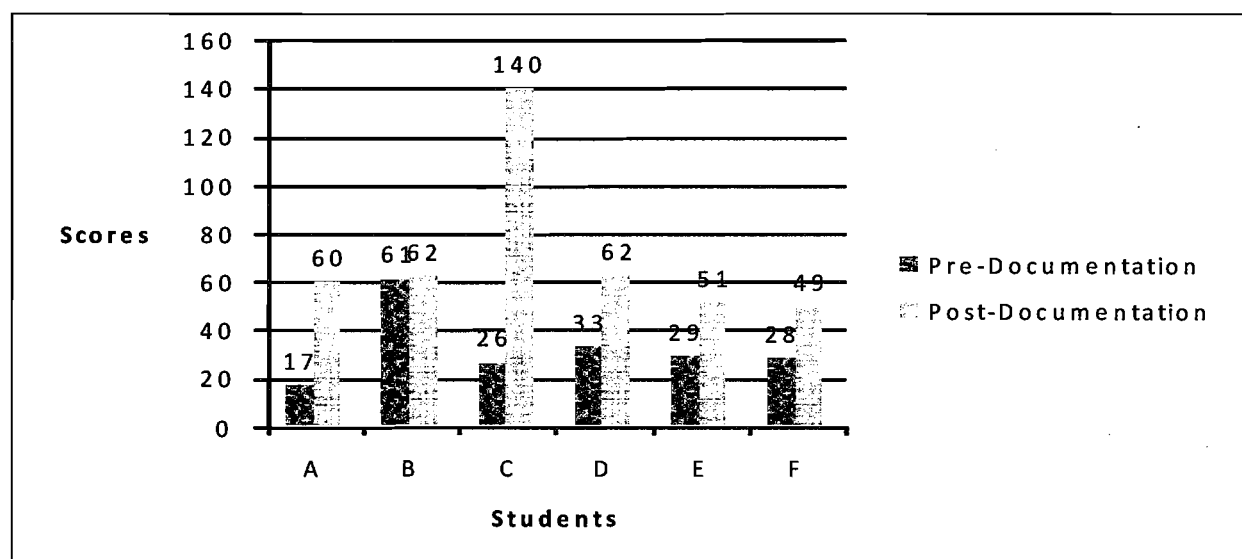


Figure 7: Nonsense Word Fluency

Figure 8 shows the results of the Star Reading Assessment in scaled scores. The scores suggest growth for all students. The initial mean for students was 79. The post-documentation mean was 105. All students showed growth according to the scaled score results.

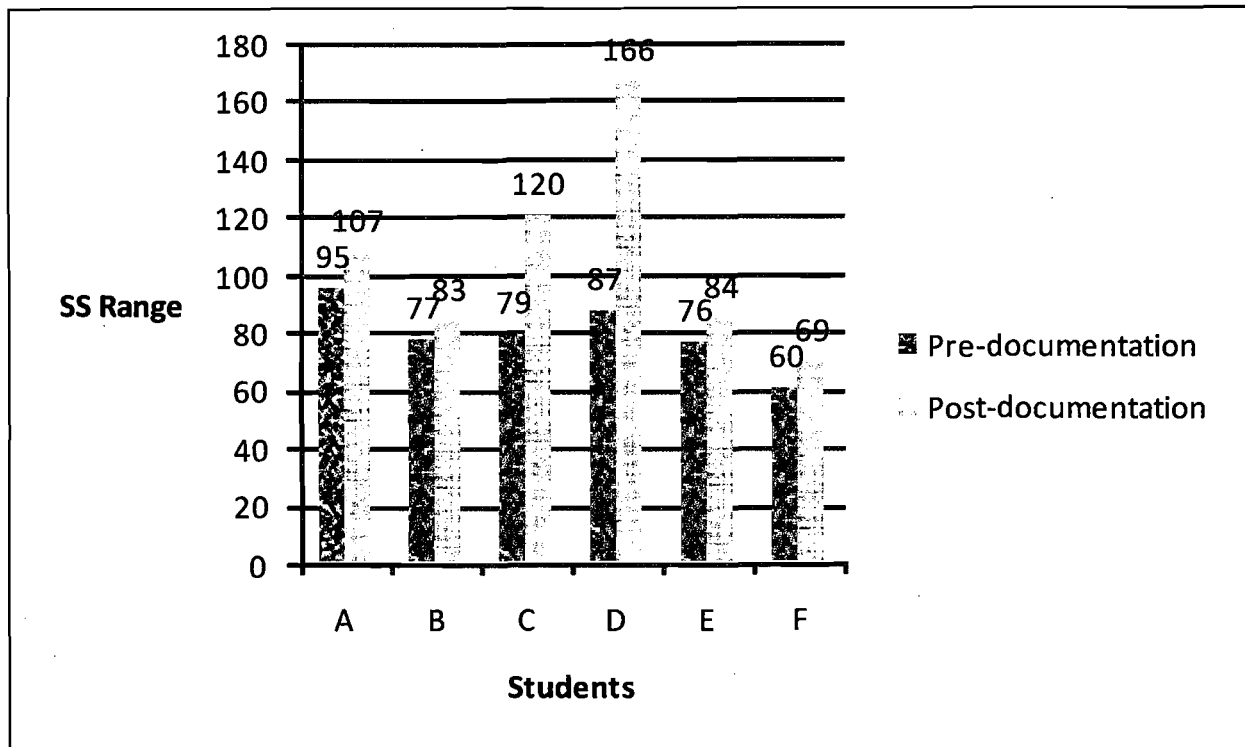


Figure 8: *Scaled Scores (SS)*

Figure 9 shows the results of the Grade Equivalent (GE) scores.

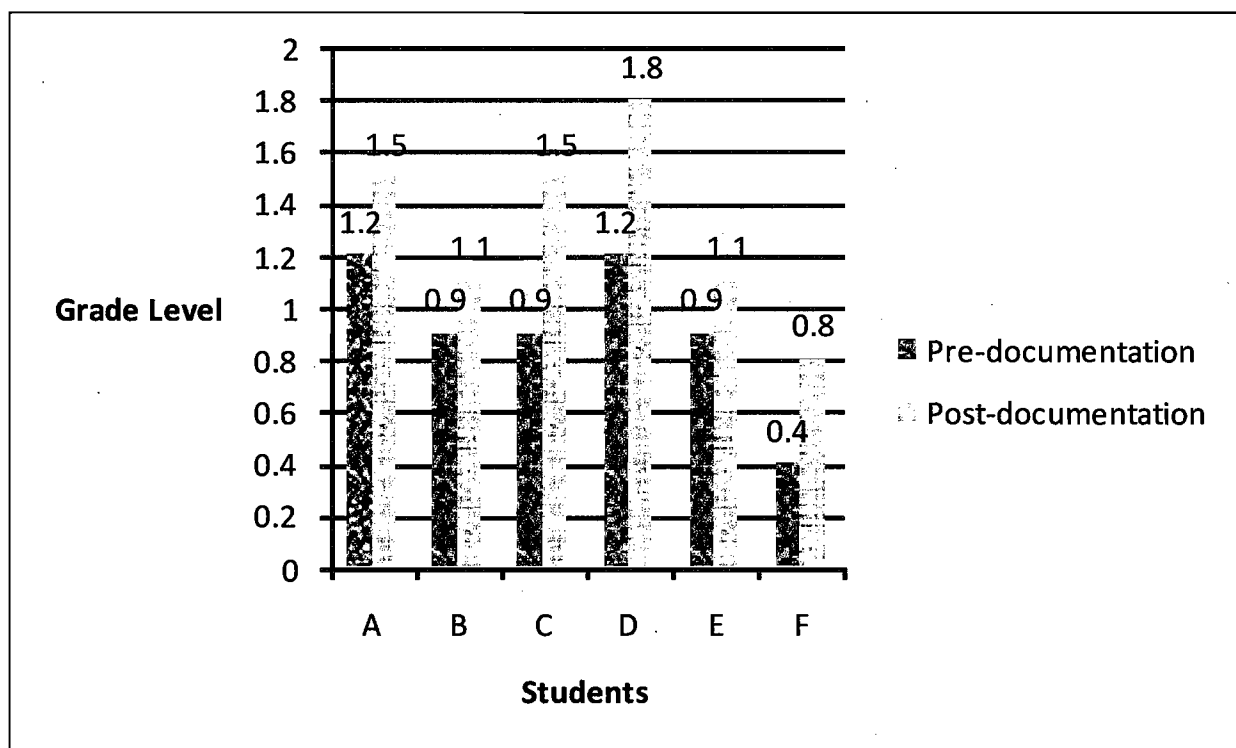


Figure 9: *Grade Equivalent (GE)*

The grade equivalent scores showed growth in grade level performance across the test group. The range was two to six months growth during the 14-week period. The pre-documentation mean was 7.8. The post-documentation mean was 10.5.

Figure 10 shows the Percentile Rank from the Star Assessments.

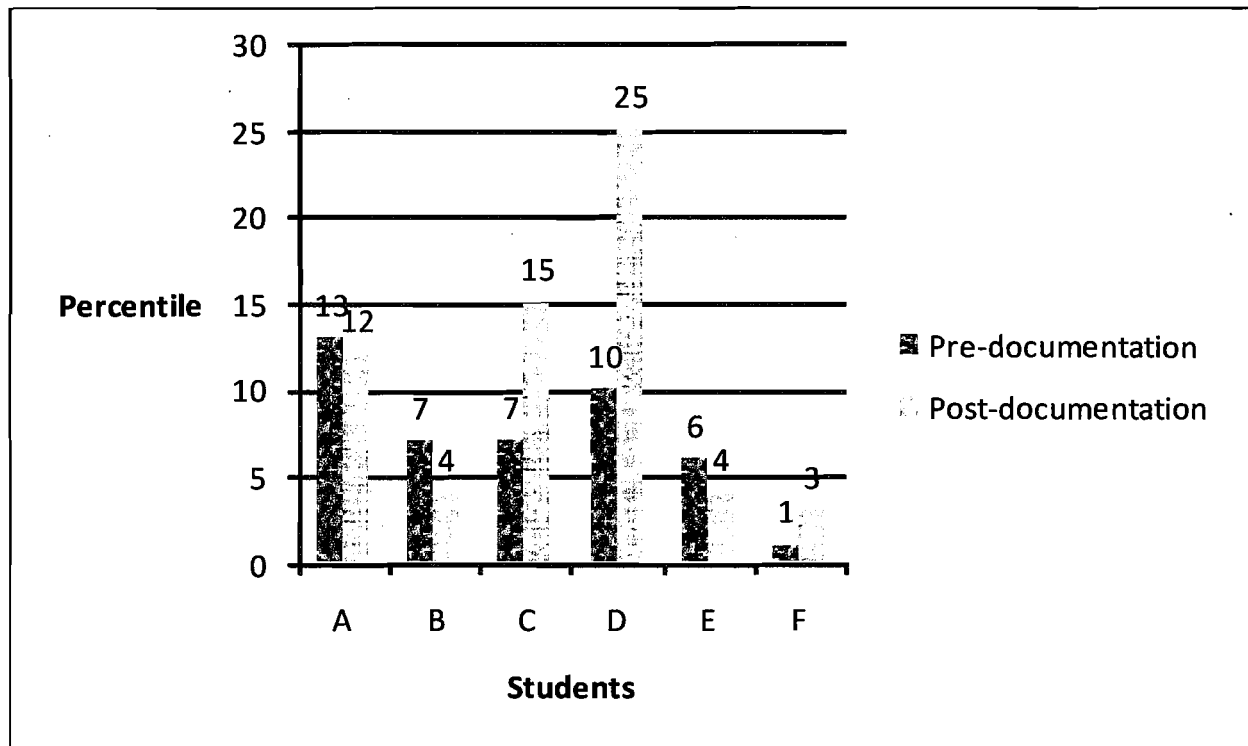


Figure 10: *Percentile Rank*

Only 50% (n=3) of the students showed growth in percentile rank with the initial mean at the 7.3 percentile, and the end mean at the 10.5 percentile. With one student at the 25th percentile, the remaining five students are still well below the 25th percentile.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The teacher researcher realizes that the interventions chosen for this action research were too broad. The fiction/non-fiction resources would have been enough to focus on for the first part of the school year. The Readers Theater activities would have been better if used as a second action research at the end of the school year when the students were able to read a little more fluently.

Both interventions appeared to be enjoyed by the students. The fiction/non-fiction book selections and activities appeared to be more motivating, seeming to increase the students' desires to read and write. Yes, the assessment tools of DIBELS and Star Reading were not necessarily appropriate for measuring students' desires to become more literate, nor could they be used to show actual increase in the basic reading skills of literacy that could definitely be attributed to the interventions.

Perhaps more appropriate tools would have included student portfolios showing Accelerated Reading reports of student growth in reading levels, as well as the reading choices of fiction or non-fiction, or student writing compositions on subjects covered in their reading. Perhaps, by the end of the action research, students could have written their own response to the question, "How has your reading improved?" or "Do you enjoy reading? If so, what types of books do you like to read?" An observational survey such as those used by the Reading Recovery teachers may have been more appropriate for measuring the students' progress in the basic reading skills, knowledge of text and fluency.

Also impacting progress may be the fact that at least 50% (n=3) of the students were not receiving their medication on a regular basis. At times a student may have forgotten the medication, at other times a baby sitter may have forgotten to administer the medication, and there were those who ran out of medication sometimes. Two of the research group students started wearing glasses after the research period. The glasses were prescription glasses for reading. One student spent much of his reading time, prior to receiving his glasses, with one eye closed. He claimed that he could see better that way. After receiving his glasses, he read with both eyes open. The two students appeared to enjoy spending more time reading after receiving

their new glasses.

In conclusion, this action research project gives hope for future action research projects which are more focused on one simple change to the classroom along with a more appropriate measure.

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