

ETC 690 Master Project

Readers Theater to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension: An Issue-focused Design-based Study to Better Support Students Reading Below Grade Level

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Submitted to the

Graduate School of Education

City University of Seattle

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master's in Teaching

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my husband and three children for their unconditional encouragement, understanding, and patience and enduring this journey with me. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to my research advisor Corll Morrissey, program director Susan Gray, and mentor teacher Wayne Anderson for their invaluable support and incredible adaptability throughout these uncharted times.

Abstract

This study examines the efficacy of implementing Readers Theater on comprehension and reading motivation for lower-ability readers in upper grade classrooms. Analysis of the needs of upper-grade students soon to transition to middle school suggest an added emphasis on engaging fluency and comprehension activities to establish deep-rooted reading proficiency across all content areas. Differentiation methods such as student choice and diverse scripts can give students options. A variety of assessment methods can be used to evaluate the impact of Readers Theater including use of technology and art. Practical applications of this study include the ability to incorporate in everyday reading routines and capacity for differentiation. Through analysis of the dilemma and review of the literature the researcher proposes Readers Theater in the upper grades could improve students' reading comprehension abilities.

Introduction

The purpose of reading is to make meaning of written language. A reader who lacks comprehension when reading cannot make connections to characters, recall main ideas, or understand the author's purpose. When this occurs, reading becomes a mere pronunciation of words that have no meaning. Many lower-ability readers appear to construct meaning because they read with an appropriate tone, volume, and speed. Therefore, their lack of comprehension can be overlooked. These students enter middle school without the necessary skills to understand written texts, including in content areas. This study seeks to examine the factors contributing to the lack of reading comprehension skills in order to propose a solution to teachers and families.

Rationale

According to fifth-grade English Language Arts Common Core State Standards, by the end of the year, students should be able to read and comprehend literature and informational texts at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). However, according to iReady data, many students in my classroom are comprehending texts at a third-grade level. Lack of comprehension when reading leads to significant reading development issues. If students cannot effectively interact with a text and make meaning from it, the main point of reading is lost. How well students are able to comprehend texts can have long-term implications, including a lack of learning in the content areas. It is the role of teachers to effectively teach comprehension skills and strategies for students to use as they read (Cooper, Robinson, Slansky, & Kiger, 2015). The concern lies with how students, who are two years below grade level, will catch up by middle school.

Analysis of the Problem

Struggling readers need extra support, especially with comprehension. However, educators often inaccurately associate good fluency skills with reading comprehension. It seems readers understand text when they read with an appropriate tone and rate, but they may not. Lack of reading comprehension can be overlooked. In the upper grades, the significance of solidifying reading comprehension skills is preparation for understanding middle school content.

Comprehension skills learned in language arts are applied to understanding information in content areas. Instructional strategies supporting the development of fluency and comprehension are multifold. Student motivation, teacher scaffolding, differentiation, and collaboration are all components of comprehensive literacy strategies.

Experience in my fifth-grade classroom led to observations of students who read fluently but lack comprehension according to iReady scores, responses to comprehension questions, and summary writing samples. Many are high achieving English Language Learners, or students from homes where English is spoken as a second language. These students often read fluently but without comprehension. The school includes 11.4% English Language Learners and diverse classrooms with 58.3% of students in an Asian demographic group compared to Washington State with 8% Asian student demographics (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2019). Although many students are high achieving, 51.6% met ELA standards compared to 59.6% across Washington State (OSPI, 2019).

Our school has a low percentage of free and reduced lunch in comparison to students across Washington State and the district. The school has 4.7% low income demographics in comparison to 14.4% across the district (OSPI, 2019). However, across Washington State, 45% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch (OSPI, 2019). The geographic region promotes

high incomes with close proximity to technological industries, in which the majority of parents are employed.

Many students need encouragement to stay on task during reading activities. Because the majority of instructional time is whole class or small group lessons and activities, there is not enough time for individualized methods addressing comprehension issues. The predominate comprehension strategy is identifying main ideas and supporting details in a variety of texts. However, most lower readers are reluctant to engage and stay on task during reading activities.

Many students begin middle school lacking sufficient grade level reading skills because reading comprehension skills were not reinforced in elementary school. According to National Center for Education Statistics (2020), only 34% of eighth-grade students nationwide scored at or above the NAEP proficient reading level and only 36% showed confidence in their reading ability. There is significant concern for learning outcomes of these students in content areas such as math, social studies, and science. Furthermore, the majority of reading purposes in middle school is learning in content areas. If elementary students struggle with reading comprehension at the end of fifth grade, it is likely they will struggle with content area texts in middle school. There is importance in establishing a strong reading comprehension foundation in elementary school, so students are better able to attend to academic language in middle school and beyond.

Early in my life as an elementary student, I also struggled with reading comprehension. For me, I did not enjoy reading and had difficulty engaging with texts I read. However, this often went undetected because I was a fluent reader. I read with appropriate tone, volume, speed. I also used appropriate prosody and phrasing. Deeper investigations would have had to be done to truly notice that I had comprehension difficulties. Unfortunately, no such interventions were conducted. I went through elementary and middle school a struggling reader who did not enjoy

reading because it took so much time and rereading for me to comprehend a text. My first year of high school, I had the opportunity to dig deeper in texts through acting out scripts in my English classroom. Not only did my comprehension of texts greatly improve, my enjoyment for reading did as well.

Engaging and differentiated reading instruction is often lacking in classrooms. Teachers often lack training, time, and materials. Professional development training for general education teachers does not typically consist of strategies for effective differentiation and may not be sufficient to meet the needs of diverse learners. Even if teachers are trained to establish differentiated classrooms, time to create multiple versions of instructional materials and deliver multimodal lessons is limited. Also, due to state and federal funding shortages, school districts often must make difficult budget decisions. Typical areas for budget cuts are professional development and curriculum instructional materials. Funding shortages often prohibit access to new, engaging, and diverse reading material in classrooms. If funding is not available from districts, it often comes from teachers' pockets.

Literature Review

Development of reading proficiency is a process that requires ability to read fluently and comprehend text. Educators seek methods to increase students' intrinsic reading motivation to improve fluency and comprehension. Many instructional methods are used to improve reading proficiency: repeated reading, increasing motivation, scaffolding, graphic organizers, differentiation, and performance-based strategies.

Relationship Between Fluency and Comprehension

Reading fluency is an essential skill for reading proficiency. Fluent reading is smooth, automatic, and contains few errors. According to the theory of automaticity, mastery of reading fluency frees up cognitive space that readers can use to construct meaning of a text (Young & Nageldinger, 2014; Rasinski, Rikli, & Johnston, 2009). Rasinski et al. (2009) suggested when students spend energy decoding words, less energy is available to comprehend text.

Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading.

Prosody as an indicator of comprehension. Experience shows many upper-grade teachers do not incorporate fluency instruction in their reading curriculum even though some upper-grade students still lack fluency skills. The focus in these stages of elementary and middle school is comprehension. However, Rasinski et al. (2009) showed that reading comprehension was positively correlated with prosody skills for third-, fifth-, and seventh-grade students. The researchers demonstrated the lack of word recognition skills in upper-grade students when they showed a group of seventh-grade students' oral reading fluency scores were below that of a group of fifth graders (Rasinski et al., 2009). The middle grade students struggled to accurately identify words during oral reading. As grades progress, vocabulary in grade-level text becomes

progressively more advanced. In the upper grades, the importance lies with how exposure to increasingly unfamiliar vocabulary impacts fluency and comprehension.

Teachers sometimes mistake fluency for comprehension. Experience suggests if assessment shows students as fluent readers, teachers assume they comprehend texts. Young and Nageldinger (2014) suggested that reading rate was an effective gauge to assess fluency and comprehension because good readers adjusted their rate to match the content of the text.

However, according to Rasinski, Rupley, Paige, and Nichols (2016) many upper-grade teachers only used reading rate to measure comprehension. Reading rate is only one component of fluency and many factors affect the relationship between fluency and comprehension. Therefore, it would not be accurate to use reading rate as the only component to indicate comprehension. In fact, Rasinski et al. (2009) found a significant positive correlation between students' prosodic oral reading and silent reading comprehension.

Erekson (2010) suggested prosody skills are an accurate measure of comprehension because prosody is the outcome of a brain-speech connection. How students express their voice during oral reading suggests the level of interpretation of text (Erekson, 2010). For example, phrasing of appropriate text suggests the student is able to compartmentalize ideas. Using appropriate inflection when the author asks a question and matching tone to character emotion are also examples of how prosody is relative to comprehension.

For fourth-grade students ($n=90$) in Turkey, researchers found a stronger correlation between prosody and comprehension, specifically in-depth meaning linking, than any other fluency skill concluded using correlation and multiple regression analysis (Basaran, 2013). Similarly, Yildiz, Yildirim, Ates, Rasinski, Fitzgerald, and Zimmerman (2014) found prosody

had a stronger impact on comprehension than automaticity or accuracy for fifth-grade students in Turkey showed by hierarchical regression analysis.

To assess prosody Hudson, Lane, and Pullen (2005) suggested using a checklist and scoring scale to measure inflection and phrasing over time. The researchers also suggested that modeling correct expression and cueing phase boundaries can lead to successful prosody development (Hudson et al., 2005). They also found when students were involved in the process of charting their prosody data, motivation for continued reading improved (Hudson et al., 2005). This research underlines the significance of focus on prosody in oral reading instruction to strengthen comprehension skills.

In a National Assessment of Educational Progress study, Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Goodman, and Oranje (2005) showed three-fourths of fourth-grade students ($n=1,779$) read with at least 95% accuracy and those students who made fewer errors had greater comprehension. The researchers also showed 61% of these students were fluent readers measured by prosody, and those students who were more fluent had greater comprehension (Daane et al., 2005). This suggests that accuracy is more readily achieved than prosody although both are positively correlated with comprehension. The implications of these studies are on the advantage fluent readers have over less fluent readers and greater comprehension gains with better prosody.

Repeated Reading

Repeated reading is a commonly used instructional strategy promoting rereading to aid in comprehension. Repeated reading is an instructional strategy in which students reread short texts until a particular level of fluency is reached. According to Frey and Fisher (2014), good readers independently reread texts to provide clarity and deepen understanding of text.

Repeated reading with support can impact fluency and comprehension when introducing new concepts and vocabulary. In testing 227 sixth and seventh grade students, Paige (2011) found two-thirds had poor fluency and comprehension skills and those with poor fluency skills also had poor comprehension skills according to scores from the Gray Oral Reading Test. The developmental implications of this study are on outcomes of lifelong reading achievement if fluency skills are not improved in middle school.

In low-achieving urban and suburban schools with high proportions of students receiving free and reduced lunch, researchers examined the effects of FORI and Wide FORI on second-grade students' fluency and comprehension (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, Morris, Morrow, Woo, Meisinger, Sevcik, Bradley, & Stahl, 2006). They found an 8% increase in comprehension for the Wide FORI group and 6% for the FORI group. Results also showed 7% improvement in fluency for the Wide FORI group and 4% for the FORI group as measured by the WIAT reading comprehension test and Gray Oral Reading Test. Students in the FORI and Wide FORI groups made significantly greater gains in comprehension and fluency than the control group. Also, the Wide FORI group made greater gains than the FORI group. The studies emphasize the importance of scaffolding in FORI and Wide FORI and its impact on comprehension and fluency progress. Also, multiple texts instead of single texts during the weekly scaffolding process resulted in even greater gains (Kuhn et al., 2006).

Repeated reading instruction is often done ineffectively. Observing kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms, Frey and Fisher (2018) found literacy instruction involving repeated reading often lacked a comprehension connection. They showed teachers mainly focused on fluency and excluded comprehension questions during guided reading with younger students

(Fisher & Frey, 2018). The researchers also found discussions often lacked the use of text as evidence and rereading outside students' reading levels was discouraged (Frey & Fisher, 2018).

Rasinski et al. (2016) showed that implementation of repeated oral readings improved word recognition, accuracy, rate, expression, comprehension, and student confidence in reading. However, experience shows engaging students in repeated reading activities can be challenging, especially for struggling readers and students with disabilities. Frey and Fisher (2018) showed many elementary students did not see reason to orally reread, as measured by student dialogue. Rasinski and Stevenson (2005) found first grade students doubled their reading fluency gains with a 12-week implementation of Fast Start, in which parents and students engaged in interactive rhyming repeated reading activities at home.

Furthermore, it would be helpful to examine how repeated reading impacts other literacy components such as vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. Implications in understanding this are implementation of modified fluency instruction for upper-grade students as a gateway to improve content area comprehension.

Motivation

There are many motivational factors that affect reading achievement. Understanding how to regulate these factors can help educators better facilitate literacy development. The implications of this are motivating students to read across content areas to build foundational knowledge and foster lifelong learning through reading.

Purpose. Navigating an instructional task without a purpose is like driving without a destination. Educators add structure and give reading a purpose when they assign content-related questions to answer before reading (Cooper et al., 2015). This task sets the stage for reading and gives students a method to focus on important information during reading. In fact, Rasinski,

Blachowicz, and Lems (2006) stated that student motivation increased when they were given a purpose before reading. In addition, Zentall and Lee (2012) showed that implementation of reading-specific tasks and performance goals improved fluency and comprehension of students with reading disabilities, ADHD, and typically developing students. For many students, especially those with disabilities, attachment to an academic task comes only if they can see immediate relevancy.

Interests. Naturally, people desire to participate in activities they enjoy. When implementing reading instruction, educators can tailor tasks and reading materials to student interests. Students can also choose their reading material. Thornton (2018) demonstrated that student motivation increased when students were given the opportunity to choose their own texts. Additionally, Harsin (2012) found that students' attitude toward academic and recreational reading improved when given the opportunity to self-select their reading materials. Reading material is more likely to align with student interests when they choose. It is evident that students' reading motivation can be impacted by student choice of reading materials. This has important implications for content area learning where students are usually expected to read the same material.

Connections. Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, and Guthrie (2009) showed that when background knowledge was activated prior to reading, internal motivation and reading comprehension improved among fourth-grade students. However, the impact of extrinsic motivational factors differs from intrinsic factors. Becker, McElvany, and Kortenbruck (2010) found that when reading motivation comes from extrinsic factors such as parental pressure, reading achievement was lower for middle and upper-grade elementary students. The

implications of these studies are the use of intrinsic motivational factors over extrinsic factors to improve reading achievement in elementary-aged students.

Performance activities. A wide variety of genres such as song lyrics, speeches, scripts, monologues, and poetry can be performed as part of the repeated reading strategy. Kuhn, Rasinski, and Zimmerman (2014) suggested poetry performances used oral repeated reading in which rhymes and rhythm helped to quickly master fluency skills. However, the majority of texts read in classrooms are informational and narrative (Rasinski et al., 2016).

The use of engaging instructional activities in the classroom can impact reading motivation. According to Young, Valadez, and Gandara (2016) implementation of Rock n Read, in which students sing while reading, improved expression, pace, word automaticity, and volume. Similarly, Wilfong (2008) showed a significant increase in struggling, third- grade students' word recognition, comprehension, and academic and recreational reading motivation with the implementation of weekly poetry performances called poetry academy. Poems are usually short and contain engaging humor and imagery. The researcher in this study also used motivating incentives such as candy, stickers, and the promise of a celebration for participation (Wilfong, 2008).

Additionally, students from a second-grade classroom made greater word recognition and prosody gains with performance-based reading over book box reading (Young & Rasinski, 2018). Researchers also showed fluency and confidence improvements in a struggling fifth-grade reader after participation in the school drama program (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). Fisher and Frey (2020) showed tenth-grade students increased the amount of time reading math text, notes, and analyzing graphic organizers with the implementation of math poetry performances. These studies suggest performance with an audience could be a motivational factor for students.

Technology. Incorporation of technology can motivate students in reading instruction tasks. Robson, Blampied, and Walker (2015) showed that video self-modeling, in which a student acts as a model for themselves, increased student self-efficacy for reading. The students are videoed reading their text, feedback is provided, and only the positive modeling segments are shown (Robson et al., 2015). Students then have a video of themselves performing the target skill and can use as a model (Robson et al., 2015).

Audiotaped voice software gives students more opportunities for oral reading practice. With the implementation of singing software, Carry-a-Tune CAT, in a rural, Title-1 middle school classroom, researchers showed a 1.37 grade level reading increase in struggling seventh and eighth grade students after 6 months as measured by Qualitative Reading Inventory (Biggs, Homan, Dedrick, & Rasinski, 2008). Carry-a Tune software tracks pitch tone and gives feedback to the student. The researchers used a combination of song and technology to examine the impact on prosody and reading achievement.

Similarly, the implementation of *Soliloquy Reading Assistant* over an eight-week period showed improvement in attitudes and prosody of second-grade students measured with the Rasinski Multi-Dimensional Fluency Scale (Albert-Devine, 2009). The software provides a visual model for chunking of text as students read and allows them to record their oral reading so prosody skills can be scored (Albert-Devine, 2009).

Digital storytelling is a complementary activity to the narrative writing process. With the implementation of a digital storytelling narrative project using MovieMaker, researchers showed second grade students' improvement in Common Core State Standards writing elements and fluency as measured by narrative writing and oral fluency rubrics (Foley, 2013). In this study, the second graders' use of supporting details and concluding statements improved with digital

storytelling (Foley, 2013). The implications are the use of technology in the classroom to support a broad range of student needs and boost student motivation in English language arts instruction.

Engaging tasks. The level of student participation can depend on the type of reading task students are asked to complete. Similarly, Guthrie, Wigfield, Humenick, and Perencevich (2006) showed that second-grade students' reading comprehension, according to the Gates-MacGinitie test, and motivation improved with the implementation of stimulating tasks related to the content of texts. The implications of this study are the impact student engagement in connection to content has on comprehension across all content areas. There is importance in better understanding the relationship between motivation and reading comprehension and its various applications in the classroom.

Peer collaboration. There are many opportunities for peer interaction to impact student motivation and learning. Peers have unique relationships in which they can learn from each other because they share a similar level of language. With the implementation of partner brainstorming and peer editing in the narrative writing process, researchers found first and second-grade students' writing motivation and self-efficacy improved, as measured by student language discourse and interviews (Foley, 2013). Students usually reluctant to share ideas discussed their ideas freely with peers (Foley, 2013). The implications of this study are structuring the natural, everyday peer interaction to facilitate reading achievement.

Scaffolding in Reading Instruction

Teachers provide leveled supports and specific instructional strategies to students. Modeling is a strategy often used by teachers to help improve student achievement. As students listen to the reading of a text, they are given an oral example of how to be mindful of punctuation and dialogue using correct tone and expression (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). For example, a teacher

pauses after a period when the sentence ends. If dialogue expresses sadness, the teacher will read it in a tone that evokes sadness.

Researchers showed improved fluency and ability to independently use reading strategies in fourth grade students in Ethiopia with the implementation of Scaffolding Reading Experience as measured by oral reading fluency tests and student checklists (Enyew, Yigzaw, & Muche, 2015). This scaffolding method uses techniques such as modeling fluency, making predictions, learning new words, and giving a purpose for reading. Direct oral support and teacher modeling strategies more effectively improved fluency than encouragement of strategy use during independent reading (Enyew et al., 2015). The implications of this are the importance of highly involved teacher scaffolding on student reading achievement.

Conversely, direct teaching of comprehension strategies is not the only effective method to improve independent reading comprehension. McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) showed that fifth-grade students were better able to recall information in narrative and expository texts measured by oral recall with the implementation of a content-based approach focused on questions and discussions related to specific content, as opposed to general comprehension strategies. It would be useful to understand if this data is consistent across all genres, such as poetry, biographies, and fantasies, and in content areas such as science and social studies.

Kuhn et al. (2014) showed elementary students in randomly selected grades reading fluency increased from 25% to 75% measured by words correct per minute with the implementation of Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI). With FORI, daily reading activities are done with one text throughout the week, such as choral reading, echo reading, and partner reading.

However, the same type of scaffolding may not be effective for all reading activities. Young and Rasinski (2018) showed that second-grade students who participated in weekly Readers Theater made greater word recognition and prosody gains than students who participated in weekly book box reading with the same scaffolding techniques. In addition, Guffey (2007) showed that 81 fourth and fifth grade students showed significant comprehension gains with expository texts, but not social studies content, when teachers activated prior knowledge, generated purposeful questions, modeled summarizing, and presented text structure. This suggests that not all scaffolding techniques are equally effective across all content areas and student populations.

Graphic Organizers

A variety of instructional materials provide targeted support to students with specific learning needs. There are many ways for students to organize information and represent knowledge; however, some students may respond better to specific materials. In any classroom, diverse learners have preferred learning styles, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic, that can impact academic achievement.

Graphic organizers are tools used to visually represent concepts and compartmentalize information using pictures, diagrams, or models. Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, and Stone (2012) suggested representation of knowledge in a nonlinguistic manner helps tap in a part of the brain that constructs meaning through visual image processing and connects prior knowledge to new knowledge. Graphic organizers provide a way to organize information and retrieve that information later. Students in a fourth-grade classroom showed significant gains in their retelling abilities but not their inferencing skills with the implementation of graphic organizers (Bernhardt, 2010). Furthermore, Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek, and Wei (2004) showed students with

learning disabilities made significantly greater gains in reading comprehension with the implementation of semantic maps, cognitive maps, and framed outlines. Students also performed higher on comprehension assessments when they constructed their own graphic organizer versus using a premade one (Kim et al., 2004).

Additionally, Muniz (2015) demonstrated that English language learners made significantly greater reading comprehension gains with the implementation of graphic organizers. For ELL students, many challenges lie with unknown vocabulary and making connections to prior knowledge. Jones, Conradi, and Amendum (2016) demonstrated that the ability to visualize settings and access to pictures associated with unknown vocabulary improved struggling students' comprehension of informational text.

Similarly, Praveen and Rajan (2013) showed middle school ESL students in India scored 17% higher on comprehension questions with the implementation of graphic organizers in reading instruction as evaluated by ANOVA. There is a broad range of cultural, socioeconomic, and learning needs to accommodate for when designing reading instruction, and graphic organizers have been used across all student populations for reading instruction. To meet the needs of diverse learners, it would be helpful to understand how graphic organizers impact comprehension for specific student populations. This could be in relation to student interests, gender, culture, learning abilities, socioeconomic status, and age.

Reading Comprehension in Content Areas

The emphasis on content area comprehension progresses as grade levels advance. Many content area teachers do not use comprehension strategies such as modeling, evaluating text, or building knowledge through schema. Researchers found only 3% of middle and high school science and social studies teachers in urban areas taught reading comprehension strategies (Ness,

2016). Instead, they used text structure and answering questions to teach content. Ness (2016) also found teachers felt pressure to deliver content instruction in preparation for state standardized tests and did not have time for reading instruction. The implications of this study are the importance in establishing reading comprehension before students enter middle school.

Differentiation in Reading Instruction

Educators use multiple instructional methods and materials to meet the needs of a broad range of student needs. Using a variety of learning and teaching approaches helps facilitate student progress (Tomlinson, 2014). For example, differentiation of instruction can impact fluency gains in primary grades. With the implementation of differentiated learning centers in an urban first-grade classroom, Bradfield (2012) showed students, of which one-third were struggling readers, scored significantly higher on the Aimsweb fluency test. However, experience suggests differentiation is often lacking in classrooms.

Student choice. In addition, even with differentiated instruction, some teachers find it challenging to facilitate student motivation in reading activities, especially for those with disabilities (Shevin & Klein, 2004). Observing fifth-grade students in a low-income school, Servilio (2009) found that implementation of student choice in reading activities increased reading grades by 83.4% and motivation for students with and without disabilities.

Students in any given classroom have varied reading levels, cultural backgrounds, and interests. They can also demonstrate their learning in variety of ways. Tomlinson (2014) showed that a middle grade science teacher used choice boards to differentiate the format of performance assessments. Students performing above grade-level may choose a more advanced assessment requiring a higher level of critical thinking skills, providing an appropriate challenge. In addition, an eighth-grade English teacher used literature circles to form reading ability groups and

provided reading material that appealed to a variety of interests and cultures (Tomlinson, 2014). Tomlinson (2014) also showed that in a high school French class, students' language fluency improved with the implementation of personal goal setting and self-selection of homework assignments to meet those goals. These studies underline the importance of developing choice-making skills and aligning student interests with tasks.

Genres in Reading Instruction

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts expect students across all grade levels to read a broad range of literary and informational texts (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). The expectation to read more informational texts increases with grade level progression. Exposure to a variety of genres, including dramas, myths, poetry, time periods, and diverse cultures, broadens student knowledge and perspectives. It also increases their familiarity with various text structures and elements (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Reading a variety of content area texts builds background knowledge and helps students become better readers in all content areas (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010).

In reviewing the research, Hudson et al. (2005) suggested that students apply accuracy skills obtained with shared words in practiced text and unpracticed text. For example, accuracy is improved when a newly learned vocabulary word in a fantasy novel is easily understood in a nonfiction text. Also, Rasinski et al. (2005) suggested that more exposure to high-frequency words helps to decrease the effort made in reading. Similarly, researchers showed a positive correlation between students' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension over four years in Florida schools beginning in grade 1 and ending in grade 4 as measured by Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, WASI test, and Woodcock Reading Mastery test (Quinn, Wagner, Petscher, & Lopez, 2015).

Text genres differ in structure and level of difficulty in making connections to the text. In regard to Common Core practice of exposure across all genres, some students may find poetry more challenging while others find expository texts more challenging. Kraal, Koornneef, Saab, and van den Broek (2018) showed that students used different comprehension strategies for expository texts and narrative texts, and struggling readers made more inaccurate inferences when reading expository texts. The underlying importance of this study is on the need for focus on inferencing strategies for struggling readers, especially in regard to expository texts.

Readers Theater

There are many strategies that involve oral repeated reading, but not all are equally effective. Readers Theater is a repeated reading and close reading strategy aimed to improve student expression and comprehension (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). Students are put into groups and assigned a role. Usually, there is a weekly process for rehearsing and performing on the last day.

When reading scripts, students practice using voice expression (prosody) and phrasing. Griffith and Rasinski (2004) suggested this helps audiences understand the meaning. For example, appropriate use of tone and pitch conveys anger from a character. Portraying character emotions helps understand their actions and reciprocal actions of other characters. Young and Rasinski (2009) showed implementation of weekly Readers Theater during the entire school year increased second-grade students' prosody by 20%. Similarly, Griffith and Rasinski (2004) showed that Readers Theater helped more than double Title 1 students' fluency gains, improved silent reading comprehension, and increased independent reading time.

Podcasts. Podcasts are an auditory-only modification to Readers Theater in which students use their voice to record performances. Audiences can listen to performances at a later

time. Vasinda and McLeod (2011) examined the impact of podcasts, using Audacity Software, as a performance method for Readers Theater in a suburban school. The researchers found second and third grade struggling readers made an average of 1.13 grade level comprehension gains with a 10-week implementation of weekly Readers Theater sessions (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011).

Audacity Software is a free audio recording software used to record audio with microphones and audio files are uploaded to any podcasting site (Audacity, 2019). Students can visualize their sound waves and recognize pauses, expression, and volume. In this study, researchers showed improvement in students' motivation and self-reflection as measured by student focus group interviews and teacher questionnaires (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011).

Student-written scripts. Students can transform texts into Readers Theater scripts. Kuhn et al. (2014) suggested these students perform scripts connected to challenging fiction and content areas to help reinforce comprehension. Haag (2018) showed that implementation of student choice of text to create scripts improved student engagement and writing scripts deepened students' connection with the text. When converting text into dialogue, students analyze character motives and plot details.

Conclusion

There are a variety of instructional strategies and materials to improve student motivation and overall reading achievement. However, meeting the needs of all learners requires an in-depth connection between the students and delivery of instruction. This means teaching the same concept through targeted and individualized instruction. It also means establishing a differentiated, culturally inclusive classroom and considering all students' backgrounds and interests. In addition to differentiation, scaffolding and methods to improve motivation are components of effective reading instruction.

Discussion

Many upper grade students struggle with reading comprehension and reading comprehension instruction is often lacking. It becomes almost nonexistent in middle school when the focus shifts to content instruction. Establishing a strong comprehension foundation in elementary school will better prepare these students for understanding in content areas.

Teachers have an obligation to expose students to a broad range of texts across all genres. This can be done carefully with engaging methods. Fluency and comprehension improve with repeated reading however, many students lack engagement during repeated reading tasks. Because reading motivation increases with performance activities, it makes sense to combine performance with repeated reading. This combination has the potential to produce significant gains in fluency and comprehension.

The positive correlation between oral prosody and comprehension suggests expression, phrasing, and intonation could be valuable assessments for reading comprehension. Performance tasks match well because of the oral component. The use of technology, such as digital storytelling, is also an engaging way for students to show what they know.

Incorporation of scaffolding to improve prosody could be useful in improving comprehension, such as asking questions related to content and marking phase boundaries. For example, ask students questions about character motivation or how setting influences the plot and encourage them to convey that knowledge in their voice for the audience. Also, voice-recording software is effective for fluency modeling and providing feedback in students' prosody skills. Other scaffolding methods to improve comprehension are teacher modeling good fluency and think-alouds, setting a purpose for reading with specific tasks, making predictions, making connections to prior knowledge, focus on unknown vocabulary, and graphic organizers.

Research supports differentiation in reading activities to meet the needs of diverse learners. Student choice of reading material and tasks can improve motivation. Attending to visual learners and differentiated tasks, leveled choice boards could be used to give students opportunities to choose their reading task based on their interests. Provided tasks can be culturally inclusive and encompass wide student interest. Leveled choice boards could be used in which several versions of choice boards are used. Student ability level would match with the correct choice board. Students have the opportunity to be active participants in their own learning through self-assessment with choice boards. It is more likely students will be motivated to perform their best when given choice in task and assessment.

Conclusions

The use of poetry, speeches, monologues, song lyrics, and Readers Theater have been used as reading performance activities. They are motivational and involve the strategy of repeated reading to improve fluency. However, there is less research that supports comprehension gains with performance activities. Because of the link between fluency and comprehension, it makes sense to examine the effect on comprehension. Modifying performance activities for comprehension gains may need scaffolding and assessment modifications as well.

Preparing fifth graders for middle school means building a comprehension foundation with exposure to a broad variety of texts to encourage different levels of thinking. Also, Common Core State Standards' expectations are to expose students to a wide variety of genres. The use of poetry, monologues, and song lyrics as performances to improve comprehension do not fit with the context because they limit student choice and lack exposure to a wide variety of genres. Speeches may be relevant for social studies content learning but are too narrow of a topic for comprehensive comprehension gains.

Readers Theater makes sense in the instructional context. It gives teachers opportunities to include a wide variety of genres such as fantasy, humor, folktales, historical fiction, biographies, nonfiction, current news articles, expository texts, and content area texts. It also gives more variety in options for student choice in the likelihood they will find a script that interests them. If student performance groups choose different genres each week, they are given opportunities to comprehend and perform a variety of genres over time. Also, the whole class is exposed to multiple genre performances each week.

Combining technology with Readers Theater makes sense in the instructional context. Technology is an engaging instructional tool, especially for students in the current generation. The school district within the instructional context includes families with higher socioeconomic statuses. The diverse geographic region promotes high incomes with close proximity to technological industries, in which the majority of parents are employed. As a result, there is greater integration of technology in students' daily home lives. There are decreased barriers for technology use in schools due to district funding and higher tax bases in the region. Parents as stakeholders often push for challenging curricula and integration of technology.

Activities that give students an opportunity to be collaborative and creative while using technology improves participation. Podcasts are not appropriate within the instructional context because they lack visual stimulation and creativity. Tasks that combine technology and creativity may better improve engagement. These multimodal tasks could provide opportunities to assess comprehension through technology and art.

The use of Readers Theater in the content areas, such as math and science, may be beneficial to understand challenging academic language. In the instructional context, academic vocabulary is more challenging for English Language Learners and culturally diverse students in

which English is not the primary language spoken in the home. In addition, writing content area scripts could improve comprehension. Transformation of content area texts into dialogue may stimulate a deeper connection with content to promote knowledge retention. Writing scripts could also improve comprehension in other genres as well.

There is significant research to support student fluency gains with the implementation of Readers Theater. However, there is limited research on the impact on comprehension. Peer collaboration in Readers Theater is evident. Groups work together to rehearse, comprehend text, and perform. They may expressively react to each other and participate in discussions to help better understand elements in the script.

Readers Theater is an engaging strategy that can support prosody. It makes sense to investigate the impact it has on reading comprehension. It is also an engaging activity that can be modified according to classroom parameters. Classroom teachers can adapt the structure, content, level of complexity, and assessment formats of Readers Theater to best fit their students' assets and needs. Because of its differentiation capacity and ability of integration in the everyday classroom routine, Readers Theater is a strategy that teachers could use to readily meet the needs of diverse learners. Also, the capability to motivate and engage students gives it the potential to spark enthusiasm for reading. It is hoped that this proposed study will demonstrate results that help facilitate reading proficiency for struggling upper-grade readers.

Implications

Identifying a strategy to improve reading comprehension and motivation in upper grade students establishes the groundwork which teachers can adapt to their instructional context, learning goals, and students' needs. Improvement of reading comprehension skills at this stage in school is foundational to understanding content areas in middle school. The findings of this study

may also support Readers Theater as a strategy to improve content area comprehension for middle and high school students.

Limitations

1. Accessibility to a wide variety of culturally diverse genres that align with student interests usually depend on district and school budgets.
2. Range of sampling diversity in socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds shift with geographic regions. This narrowed sampling may not accurately reflect the general student population.
3. Full examination of the problem may take longer than one school year due to the need in measuring change in comprehension ability from upper grades through middle school.

Recommendations

1. Parental involvement at home and school is an outside source that affects reading achievement. There is value in understanding how parental engagement, specifically parents as audience members, impact student reading motivation.
2. Inclusion of professional development in performance strategies to improve comprehension could add effectiveness to Readers Theater.
3. It is worthy to examine the effectiveness across cultures. There is significance in understanding how Readers Theater impacts students with specific cultural backgrounds, even with access to culturally relevant scripts.

Question

Will the use of Readers Theater improve reading comprehension of fifth-grade students reading below grade level?

How will the implementation of Readers Theater change those students' attitudes about reading?

Proposed Design

Collaboration between upper-grade teachers, principals, and special education teachers can provide opportunities for effective implementation of Readers Theater. Readers Theater designs and schedules can be structured within broader contexts of the school. Other factors to consider are instructional contexts of classrooms and needs of diverse students.

Purpose

The purpose of this design is to improve reading comprehension and motivation for upper grade students through (1) implementation of Readers Theater; (2) exposure to a variety of culturally diverse genres within Readers Theater; (3) assessment of comprehension with technology and art; (4) increased teacher knowledge and skills to effectively scaffold Readers Theater in the classroom; (5) differentiation with leveled script choice boards.

Outcomes

- Upper-grade students increase reading comprehension gains.
- Upper-grade students improve reading motivation.
- Middle school students increase content area comprehension.
- Ability to understand in content areas and across genres is lifelong.

Theory of Change

In order to establish effective reading comprehension skills for upper-grade students consistent with commitment to meeting the needs of diverse learners, it is my belief that

implementation of Readers Theaters will improve reading comprehension in preparation for understanding content areas in middle school and beyond (see Appendix A for logic model).

Structure

- Weekly Readers Theater sessions facilitated over several consecutive weeks or throughout the school year. Shorter scripts may only need three days.
- Sessions take place during daily reading block and align with current reading curriculum.
- Search free online Readers Theater scripts (see Appendix B for online resources).
- Leveled Readers Theater choice boards for choosing scripts (can be digital). Students are assigned a row to match reading level. Script choices are culturally relevant, genre-diverse, and tailored to student interests (see Appendix C for leveled choice board sample).
- Students rehearse daily in their groups, teacher scaffolding and feedback are provided throughout the week, and performances are held on Friday.
- Parents, families, and other classes are audience members.

Sample weekly protocol. The following is a sample weekly protocol:

1. On Monday, explain the Readers Theater process. Assign students to their groups, assign roles, and hand out scripts. Give students time to read through their script together. Allow students to take their scripts home and practice with family members.
2. On Tuesday, students will practice their scripts again. This time can be used for small group conferencing to identify unknown words, model comprehension strategies, and give feedback.

3. On Wednesday, students will practice their scripts again. Students can use this time to add hand gestures and body movements that may help their audience better understand the story. Meet with groups for extra support as needed.
4. On Thursday, students rehearse their scripts one final time. They may want to rehearse where each character will stand and finalize their body gestures.
5. On Friday, each group will perform their script for the class. Family members and other classes can be invited to watch. Audience members can offer positive feedback on what they liked about the performance. After analyzing and reflecting upon the data, necessary adjustments can be made for the upcoming week.

Differentiation

Modifications can be made to provide better access to learning. This is in alignment with the district's goal to differentiate instruction. Differentiation also supports the need to meet unique strengths, backgrounds, readiness, interests, and learning styles of each student.

Use in content areas. Academic content can be transformed into Readers Theater scripts to improve comprehension in content areas. This may be an engaging way to present new and challenging information. Overlapping literacy and content areas could save instructional time. An example is incorporation of Readers Theater in an earth systems unit. Students could be broken into small groups and each assigned the role of hydrosphere, geosphere, atmosphere, or biosphere. A script could be written for students incorporating personal or cultural assets and prior knowledge. For example, for students living in Western Washington, the hydrosphere role could be Puget Sound to establish a personal geographic connection. Another option would be to have students create their own scripts showing how earth's systems interact.

The above example combines content area Readers Theater and personal geographic context. Combination of these strategies could improve academic vocabulary comprehension. A unique opportunity is provided to explore academic language at a deep level because students are active participants with the context. Content area Readers Theater may also be useful to strengthen academic language and discourse because students use speaking and listening skills to practice academic vocabulary in context.

Reading levels. Teachers can use ability grouping for Readers Theater performances. Groups of high ability readers perform scripts with complex themes and advanced vocabulary. Groups of middle ability and struggling readers perform less complex scripts and struggling readers can be assigned fewer speaking lines. Leveled choice boards can be used in which students are assigned a particular row according to their reading level. They choose from script options on that row.

Scripts. To ensure culturally relevant teaching, inclusion, and engagement, a variety of scripts including culturally relevant scripts and scripts aligned to student interests can be provided. Students can be given the opportunity to choose their own scripts without concern of reading level. An alternative is to give students the opportunity to write their own scripts to stimulate deeper interpretation skills. This may also be an effective assessment method. Students translate information and represent story elements using their own interpretations, so the level of comprehension is apparent. Chapter books, historical events, news articles, and folk tales are a few contexts students can write scripts from. Also, whole-class brainstorming can help generate topic ideas and student groups can vote on topics which to base their script. Because of the loose structure associated with this activity, a rubric may be helpful to refine expectations.

Exposure to a variety of script genres provides an opportunity to practice comprehension strategies in many contexts. Genre type can be tailored to specific students' needs and learning goals. For example, students struggling with inferencing could be assigned expository texts in which the text structure gives details for text evidence. This provides scaffolding opportunities to focus on schema and text evidence.

Props. Students can use props to better portray their characters and provide visual settings for the audience. A large selection of props may help students choose one that fits their particular script. Their prop selection may also provide an opportunity to assess overall comprehension of a story or main ideas in nonfiction. Examples of props are hats, sunglasses, masks, and aprons. Some of these could even be made in class as art projects.

Scaffolding

Teacher support may be helpful in the beginning to help a student choose appropriate texts and activate prior knowledge. Difficult vocabulary can be taught using graphic organizers such as semantic mapping. For example, if students come across the unknown word *adaptation* in their script, it could be placed in the center of the semantic map. Categories such as ears, gills, wings, and bones with specific examples branching off the category could be included to activate prior knowledge and make word associations. This could also be helpful for English language learners. Choral reading can be done for those students struggling with fluency, so the teacher can lead using an appropriate rate. Minilessons may be needed for struggling students to model comprehension strategies such as summarizing, organizing story structure, and identifying where comprehension difficulties occur.

Extra support may be needed to help struggling readers decode unknown vocabulary and make connections to prior knowledge using graphic organizers. Semantic webs and KWL charts

could help support students make these connections. Other graphic organizers that require students to summarize main concepts and supporting details or the use of text evidence to support emotions and events can be used. Story charts, flow diagrams, and concept maps can be used to record events and activate prior knowledge. For example, the teacher could say “you know your character is scared, but what descriptive words are there in the text that shows you this?” It says, I say, and so graphic organizer could be useful in this example. For nonfiction text, organization of thought with three big questions using a graphic organizer could be used: What surprised me? What did the author think I already knew? What challenged, changed, or confirmed what I knew? (Beers & Probst, 2016).

Assessment Options

The assessments will correlate with one another to provide triangulated data support for analysis of how well Readers Theater supports reading comprehension according to criteria expressed in the Purpose.

Assessment #1: Story map. This assessment includes a story map graphic organizer related to characters, plot, setting, main events, and problems and solutions (see Appendix D). The story map graphic organizer can help participants collect their thoughts about the story before the oral retelling.

Assessment #2: Story map rubric. A story map rubric can be used to assess proficiencies in each category (see Appendix E). It can be used for students to self-assess progress in specific categories. It is also used for teacher assessment. The data collection method can be paper-and-pencil or electronic.

Assessment #3: Readers Theater performance rubric. A performance rubric can be used for student self-assessment of progress toward a learning goal and sets clear performance

expectations (see Appendix F). It is also used for teacher assessment of proficiencies in multiple categories during performances.

Assessment #4: I say, it says, and so graphic organizer. This graphic organizer can be used with expository texts for lower level readers. It assesses the thinking process, ability to build on prior knowledge, and inferencing skills. It also provides information about sources of student ideas (see Appendix G).

Assessment #5: Nonfiction text structure graphic organizers. This assessment gives students an opportunity to choose the graphic organizer that best fits the nonfiction text structure. The graphic organizer they choose and provided information can demonstrate the structure and details in what they remember from the text. Making connections between text structure and what the author is trying to tell the reader can be significant in assessing comprehension (see Appendix H).

Assessment #6: Big questions graphic organizer. This assessment shows the level of deep-thinking and how students connect ideas when reading informational scripts. In their script copy, students will highlight surprising information in blue, assumes what you already know in yellow, and changed, challenged, or confirmed their thinking in red. Then, reflections will be made in the graphic organizer (see Appendix I).

Assessment #7: Big questions pair share. Pair shares can be facilitated between peers in the same Readers Theater group. This serves as self-assessment. Comparing ideas and thoughts with peers gives students an opportunity to reflect upon what they know and do not know. Observational data from peer discussions can provide comprehension information when students defend their reasoning and give peer feedback.

Assessment #8: Pre- and post-retelling scale. The same assessment can measure participants' reading comprehension. It measures their ability to recognize main events in a story and make connections between those events and the characters in the story. Students can orally produce a retelling of the text that describes the plot, setting, main sequence of events in the story including the connection of those events to the problem, and main characters. This can be done on Mondays after the initial reading (pre) and after final performance (post) to compare the ability to accurately describe main events in the story and how they connect to character motivations, emotions, and the overall plot. Comparing the pre-and post-retellings can show if Readers Theater impacts the progress participants are able to make in constructing meaning. A retelling summary sheet can be used each time to score students in each category: setting, characters, problem, action, outcome, and sequence. After students give an unprompted retelling, they can be prompted with questions about specific parts that were not included (Cooper et al., 2015). An overall score out of 10 points can be available in categories of prompted or unprompted responses (see Appendix J).

Assessment #9: Reading motivation survey. This assessment can measure participants' self-perception for their reading motivation and how Readers Theater relates to it. Students can use a scale (1-4) to rate their reading motivation (see Appendix K). This self-assessment data provides unique data for reading motivation because it comes from the participants' perspectives. Therefore, this assessment triangulates well with all other assessments. The data collection method for this assessment can be paper-and-pencil or electronic.

Assessment #10: Pre- and post-IRR data. Independent Reading Record data can be used as a baseline. IRR data can be obtained again after the course of the Readers Theater sessions. The IRR data can show how students are able to construct meaning of a text over time.

This data collection method will be oral for the participant.

Assessment #11: Pre- and post-iReady data. The same assessment can measure student proficiency in reading comprehension before and after Readers Theater. This is a computer-based form of assessment that can correlate with all other assessments because it provides evidence of reading comprehension in the form of technology including a variety of texts. This supports triangulated data to analyze how well the intervention improves reading comprehension ability.

Assessment #12: Observation logs. This assessment can be done through informal observations. Observations can be made over time and recorded in log form. Informal comments made by other observers such as parents, mentor teacher, or special education teacher can also be recorded. Written notes can be dated and included in each students' observation log. Listening to and watching students over time will help note any patterns or progressions in reading comprehension and motivation.

Assessment #13: Reflective journal. Thoughts and opinions throughout the Readers Theater sessions can be recorded in a reflective journal.

Assessment #14: Digital story with recorded audio. This assessment provides an opportunity for students to choose a technological method combined with art to demonstrate their understanding. It also promotes peer collaboration and provides audiences with visuals. Digital storytelling platforms such as Storybird (Storybird, 2019), Buncee (Buncee, 2019), and Comic Life (Plasq, 2020) can be used. Students can also draw their artwork, scan it, insert in PowerPoint, and use the voiceover tool to create a presentation. Students can choose which platform and method to use. They can present Readers Theater stories with voice-recorded audio

in different forms such as comics, storyboards, or news stories. Digital presentations can be uploaded to classroom website so parents can view anytime.

Assessment #15: Digital story with recorded audio rubric. A rubric can be used to self-assess progress during creation of the digital story and recording audio. It sets clear performance expectations (see Appendix L). The structure and visual representation of knowledge can be used for teacher assessment of comprehension in a variety of areas.

Assessment #16: Prereading questions. The teacher may ask specific questions for students to think about related to comprehension. A list of questions to answer can be given before reading to give purpose. For example, how do the actions of a particular character affect a specific event in the story? How are a character's actions in a historical fiction related to the time in history? How does the change in setting relate to the problem?

Assessment #17: SpeechPrompts app. This voice software serves as self-assessment in preparation for the performance. The visual and audio feedback serves as self-assessment toward improving prosody skills, specifically using appropriate expression and tone. First, teachers record themselves reading the script to serve as a model, then, students record themselves reading the script attempting to copy the teacher voice (HandHold Adaptive, 2012). Teacher and student voices are compared with a waveform graphic and audio playback (HandHold Adaptive, 2012). This can be used to assess prosody with a particular Readers Theater script reading.

Assessment #18: Student-written scripts. A variety of texts can be written into dialogue for Readers Theater scripts. This assessment can demonstrate how students interpret texts including making sense of conflict, making connections between plot and setting, and character motivation.

Assessment data can be compiled and evaluated after the predetermined number of Readers Theater sessions. Student work samples and other data informing progress can indicate further action and modifications considered by the grade-level team using an action research protocol. Classroom teachers will work with special education teachers to establish a structure for classroom observations and evaluation of progress.

There are many ways to display and compare data. Appendix M and N show sample story map quantitative data representation using line graphs. Total rubric scores are shown on the y-axis and time in weeks is shown on the x-axis. The trend helps evaluate data progression. Student A in Appendix M shows minimal reading comprehension progression over six weeks and Student B in Appendix N shows significant reading comprehension progression over six weeks.

Teachers may be interested in examining how student comprehension changed in particular areas of comprehension. For example, further examining of comprehension can be done in each fiction subsection area- plot, characters, setting, conflict, and resolution. This can be done using individual student or class average subsection rubric scores. This deeper level of analysis can help determine whether Readers Theater has a greater impact on a specific area of comprehension, which is critical to continuous reflective planning. For example, suppose data showed that implementation of Readers Theater impacts students' ability to describe the plot but does not impact ability to describe conflict. If observational data suggests that script genre could affect ability to identify conflict in a story, a subsequent action research cycle could be designed to investigate how Readers Theater script genre impacts comprehension. The implications in understanding how a particular genre impacts comprehension may help teachers provide more advanced scaffolding in that genre.

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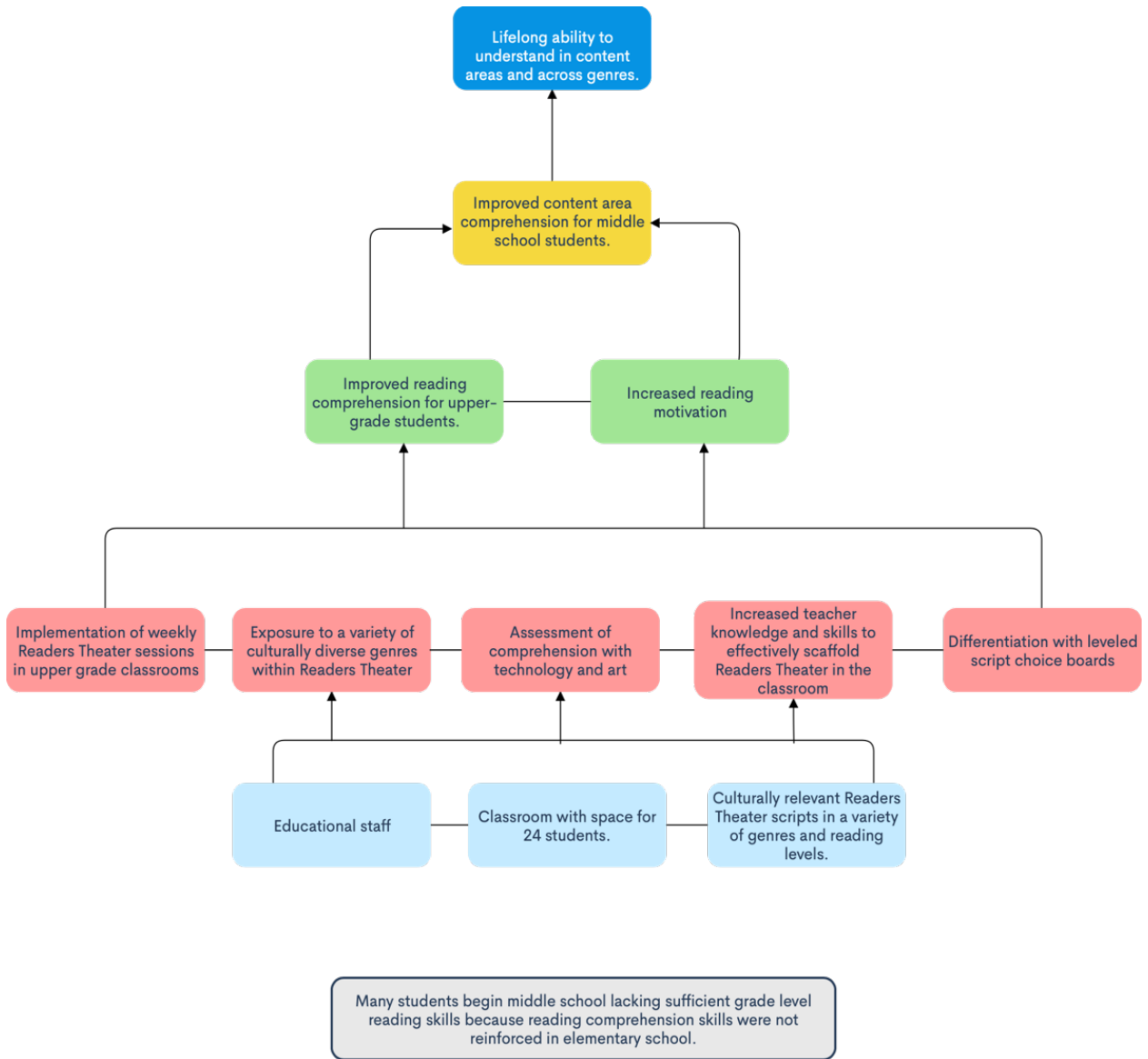
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Appendix A

Logic Model for Improving Reading Comprehension



Appendix B

Online Readers Theater Resources

<http://www.thebestclass.org/rtscripts.html>

<https://www.readinga-z.com/fluency/readers-theater-scripts/>

<http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm>

<http://www.aaronshp.com/rt/index.html>

<https://suzyred.com/readerstheater.html>

<http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Tower/3235>

<http://www.fictionteachers.com/classroomtheater/theater.html>

Appendix C

Leveled Readers Theater Choice Board

A	<i>The Amazing Amazon</i>	<i>Meeting Mrs. Pierce</i>	<i>Tom Sawyer</i>	<i>Let Them Play</i>
B	<i>Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and Tsunamis</i>	<i>Leaving Home</i>	<i>The Tale of the Too Talkative Turtle</i>	<i>Ayanna the Brave</i>
C	<i>Albert Einstein</i>	<i>Animal in Trouble</i>	<i>The Black Stones</i>	<i>The Woman with the River in Her Hair</i>

Appendix D

Story Map

Story Map

Setting:

Characters:

Plot/Conflict:



Event 1:

Event 2:

Event 3:

Resolution:

Appendix E

Story Map Rubric

Category	1	2	3	4
Plot	Can describe only 1 event in the story.	Can describe 3 events in the story but may be incorrectly sequenced.	Can accurately describe 3 events in the story in correct sequence.	Can accurately describe 3 events in the story in correct sequence and in detail.
Characters	Does not name any characters.	Names 1-2 characters.	Names all characters.	Names and describes all characters.
Setting	Inaccurately describes the setting.	Describes the setting but is only partially accurate.	Accurately describes the setting.	Accurately describes the setting in detail.
Conflict	Inaccurately describes the conflict.	Describes the conflict but is only partially accurate.	Accurately describes the conflict.	Accurately describes the conflict in detail using text evidence.
Resolution	Inaccurately describes the resolution.	Describes the resolution but is only partially accurate.	Accurately describes the resolution.	Accurately describes the resolution in detail using text evidence.

Appendix F

Readers Theater Presentation Rubric

Readers Theater Performance Rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____ Script: _____

	Excellent	Good	Needs works
Oral Delivery <i>Volume</i>	Consistently speaks loudly enough for audience to hear. <i>8-10 pts.</i>	Usually speaks loudly enough for audience to hear. <i>4-7 pts.</i>	Speaks too soft or loud to hear. <i>0-3 pts.</i>
Oral Deliver <i>Clarity</i>	Words are pronounced correctly and easily understood. <i>8-10 pts.</i>	Most words are pronounced correctly and easily understood. <i>4-7 pts.</i>	Many words pronounced incorrectly, too fast or slow, mumbles. <i>0-3 pts.</i>
Oral Delivery <i>Reads with expression</i>	Student read the script with confidence and expression, made gestures and good eye contact, and used props to add to the performance. <i>8-10 pts.</i>	Student read the script with some expression, gestures, eye contact, and use of props. <i>4-7 pts.</i>	Student read the script but had little expression, few gestures, little eye contact, or did not use props appropriately. <i>0-3 pts.</i>
Oral Delivery <i>Reads in turn</i>	Takes turns accurately on a consistent basis. <i>8-10 pts.</i>	Takes turns accurately on a somewhat consistent basis. <i>4-7 pts.</i>	Takes turns rarely on a consistent basis. <i>0-3 pts.</i>
Cooperation with group <i>Works well with group members</i>	Student worked cooperatively with the group in all aspects of the project and shared all responsibilities and ideas well. <i>8-10 pts.</i>	Student worked cooperatively with group in most aspects of the project and shared most responsibilities and ideas. <i>4-7 pts.</i>	Student did not work cooperatively together with group and could not agree on what to do. Student did not share responsibilities or ideas and wasted time. <i>0-3 pts.</i>

Appendix G

It Says, I Say, and So Graphic Organizer

It Says – I Say – And So...

Name: _____

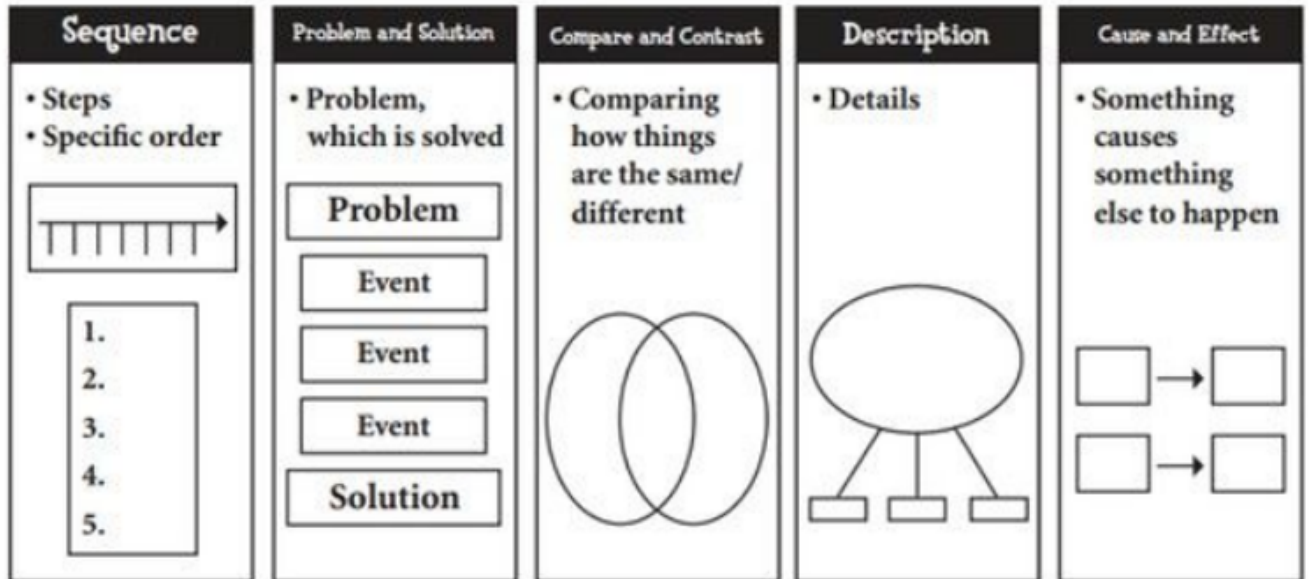
The following graphic organizer helps you to find information in a text and put it together with what you already know to come up with a complete answer.

Question	It Says...	I Say...	And So...
<p>Step 1... Write the question (created or provided)</p>	<p>Step 2... Find information from the text that will help answer the question.</p>	<p>Step 3... Think about what you know about that information.</p>	<p>Step 4... Combine what the text says with what you know to come up with the answer.</p>

(Reading Rockets, n.d.)

Appendix H

Nonfiction Text Structure Graphic Organizers



(The Classroom Nook, n.d.)

Appendix I

Big Questions Graphic Organizer

What surprised me?	How did it surprise me?
What did the author think I already knew?	What do I need to do to alleviate my confusion?
What challenged, changed, or confirmed my thinking?	How has this impacted my thinking?

(Bayer, 2015)

Appendix J

Pre- and Post-Retelling Scale

Story Retelling Summary Sheet		
Name _____	Date _____	
Title _____		
Student selected _____	Teacher selected _____	
	<i>Scores</i>	
	<u>Unprompted</u>	<u>Prompted</u>
Setting:		
Begins with introduction (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Gives time and place (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Characters:		
Names main character (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Identifies other characters (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Gives names _____		
Gives number _____		
Actual number _____		
Number given _____		
Problem:		
Identifies primary story problem (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Action:		
Recalls major events (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Outcome:		
Identifies how problem was solved (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Gives story ending (1 pt.)	_____	_____
Sequence:		
Retells story in order (2 pts. = correct; 1 pt. = partial, 0 = no evidence of sequence)	_____	_____
	TOTAL SCORE	_____
	(10 pts. possible)	
Observations/comments:		
Analysis:		

(Cooper, et al., 2015)

Appendix K

Reading Motivation Survey

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
I enjoyed the Readers Theater session.				
I would like to read more books from this same genre.				
I would like to do another Readers Theater session.				
Doing the Readers Theater session helped me better understand the text.				
Knowing I would be performing for others helped motivate me to read the script on my own.				
Knowing I would be performing for others helped motivate me to understand the story.				

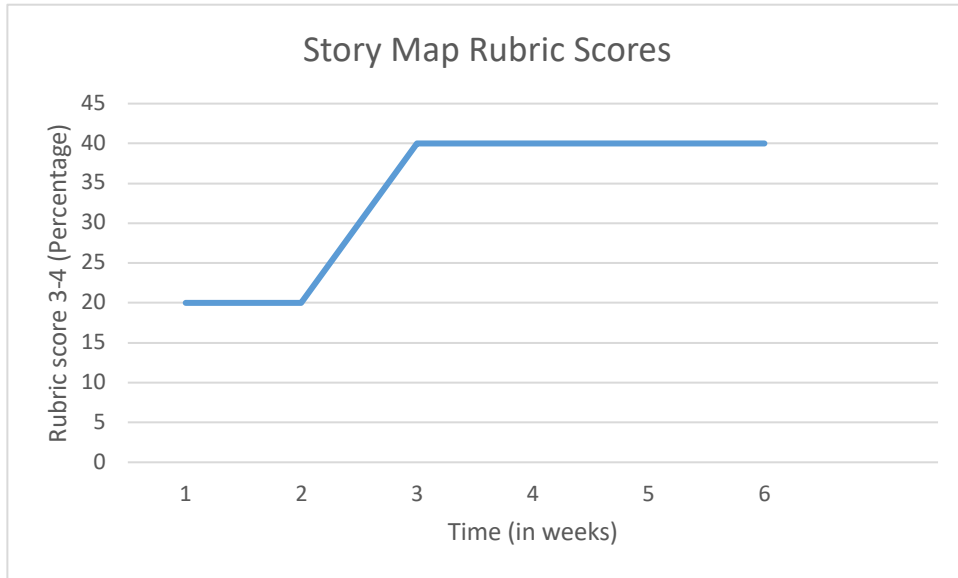
Appendix L

Digital story with recorded audio rubric

Category	4	3	2	1
<i>Voice - Conversational Style</i>	<i>Uses a conversational style throughout.</i>	<i>Uses a conversational style the majority of the time</i>	<i>Uses a conversational style most of the time.</i>	<i>Presentation style is primarily monologue.</i>
<i>Multimedia</i>	<i>Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story. The images are creative and original and may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors.</i>	<i>Images create an atmosphere or tone that matches some parts of the story. The majority of images are creative and may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors.</i>	<i>An attempt was made to use images to create an atmosphere/ tone, but it needed more work. Image choice is logical.</i>	<i>Little or no attempt to use images to create an appropriate atmosphere/ tone.</i>
<i>Voice Pacing</i>	<i>The pace fits the story line and helps the audience really "get into" the story.</i>	<i>Occasionally speaks too fast or too slowly for the story line. The pacing is relatively engaging for the audience.</i>	<i>Tries to use pacing but it is often noticeable that the pacing does not fit the story line. Audience is not consistently engaged.</i>	<i>No attempt to match the pace of the storytelling to the story line or the audience.</i>
<i>Awareness of Audience</i>	<i>Strong awareness of audience in the design. Students can clearly explain why they felt the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience.</i>	<i>Some awareness of audience in the design. Students can partially explain why they felt the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience.</i>	<i>Some awareness of audience in the design. Students find it difficult to explain how the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience.</i>	<i>Limited awareness of the needs and interests of the target audience.</i>
<i>Oral Presentation</i>	<i>Voice quality is clear and consistently audible throughout the presentation. Interesting, well-rehearsed with smooth delivery that holds audience attention.</i>	<i>Voice quality is clear and consistently audible throughout the majority of the presentation. Relatively interesting, rehearsed with a fairly smooth delivery that usually holds audience attention.</i>	<i>Voice quality is clear and consistently audible through some of the presentation. Delivery not smooth, but able to hold audience attention most of the time.</i>	<i>Voice quality needs more attention. Delivery not smooth and audience attention lost.</i>
<i>Duration of Presentation</i>	<i>Length of presentation was 4 minutes.</i>	<i>Length of presentation was 3 minutes.</i>	<i>Length of presentation was 2 minutes.</i>	<i>Presentation was less than 2 minutes long OR more than 4 minutes.</i>

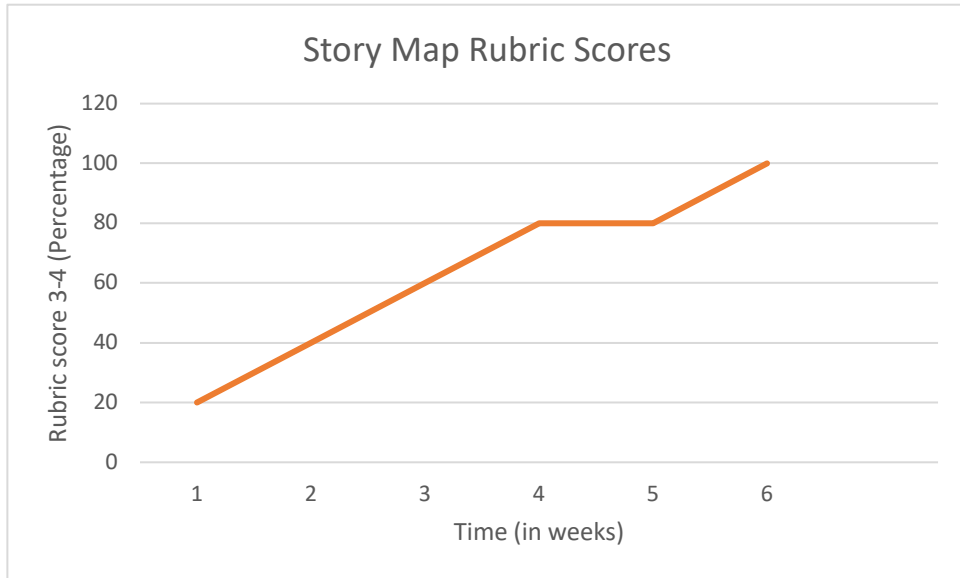
Appendix M

Story Map Rubric Scores Student A



Appendix N

Story Map Rubric Scores Student B



Author's Note

Although I am beginning the pursuit of my teaching career later in life, it has always been in my heart. I grew up in rural Oklahoma where access to high-quality education was limited, but as a young girl I dreamed of being a teacher. After graduating from Oklahoma State University with a bachelor's degree in Biology, I worked in the science and research industry. My husband, three children, and I moved to the Pacific Northwest two years ago to pursue a better career opportunity for him. It took 35 years of teaching tugging at my heart strings to finally follow my dream. As a teacher, I am particularly responsive in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom of students. This could be due to my experience with culturally diverse populations or my son who has ASD. Within my own classroom, I will strive to provide multimodal instruction delivery and engaging differentiated tasks to ensure every student has the best chance for success.

Dissemination Plan

This issue-based design study will become a portfolio artifact as demonstration of my differentiation skills to meet the needs of diverse learners.