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The Impact of Readers Theater on Fluency

Emily Suggs

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The Impact of Readers Theater on Fluency

by

Emily Suggs

Bachelor of Arts
Coastal Carolina University, 2004

Master of Science
Walden University, 2011

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Accepted by:

Suha Tamim, Major Professor

Yasha Becton, Committee Member

Rhonda Jeffries, Committee Member

Jin Liu, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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DEDICATION

The journey of completing this dissertation began for me in the spring semester of 2016; however, the desire to obtain a doctoral degree ignited much earlier in my life. One of the first recollections I have of planning to obtain such a degree was during the completion of a ninety-five year plan assignment in a health education class for my undergraduate degree. This assignment forced me to put my life's goals into writing and for that I am appreciative. I am most thankful to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who blessed my efforts to accomplish this goal. "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4 King James Version). He followed through on this promise and has blessed me every step of the way. To my husband, Jesse, who has supported me and been understanding of the long nights and weekends that I have spent sitting at the kitchen table, thank you for the encouragement and pride you have taken in me as I have aspired toward this goal. To my children, Abram and Emma, who have been accepting of the extensive hours I have put into this dream, I pray that one day I serve as an inspiration for you to accomplish a dream that you have. To my parents, Dale and Katrina, who have always supported and encouraged me to accomplish this dream, thank you for the upbringing you have given me and your continued prayers and support throughout my life. The Lord blessed me with wonderful parents and I know you will always be there for me. Because of all of you, I was able to reach this goal. I love you all!

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ABSTRACT

This action research study describes a problem of practice derived from the identification of students in fifth-grade who lack reading skills to be classified fluent readers as identified by Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Next Edition Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS Next ORF). This problem of practice led to the development of an action research study, which examined the impact of fluency instruction that used readers theater texts on students' overall fluency performance.

Through a convergent mixed methods design, the study addressed three research questions that explored the impact of using readers theater texts on students' overall fluency performance, the perceptions of the student-participants, and the perceptions of the teacher-participant on the fluency intervention. Quantitative data collection instruments of pre-and post-tests and qualitative instruments of field notes, open-ended questionnaires, and a one-on-one semi-structured interview were used in this study.

The study revealed that the prescribed fluency intervention was statistically significant in improving students' accuracy percentages, showed promising impacts on fluency rate, and had a positive effect on the way in which students' view themselves as readers. The findings and supporting themes suggest implications for professional development at the research site to increase awareness of the impacts of fluency on students' reading performance, to effectively analyze fluency data and make a plan of action to support struggling students within each teachers' classroom, and to support

teachers as they begin to use fluency instructional strategies and appropriate texts in their classrooms. Future research will determine if shorter readers theater texts are effective when used in the same type of intervention implemented in this action research study and will examine if students' retell of the text becomes more sophisticated in nature as fluency rate and accuracy percentages increase.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Clay (2007) defines reading as “a message-getting, problem-solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practiced” (p. 6). Learning to read and comprehend at a high rate is critical to students’ academic success. The ongoing process of learning to read begins very early and continues throughout a lifetime. Even preschool students have a wealth of knowledge about the world around them, environmental print, and language they have developed through their experiences before entering the formal academic setting (Clay, 2007; Goodman, 1986). The task of reading increases in complexity over time as the level of text increases, sentence structures become more multifaceted, and vocabulary used may be less familiar (Allington, 2006). As difficulty increases, reading success for some students becomes increasingly challenging to achieve. As a result, educators try to better understand how to support the learning process of these readers (Pinnell, 2017). While the intricate process of reading embodies many facets including emotion, memory systems of the brain, and motivation (Lyons, 2003), in 2000, the National Reading Panel reported five essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These five components have transformed reading instruction in schools over the past 16 years (Honig & Gutlohn, 2013; Learning Points Associates, 2004).

Fluent readers can read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (National Reading Panel, 2000). The triangular concept of fluency is essential, as sole focus on speed can lead to unnatural and unproductive reading. Some consider fluency the bridge between decoding and comprehension (Pikulski & Chard, 2003).

“Significantly, many struggling readers have problems with fluency. They may read slowly, word by word, or in a halting, erratic manner that violates phrase boundaries and compromises comprehension” (Morris, 2008, p. 155). To promote comprehension in older elementary grades, it is vital for educators to consider the effects of low fluency on students’ comprehension and remediate this difficulty when reading comprehension is diminished (Neddenriep, Fritz, & Carrier, 2010).

Scholarly Literature

In 2015, only 33% of fourth grade students scored at or above a proficient reading level in South Carolina (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). With only a third of students securely grounded in reading skills and abilities, reading instruction continues to be an area of focus for our state and country as a whole with literacy mandates such as the South Carolina Act 284 (Read to Succeed) and national legislations such as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (P.L. 114095). Continued attention on this matter has caused many to ponder the role of fluency instruction in relation to the main goal of comprehension. “Fluency matters simply because it is an essential element of proficient and meaningful reading” (Rasinski, 2014, p. 5). Rasinski, Rupley, Paige, and Nichols (2016) suggest “Lack of successful word recognition accuracy and automaticity can be significant impediments for progressing to a level of reading for meaning and learning” (p. 164).

Rasinski (2014) gives several instructional methods that have proven positive effects on increasing fluency such as modeling fluent reading, providing fluency support through assisted reading, and reading practice. Rasinski (2014) also emphasizes the importance of examining all aspects of fluency including prosody and meaning. Evidence of these methods are infused in the more specific instructional strategies discussed below.

One instructional strategy that has shown positive impacts on reading fluency is Whole-Class Choral Reading (WCCR). WCCR is a variation of choral reading in which all the students in the classroom and the teacher read aloud from the same text in unison. After the choral reading of a passage, the teacher provides corrective feedback explaining or modeling fluent reading to aid the students in improving their fluency. Research conducted on 112 sixth graders, of which 89% were African American, show that these students benefited from WCCR when using a repetitive-text strategy. Paige (2011a) suggests, WCCR can improve decoding ability and increase fluent reading. He also encourages the intentional selection of high-interest texts, such as interesting trade books for WCCR, which can increase student motivation and create a meaningful experience. Another benefit of this strategy is the anonymity it provides for struggling readers that may experience anxiety while reading (Paige, 2011b). Focusing on the whole-class reading in “one voice” can provide students with a sense of security during the reading process and also lead to an increase in fluency.

Another strategy that has been shown to increase fluency, especially in relation to prosody or the ability to read texts with appropriate expression, phrasing, and intonation, is Readers Theater (Young & Nageldinger, 2014). Readers theater is an educational

activity in which students perform a text informally without the use of props. This strategy naturally incorporates the previously discussed strategy of repetitive reading, as the student reads the text several times to prepare for performance. The text type for this strategy is chosen by the teacher and can range from nonfiction to poetry. Students gain an authentic sense of audience with the use of this strategy. Wilfong (2008) conducted research to examine the effects of the instructional program Poetry Academy, which has similar aspects to that of readers theater, with 86 third graders. This program consists of a five step cyclical process. A student is given a poem selected by the teacher, and then a volunteer models a reading of the poem for the student. Afterwards, the volunteer and student read the poem together, the student reads the poem to the volunteer, the student reads the poem outside of the school setting to another individual or group, and lastly the student reads the poem once more to the volunteer to show mastery. The research findings suggest that students in the treatment group, which performed the poem for volunteer and a person outside of the school setting, increased the number of words they could read correctly per minute and word recognition as measured by the Curriculum-Based Measurement (Wilfong, 2008). As an additional benefit, these students demonstrated increased self-efficacy in their reading abilities and attitude toward reading.

Much research has also been conducted on the relationship between fluency and comprehension (Basaran, 2013; Clay, 2005; Morris, 2008; Neddenriep et al., 2010; Pikulski & Chard, 2003; Rasinski et al., 2016). A study by Wood (2006) examined 281 students in grades three, four, and five in a public elementary school in Colorado. The study investigated the relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension, as measured by the Colorado statewide test of reading proficiency

(CSAP). The study demonstrated a strong relationship between oral reading fluency and students' performance on the statewide reading proficiency test (Wood, 2006). The study also found that reading fluency predicts students' performance on the reading achievement test equally across grades levels addressed in the study, suggesting the relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension is relatively consistent across intermediate grades. The results of this study reiterate the importance of fluency instruction with struggling readers for students in all grade levels as a predictor of comprehension achievement (Wood, 2006).

As presented above, several research studies have been conducted to find effective instructional strategies and methods to increase fluency of school-aged students. These studies have found that modeling fluent reading, providing fluency support through assisted and choral reading, reading practice that consists of repeated readings, and creating a performance aspect to reading tasks can increase fluency and may consequently have a positive impact on comprehension (Basaran, 2013; Clay, 2005; Morris, 2008; Neddenriep et al., 2010; Paige, 2011a; Paige, 2011b; Pikulski & Chard, 2003; Rasinski, 2014; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2014; Wilfong, 2008; Wood, 2006). It was with these instructional strategies and methods in mind that an intervention to the problem of practice discussed below was composed.

Statement of Problem of Practice

With increased significance and emphasis on fluency, classroom teachers hold a great responsibility in helping students progress to the expected level of reading deemed appropriate by states and districts through providing direct instruction, modeling fluent reading, selecting appropriate materials, providing assistance while reading, evaluating

progress, giving encouragement, and celebrating success (Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs, 2009). From my experiences teaching first, second, and fifth grade classes, serving as a Reading Recovery first-grade interventionist, and now as the elementary instructional coach, I have seen first-hand the effects of low fluency on students' reading abilities and comprehension. In all of these settings, I have witnessed the ill effects of low fluency such as laborious and often unsatisfying reading and insufficient meaning making which leads to comprehension difficulties. My interest and expertise in helping readers become stronger, more proficient readers, was refined when I became a Reading Recovery teacher. These two years of training provided me with experience in assisting the lowest achieving first-grade students with a twelve to twenty week one-on-one intervention to meet their individual reading and writing needs in effort to accelerate their performance to grade level expectations. As a fifth-grade teacher, I found more than a third of my students in need of reading instruction to gain fluency through the use of strategies I have found effective in working with first graders in Reading Recovery (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016). Now, as the elementary instructional coach, I have observed within upper elementary classrooms the lack of fluency instruction that is commonly observed in the primary grades. Upper elementary classrooms at the research site consistently focus small group targeted instruction lessons for ELA to align with standards and skills to promote comprehension and understanding, while disregarding the need for fluency-focused instruction. As their instructional coach, I seek ways in which to support teachers in the best use of instructional materials and strategies to increase fluency for their students. This action research study sought to utilize texts that align with the readers theater instructional strategy, alongside a combination of fluency instructional

strategies that research has shown to be effective, to bring about change in students' reading processes and fluency rates (Rasinski, 2014; Paige, 2011a; Young & Nageldinger, 2014).

National data also confirm my observations, as the National Center for Education Statistics (2002) examined the relationship between reading scale scores and the average number of words read correctly per minute for fourth grade students. The data show a positive correlation that as the average number of words read per minute increases, there is also an increase in the reading scale score. According to Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Next Edition Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS Next ORF) Measures, currently 48% of fifth grade regular education students at the research site have difficulty with one or more components of fluency and are currently below the target level that projects fluency success by the end of the year (Good & Kaminski, 2011). In the teacher-participant's classroom alone, there are nine students that are struggling with speed, accuracy, or both components according to these measures. These nine students need fluency instruction to meet grade level fluency expectations by the end of the year. As an instructional coach for the research site, I desire for upper elementary teachers to use instructional strategies that best increase fluency.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this is action research study is to analyze the effectiveness of using a readers theater text in conjunction with other proven fluency instructional strategies with fifth-grade students, in accordance with the identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for this Dissertation in Practice (DiP). Students from two fifth-grade classes at the research site received a series of combined research based interventions such as choral

reading, repeated reading, and modeling while using readers theater texts for the authentic reading purpose of performance over a four-week period of time. The study examined how the intervention affected the fluency components as follows: fluency rate, the number of words read within a one minute timing period; accuracy, the percentage of the number of words read correctly, divided by the total words read; and fluency retell, a measure that assess comprehension.

Significance of Study

The present study attempted to examine the effects of using readers theater and fluency instructional strategies on the fluency rate, accuracy, and fluency retell score of fifth-grade students. It is with the achievement of better fluency, comprehension may also increases (National Center For Education Statistics, 2002). Achieving proficient reading skills and abilities early in students' educational years, such as in elementary school, is pivotal when one considers the extensive amount of research that points to the alarming trend that students who struggle with reading early on in their schooling continue to have difficulty in later years (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003; Catts, Neilsen, Bridges, & Liu, 2016; Hart & Risely, 2003).

Beyond the foundational research that demonstrates students that struggle early on with reading are likely to continue to struggle, let us consider this effect compounded by the effects of low socioeconomic status. The research-site for this action research study is in a small rural community in South Carolina. The school has approximately 78% of students living at or near the poverty level as measured by its eligibility for Title 1 funds by the federal government. These demographics unveil another level of significance when considering the reading achievement of these students. A significant amount of

research has been conducted to examine the effects of low-income families on school achievement and performance. Hart and Risley (2003) illustrate this connection in their findings that students from families receiving welfare support had smaller vocabularies and acquired new words more slowly than students from families that did not receive welfare support. They also suggest that vocabulary acquisition is a reliable predictor of academic success and reading performance in later years.

Outside of the educational realm, Nobel, Norman, and Farah (2005) conducted research to examine the differences in the neurocognitive performances of 30 low-income African American kindergarten students and 30 well-off African American kindergarten students. The results were astonishing in the significant differences in brain functions in the areas of language, memory, and working memory (Nobel, Norman, & Farah, 2005). While the results emphasize the differences and under performance between students with low-income students when compared to higher-income students, current research also sheds light to the fact that intelligence is not a fixed factor, but can increase or grow with the appropriate supports and instruction in place (Dweck, 2015).

With approximately 80% of students at the research site from low-income families, the effects of this socioeconomic status are extensive in the student population. Specific to reading fluency levels, currently, 48% of the fifth-grade regular education students at the research site are underperforming in at least one of the components of fluency this proposed action research study measures: fluency rate, accuracy, and fluency retell. With this percentage in mind, combined with the wealth of research that support continued difficulty for low performing students and especially those of low-income

families, urgency rises within myself to seek sound, research based instructional methods remediate fluency concerns for these students and promote their future successes.

Research Questions

As there are students in fifth-grade who continue to struggle with fluency, the following overarching Research Questions (RQ) and Secondary Research Questions (SRQ) guide the present study:

RQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater text on students' overall fluency performance?

SRQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' fluency rate?

SRQ2: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' accuracy?

SRQ3: What is the impact of using readers theater text on students' fluency retell score?

RQ2: How did the teacher-participant perceive the fluency intervention?

RQ3: How did the student-participants perceive the fluency intervention?

Research Design

“Educational research involves the application of the scientific method to educational topics, phenomena, or questions in search of answers” (Mertler, 2017, p. 6). Educators and those connected to the field of education use research for many purposes that range from developing theories about how the human brain makes connections and recalls information to understanding why certain students do not perform as well as others on standardized tests. Two types of educational research are traditional

educational research and action research. While both methods can be used to focus around topics that purpose to help educators ultimately increase student learning, there are many differences that may impact their usefulness in the classroom. “Traditional research in education is typically conducted by researchers who are somewhat removed from the environment they are studying” (Mertler, 2017, p. 7). Because of the disconnect between the researcher and the classroom teacher or school administrator, such stakeholders may sometimes find it difficult to implement the research ideas in a practical way in their school setting. On the contrary, action research is teacher-initiated and provides a method for reflection that cultivates changes in instruction or instructional strategies to increase student achievement. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) state the following:

Teacher-inquirers focus on providing insights into teaching in an effort to make change, working tirelessly to unpack all of the complexities inherent in the act of teaching to become the very best teachers they can be for every individual student” (p. 9).

Although some have discredited action research because of its lack of formal methodology, that is not particularly the case. While there are several variations of action research models, commonalities exist. Action research models begin with a central problem or topic and also include observations or monitoring, the collection of data, and then an action to make improvements (Mertler, 2017, p.13). The desires of educators to be able to have a personal connection and immediate implementation of research, has caused the popularity of action research to increase over time. Action research provides a unique opportunity to design a study that will ultimately help me better meet the needs of the readers at my school. More specifically, this action research study follows a

convergent mixed methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data is collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then merged to interpret the results of the intervention (Creswell, 2007).

Setting. The setting of the action-research study is a rural elementary school in South Carolina. The research site receives Title 1 funding and currently serves 623 students in grades Pre-K through grade five. There are two child development classes, four kindergarten, four first-grade, four second-grade, three third-grade, four fourth-grade, and four fifth-grade classes at the research site. The site also staffs the following professional staff members: four special education teachers, a speech pathologist, five special area teachers for elective classes such as art, music, media, computer lab, and physical education, two reading interventionists, a primary and elementary instructional coach, an assistant principal, and a principal. The breakdown of demographics for the school are as follows: 59% Caucasian, 35% African American, 3% Hispanic, 3% two more races, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and less than 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Approximately 78% of the students are of low socioeconomic status.

Participants. The student-participants in the intervention are twelve fifth-grade students from the teacher-participants ELA small group differentiated block. Participants will demonstrate a lack of fluency as demonstrated by the fluency rate, accuracy, and fluency retell score on the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency measures assessment. One fifth-grade teacher served as the teacher-participant and implemented the fluency intervention to the twelve student-participants.

Intervention. The intervention consisted of four weeks of focused fluency instruction for the student-participants. Each week students were introduced to a new

readers theater text. The teacher-participant then led them through a process of discussion of the text, modeling of fluent reading, choral reading, repeated readings, partner reading, and finally performance of the text. The readers theater texts are play-like scripts that are divided into character parts for students to perform for an audience. The scripts chosen for this intervention relate to U.S. History content that fifth-grade students learn throughout the year. The scripts used for the intervention can be found in Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, and Appendix D, and their titles are as follows: Narcissa Whitman and the Westward Movement, Child Labor and the Industrial Revolution, The Great Depression: A Migrant Mother's Story, and Immigration for a Better Life.

Data collection methods. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during this action research study. Quantitative data consisted of student achievement scores relating to students' fluency rates, accuracy percentages, and retell scores as determined by the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Next Edition Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS Next ORF) measures. Qualitative data were collected by administering an open-ended questionnaire to the student-participants and by conducting a semi-structured interview with the teacher-participant. The purpose of collecting qualitative data was to determine the perceptions of the participants towards the proposed intervention. This triangulation of data increases the validity of the findings of the research study (Creswell, 2007). Field notes will also be utilized as qualitative data to capture the action in the classroom (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

Data analysis. After the treatment intervention was completed, a posttest was administered and comparisons between the pre- and post-tests individual scores were

analyzed for potential impacts of readers theater on fluency. Each separate component of fluency, such as fluency rate, accuracy, and retell will be examined to note changes. Field notes were also analyzed to determine if any outside factors could have influenced the effectiveness of the intervention. Interview responses from the teacher-participant and the written-responses from the student-participants' open-ended questionnaire were analyzed to determine trends and patterns in their perceptions of the fluency intervention.

Limitations

This action research has several limitations. First of all, the sample size of student-participants used is small. The sample size is small because the study will be conducted with two small groups of students in the participating teacher's English Language Arts class that need fluency instruction. While this factor greatly limits the study, it is important to remember, "teacher research is not meant to be generalizable to *all teachers everywhere*" (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Teacher research is designed to focus inward to directly inform one's own classroom, rather than outward proving a particular strategy would be effective for others (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Another limitation is that the study relies solely on DIBELS Next ORF measures for examining students' fluency (Good & Kaminski, 2011). Although, it would be advantageous to add an additional measure to analyze students' fluency abilities, only the DIBELS Next ORF measure was used for the action research study due to its precedence as a fluency measure in the researcher's school district and the teacher-participants accountability to this measure of fluency. Thirdly, this study is limited because of the researchers' school district restriction in not allowing students to be interviewed as a means of collecting qualitative data. Instead of a focus interview, an open-ended

question survey was used which prompted student-participants to write their responses to the questions designed to understand their feelings and perceptions of the intervention. A final limitation of this study is the length of intervention. This study incorporates a four-week fluency intervention using readers theater texts to examine effects on fluency. A longer intervention period of six to eight weeks would strengthen the validity of the results, however due to extreme weather conditions and flooding in the research-site area, the research-site district cancelled 16 days of school. These unexpected absences from the research-site delayed the start of the intervention and shortened its length to four weeks.

Summary and Organization of the Dissertation

The multifaceted subject of reading continues to be a focus for state departments of education and districts around the nation. Several acts and many political initiatives have been put into place to create top-down pressure to increase students' ability to read, comprehend, and ultimately prepare students to be college and career ready (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2003). One component of reading that has received much attention in primary and elementary grades is fluency. "Ken Goodman and Carolyn Burke in 1973 wrote that the proficient reader gets the most meaning with the least effort in the fastest time!" (Clay, 2005, p. 41). Chapter one of this action research study brings awareness to the significance of fluency as a component of reading and its importance in today's schools. Chapter two includes current seminal research relating to fluency instructional strategies that present possible solutions to the proposed research question. Chapter three details the phrases of action research methodology that will be employed by the researcher throughout this process. Chapter four explains the findings of the study and

chapter five discusses the implications and recommendations that result from the study. All in all, this study attempts to further investigate the use of research based instructional strategies such as modeled reading, choral reading, and repeated readings with readers theater texts to improve reading fluency of fifth-grade students.

Glossary of Key Terms

The following terms may be helpful in fully understanding the purpose of this action research study and related literature.

Accuracy. Accuracy is expressed as a percentage of the total number of words read minus the number of errors, divided by the total words read, and lastly multiplied by one hundred. An independent leveled text will have a 95% or higher accuracy rate, an instructional level text has a 90% to 94% accuracy rate, and a frustration level text will have accuracy of 89% or below (Clay, 2002).

Benchmark levels. DIBELS *benchmark goals* are empirically derived, criterion-referenced target scores that represent adequate reading progress. By the end of fifth grade to be considered at or above benchmark level, students must read 130+ words per minute with 99% accuracy, retell with the minimum of 36 words, and have a quality retell score of three or higher (Good & Kaminski, 2011).

Choral reading. A reading strategy in which the entire class or small group reads aloud in unison a text or poem. Students learn to read more expressively and increase fluency in a nonthreatening group setting.

Decoding. Decoding is the use of word-identification strategies to pronounce and attach meaning to an unfamiliar word (Tompkins, 2010).

Fluency. Fluency is the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Fluency rate. Fluency rate is the speed at which an individual reads. Fluency rate is measured by the number of correct words a student can read in a minute (Tompkins, 2010).

Phonemic awareness. The knowledge that spoken words can be broken apart into smaller segments of sound known as phonemes (National Reading Panel, 2000)

Phonics. Phonics is the knowledge that letters of the alphabet represent phonemes, and that these sounds are blended together to form written words (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Prosody. Prosody is the ability to orally read sentences expressively, with appropriate phrasing and intonation (Tompkins, 2010).

Readers Theater. Students “perform” by reading aloud scripts that have been made from grade level books or stories. Usually they are performed without costumes or props (Young & Nageldinger, 2014).

Self-efficacy. The beliefs students have in their own capabilities to learn (Tompkins, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature has shown that students who struggle with reading difficulties early on in schooling continue to struggle throughout their formal schooling years (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003; Catts, Neilsen, Bridges, & Liu, 2016; Hart & Risely, 2003). Data from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCED) in 2015 also demonstrates this trend as reports consistently show slightly more than the bottom quartile of students continue to score below basic in reading achievement over time in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade years. The most recent data collection from 2015 shows 28% of high school seniors, which is an all time high percentage since biyearly national data collection began in 1992, scored below basic. I find myself asking, how can this be? How, with rising standards of learning, increased accountability, and a wealth of research that supports sound instructional practices, can the percentage of students scoring in the below basic range in reading abilities remain consistent over time? Could the answer possibly be found much earlier on in the educational schooling career than the 12th grade year?

Problem of Practice

The school of study is Lakefront Elementary School, pseudonym for the student population in this action research study. According to Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Next Edition Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS Next ORF) measures, 48%

of regular education students at the research site have difficulty with one or more components of fluency and are currently below the target level that projects fluency success by the end of the year (Good & Kaminski, 2011). These students need targeted fluency instruction to meet grade level fluency expectations by the end of the year. As an elementary instructional coach, I seek to promote the use of instructional strategies that best increase fluency to support these older elementary students.

Underlying causes of problem of practice. There are numerous possible underlying causes to the lack of fluency these fifth grade students are experiencing: minimal time reading appropriate leveled texts, comprehension difficulties, word recognition difficulties, lack of exposure to modeled fluent reading, and lack of exposure to choral reading. In relation to these root causes, several subsequent effects arise that hinder fluency acquisition in more specific ways. These issues ignite the action research study, which seeks to explore methods to remediate these sources of less fluent reading and to potentially break the cycle of predictability of reading difficulties for these students.

Research questions. As there are students in fifth-grade who continue to struggle with fluency, the following overarching Research Questions (RQ) and Secondary Research Questions (SRQ) guide the present study:

RQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' overall fluency performance?

SRQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' fluency rate?

SRQ2: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' accuracy?

SRQ3: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' fluency retell score?

RQ2: How did the teacher-participant perceive the fluency intervention?

RQ3: How did the student-participants perceive the fluency intervention?

Purpose of Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to analyze foundational and current literature that relates to the topic of reading fluency. The process of conducting a literature review enables the researcher “to become more of an expert in the area you are proposing to study” (Mertler, 2017, p. 61). For this review of literature, I have chosen to use a variety of primary sources to provide original research related to the problem of practice and particular secondary sources to provide a more analytical or interpretative viewpoint of original research.

A wealth of knowledge is available at a researcher's fingertips, however it is extremely important to understand how to find reliable and verifiable literature. All resources used for this review of literature are peer-reviewed sources from scholars and researchers in the reading field of education. To search for articles of literature relating to my problem of practice, I used the search engines ERIC, Education Sources, and Google Scholar. Common research key terms used were “fluency,” “readers theater,” and “reading difficulties”. Because of the large volume of research on reading fluency that already exists, this literature review helped me to see multiple perspectives that relate to my problem of practice.

Theoretical Framework

To more fully understand the problem of practice described above, it is essential to examine the theoretical backgrounds relating to this research study. Considerations of theories describing how students learn, what is taught and how it is taught in the educational realm will be examined in the following two sections: Perspectives of learning theories and perspectives of curriculum theories.

Perspectives of learning theories. Understanding how students learn in general and learn to read is essential to be able to effectively plan and deliver reading instruction. Tompkins (2010) describes four learning theories that have direct implication on reading instruction and development: behaviorism, constructivism, sociolinguistics, and cognitive information processing.

Behaviorism focuses on observable changes in behavior. Seminal work by B. F. Skinner (1971) demonstrated the process of forming a relationship between a stimulus and a response. In this theory, incentives and rewards are used for motivation. The teacher acts as the stimulus presenter to seek desired outcomes of academic development. Applications of the behaviorism in the classroom can be evident through basal readers, skill-driven mini-lessons, and repeated readings (Tomkins, 2010).

Constructivism describes learning as an active natural construction of knowledge (Tompkins, 2010). This learning theory recognizes the importance of background knowledge, values the innate characteristic of curiosity in learners through student initiated questions, and promotes collaboration as a tool to increase knowledge. Evidence of this learning approach can be viewed in classrooms through literature focus units, thematic units, and choice of reading selections. (Tomkins, 2010; Scholnik, Kol,

Abarbanel, 2016). The use of K-W-L charts during these activities promote discussion and personal connections through what a student knows about a topic, what they would like to learn about the topic, and finally what they learned about the topics once the formal learning activities are complete (Tomkins, 2010).

The sociolinguistics theory emphasizes the importance of language and social interaction between people on learning (Tomkins, 2010). Reading and writing are viewed as social and cultural activities and students learn these processes best through authentic engaging activities. The teacher is viewed not as a giver of stimulus to get a certain response, but rather is purposed to provide a scaffold to help guide student learning. Teachers can also “use students’ lived experiences as a bridge to literacies learning and the mandated curriculum” (Cordova & Matthiesen, 2010). Evidence of the sociolinguistics theory can be seen through shared and partner reading in the classroom, literature circles, and reading and writing workshops (Tomkins, 2010).

The cognitive information processing theory of learning, which falls within the larger theory of cognitivism, focuses on unobservable mental processes. Theorists of this learning theory liken the human mind to a computer in which information is processed through a series of processing units until it is stored. Evidence of this theory is evident through guided reading lessons, the use of graphic organizers, and interactive writing (Tomkins, 2010). Research by LaBerge and Samuels (1974) was foundational in developing the automatic information processing theory, which has more recently been revised to include aspects of prosody as part of fluent reading (Schrauben, 2010).

Evidence of these learning theories is present throughout the action research study. The behaviorism theory is evident through the use of repeated reading of the

readers theaters script to seek the response of quicker and more automatic reading. The constructivist theory is evident through the use of texts that students can personally relate to and have prior knowledge of. The sociolinguistics theory is evident through the use of shared and partner reading and the cognitive information processing theory is apparent, as reading will be viewed as a meaning making process. The intervention does not solely focus on reading rate, but takes into account prosody, which is an indicator of comprehension (Schrauben, 2010). The Rauding Theory (Carver, 1984) also considers reading as a meaning making process involving comprehension and understanding of the words that are being read. Having elements of multiple theories of learning validates this research study as using a balanced approach to a comprehensive study.

Perspectives of curriculum theories. Schiro (2013) describes the ever-changing nature of American schools as a war of ideologies that have very different visions of the American school system. While benefits of competition between differing ideologies has resulted in improved instruction for students, the lack of unity between educational professionals and stakeholders has negatively impacted our schools because of their inability to pursue “goals with single-minded determination” (Schiro, 2013, p. 3). Curriculum theories or ideologies have direct implications on the instruction that takes place in the classroom on a daily basis. The following sections will examine three of the four major curriculum theories as described by Schiro (2013) in which this action research study most closely relates: The Learner Centered Ideology, and the Social Efficiency Ideology, and the Social Reconstruction Ideology theory.

Learner centered ideology. Learner centered ideology is all about the learner (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, Rugg & Shumaker, 1928). School activities and learning

experiences are centered on student interests and student choice that incorporate firsthand experiences in the world around them. While student interest and choice is at the center of this ideology, social activities do not happen by accident but are carefully planned and constructed by the teacher. The focus is on growth of individuals and grades are seldom given but rather descriptive a synopsis of the growth one is experiencing is recorded. Evidence of learner centered ideology is apparent throughout this action research study as the entire study is grounded in the need of the learners to become more proficient readers. The assessment methods focus on the fluency growth of each individual learner and learning activities planned for the intervention reflect needed social interactions that integrate student interests.

Social efficiency ideology. Social efficiency ideology is a systematic way of helping students gain knowledge needed as determined by an outside source (Bobbitt, 1913, Schiro, 2013). In this ideology, objectives of learning are determined, educational experiences are developed to help students meet the predetermined objectives, the experiences are organized into a sequence that is most efficient, and lastly the student performances of objectives are measured. Schiro (2013) relates this process to that of a factory production line, where one part is needed before another part can be added. It can also be viewed as backward design. As a need from society is determined, smaller specific ways to meet the need are developed for students to learn. Accountability is extremely important in this ideology as a measure of productivity or efficiency of the knowledge progression. This action research study is closely aligned to the social efficiency ideology, as prerequisite skills of phonemic awareness and phonics are necessary before a reader become a fluent reader. If the prerequisites to fluent reading

mentioned above are not secure within an individual learner during the action research study, additional systematic interventions that focus on the prerequisite skills will be needed before the components of fluency can be addressed.

Social reconstruction ideology. A major goal of social reconstruction is to use education as a means of reconstructing society from its current unhealthy state to a better society for all (Giroux, 2006; Schiro, 2013). The specific focus may vary for social reconstructionist and may include issues of racism, crime, and health care. Through this ideology, educators assume civic responsibility to use their educational platform to promote the transformation of society from their own perspectives of what is best for society. These goals are accomplished through a methodology, which includes the realization of the problem as it relates to their own experiences, the discussion of how to improve the current injustices in society, and finally commitment to actions to resolve the issues (Schiro, 2013). This action research study address issues of social reconstruction by providing systematic intervention to students that attend school in a low socioeconomic area. This study provides student-participants with numerous reading opportunities and intervention to overcome the educational challenges related to their socioeconomic status.

Historical Perspective

Reading has become an increasingly important skill since America's founding. The economical framework of the United States of America has shifted from an agrarian culture, to an industrialized nation, into today's technological advanced society. In our country's foundational years, one's livelihood and success did not strictly correlate to academic reading ability, but rather depended on survival and labor skills as these drove

the economic culture at that time. Since then, a notable shift has taken place in the realm of education (Historical Timeline of Public Education in the U.S., 2015; Watras, 2010). Goodman (1987) summarizes this shift of literacy development well when he stated, “It expands as society becomes more complex and needs literacy to perpetuate its history, its economy, its politics, its education, its literature, its religions and philosophies, its recreation, and whatever functions it can serve” (p. 1).

Education has expanded from being only available to a select few, to now being part of our country’s legislature (Historical Timeline of Public Education in the U.S., 2015). Early in the educational history of the United States of America, children of the elite class were taught the alphabet and sound-symbol relationships, and they learned to read texts intended for moral instruction (Vogt & Shearer, 2003). Later in history, a shift towards analytic and synthetic phonics instruction was adopted and then moves to basal reading series were popular for several years. More recently in the 1980s and 1990s, education has become more holistic and the integration of subjects more common (Vogt & Shearer, 2003). In today’s society educational federally funded research expanded and molded a common belief that reading is a complex process incorporating a variety of skills and strategies. This evolution of reading instruction has emerged in part through the establishment of an increasingly philosophical view that considers the purpose of education is to create productive working members of society. Today’s culture reveals a sharp contrast to the past, as academic ability is now deemed an excellent predictor of societal success. In 1996, The National Council on Teaching English Standards for English Language Arts predicted that in order to, “participate fully in society and the workplace in 2020, citizens will need powerful literacy abilities that until now have been

achieved by only a small percentage of the population (p. 7). Tompkins (2010) suggests literacy as a tool needed to participate fully in the technological society of the 21st century.

Importance of literacy in context of national reading data. As the importance of literacy and academic success has become realized more fully, the desire to evaluate and track student performance in academic areas to monitor our nation's progress has increased exponentially over time. The first national assessments began in 1969 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Since their initiation, these assessments have served as a "common yard stick" for student evaluation. As testing expanded into biyearly assessments and have become revered by those in power, refusal to participate in mandated assessments may result in loss of federal funding. The most current results from the NCES in 2015 show that 36% of fourth grade students scored at or above the proficient level, which demonstrates solid academic performance. This performance, up one percent from the 2013 results, is an all time high since biyearly data collection began being collected in 1992. The data also shows that 34% of eighth grade students in 2015 scored at or above the proficient level, a two percent decrease from the 2013 results. While the data shows improvement from its initial administration in 1992, only about one-third of fourth and eighth grade students demonstrate solid academic performance, therefore a sustained focus on academic literacy continues in our nation (U. S. Department of Education, 2017). These facts reiterate the importance of reading instruction and the implementation of sound reading instructional practices within the classroom. They point to the substantial opportunities for growth in our students as educators strive to help learners meet levels of proficiency in reading.

Importance of literacy in context of social implications. Technological advances that a few decades ago were unimaginable, coupled with the increase of globalization as common way of life have had significant implications on reading and literacy (Tompkins, 2010; Watras, 2010). These deficits, that previously would have been little more than nuisance, are exponentially compounded on society as a whole in today's civilization. Cree (2012) reports that the cost of illiteracy to the global economy surpasses one trillion dollars annually. In the US alone, an estimated 362.49 billion dollars a year are lost due to the effects of illiteracy on economic factors such as lost of earnings and limited employability and social factors such as increased health concerns, crime, welfare, and effects on families. This staggering cost is indicative of the more than 796 million people in the world that cannot read and write. Illiterates appear to be trapped in a cycle of poverty, have higher chances for poor health, are more likely to turn to crime, and have a higher dependence on welfare (Cree, 2012; Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, Kolstad, 2002). More specifically, 85% of juvenile delinquents are functionally illiterate high school dropouts that are more than three times as likely to receive welfare as high school graduates (Cree, 2012). The average wage for illiterates is 30-45% less than literate individuals and can be expected to stay the same throughout their lifetime, while the income of a literate person can be expected to increase two to three times from the beginning of their careers. According to Cree (2015), education has been cited as the best means of overcoming poverty caused by illiteracy. This action research study addresses components of literacy at the research site as it focuses on increasing reading fluency within fifth-grade students who show a deficient in that area. Building students' strengths and proficiencies in literacy is one way that school systems at the local level

can combat the costly social implications of illiteracy in our country and the world at large.

Five Essential Components of Literacy

In order to effectively educate individuals in reading and literacy, a comprehensive understanding of reading must first be developed. Congress gave this national charge to a group of school administrators, teachers, and scientist of reading research in 1999 called the National Reading Panel. The findings of the group were presented in conjunction with President George W. Bush’s plan for improving the nation’s education system: the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The panel highlighted five essential components of effective instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to “focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words” (NICHD, 2000). Research by Melby-Lervag, Lyster and Hulme (2012) and O’Conner (2011) strengthen preexisting research that supports phonemic awareness’ pivotal role as a prerequisite for learning to reading effectively. Activities such as breaking a word into individual sounds, making new words by adding a phoneme to a preexisting word, and replacing a specified phoneme with a new phoneme to create a new word help build phonemic awareness (Learning Point Associates, 2004; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). “Learning a new word involves forming a connection between visual information about the word as it appears in print and its meaning, pronunciation, and other information that is stored in the child’s oral vocabulary” (Learning Point Associates, 2004, p. 6). Strengthening this connection allows for quicker processing, which in return

produces more proficient reading. These types of activities to grow the knowledge base of phonemic awareness can help young children understand words in more advance ways than sight word recognition only.

Phonics. Phonics is the second essential component identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000). Phonics instruction enables young readers to use and understand the alphabetic principle. It teaches students that there are systematic relationships, however sometimes irregular, between graphemes and phonemes. Phonics instruction increases students' abilities to read and spell words correctly (Graaff, Bosman, Hasselman & Verhoeven, 2009). The use of decodable texts, as a method to transfer decoding gains to fluency and comprehension, is common in phonics instruction as a way for students to apply the specific sound-spelling word relationships taught (O'Conner & Avadasy, 2011).

Fluency. Fluency instruction, which is at the essence of this research study, is described as a combination of reading quickly to clear working memory so that more focus can be funneled to comprehension, using appropriate groupings or phrasing of words to enhance comprehension, and natural expression that mimics spoken language (DiSalle & Rasinski, 2017; Learning Point Associates, 2004). Theoretically, for fluent reading to occur, a strong foundation of phonemic awareness and phonics must be in place, and automatic word recognition is paramount (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). Instruction to promote and practice fluent reading includes the use of repeated reading, reading along with an adult fluent reader, and guidance with the grouping of words into meaningful phrases (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; Learning Point Associates, 2004).

Vocabulary. The fourth component of reading found to be significant by the National Reading Panel is vocabulary. By definition, vocabulary is the words people need to know to communicate effectively with others. In essence, we have four vocabularies: the vocabulary we are able to understand when we listen to others, the vocabulary we use to speak, the vocabulary we are able to understand while we read, and the vocabulary we use while writing. Because the known vocabulary of a student plays an important role in reading comprehension (Ilter, 2017) a strong oral vocabulary can help readers recognize words in print more easily. Simply put, students must understand the meaning of the words they read in order understand what they have read (Nagy & Scott, 2000).

Several instructional strategies have been found to help increase vocabularies such as instruction on affixes, root words, and the use of context clues to determine a word meaning (Brown, Lignugaris/Kraft, & Forbush, 2016; Toste, & Caplin, 2016). Other suggestions such as read alouds, repeated exposure to new vocabulary, associating new words with known words, and using the new words in a sentence to match meaning with appropriate context of the word have also been shown to increase the learning of new vocabulary (Gallagher & Anderson, 2016; Ilter, 2017; Myers & Ankrum, 2016). However, one of the most essential factors of building vocabulary relies in the frequency of exposures to words outside of his or her current vocabulary. Foundational work by Hayes and Athens (1988) discovered that rare vocabulary is more frequently used in print sources than speech or listening to television. This finding highlights the importance of reading to develop and enrich vocabulary.

Comprehension. The final essential component of reading highlighted by the National Reading Panel (2000) is comprehension. Comprehension involves constructing meaning that is reasonable and accurate. It is often referred to as the final goal of reading instruction. Good readers use a variety of comprehension strategies, have an awareness of their own thinking processes, understand when meaning is diminishing, and perceive comprehension as a result of effort, not ability (Burns, Maki, Karich, & Coolong-Chaffin (2017; Learning Point Associates, 2004).

Understanding the five components of reading described above and how they are closely connected to a student's reading development is essential. For the student-participants that did not experience success as measured by the fluency measures with the fluency intervention, the foundational knowledge described above assisted in determining possible reasons. This foundational knowledge of how students learn to read enable the researcher to effectively and systematically reflect at the end of the action cycle to make decisions about possible revisions for future implementations of the intervention (Mertler, 2017).

The Role of Fluency in Reading

Fluency is an integral part of reading. While the National Reading Panel examined each component as a separate entity, much research has found correlations and relational patterns between fluency and the other components of reading instruction (Nunes, Bryant, & Barros, 2012; Reis, Eckerty, McCoach, Jacobs, & Coyne, 2008 Veenendaal, Groen, and Verhoeven, 2015). The interconnected aspects of word recognition, comprehension, and prosody to fluency are examined in the section below.

Word recognition. Automatic word recognition is essential for fluency development and has been shown to increase fluency and accuracy of text reading (Coulter & Lambert, 2015). Examining how children develop successful word recognition is important so that educators can be effective in their instruction to increase word recognition (Clay, 2007). Nunes et al. (2012) conducted a study to analyze the effect of different decoding processes on reading competences. The researchers hypothesized that two types of units in decoding make independent contributions to students' reading comprehension and fluency. The two types of units analyzed were larger graphophonics, which carry no meaning, and morphemes, which are units of meaning. The results of the study showed that morphemes were a stronger predictor of comprehension and fluency than graphophonics. The implications for educators seeking to develop greater word recognition skills, fluency, and comprehension in their students are to explicitly teach and promote awareness morphemes during direct instruction.

Comprehension. Comprehension and fluency are closely related and, when worked on simultaneously in a reading program can have greater positive effects than that of a traditional reading program (Langdon, 2004; Kuhn, Rasinski, & Zimmerman, 2014). Reis et al. (2008) conducted a study to investigate the effects of such a program they call Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM-R). The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of SEM-R on students' fluency, comprehension, and attitudes toward reading in comparison with a basal program. The SEM-R had an emphasis on enjoyment in the process of learning with a focus on planned systematic enrichment activities. The components of the SEM-R included read alouds, independent reading time with self-selected books, and self-choice enrichment activities that fostered

comprehension. The results of the study suggest that an enrichment reading program that challenges and engages students produced higher ORF than a standard basal program (Reis et al., 2008).

Prosody. Prosody is the ability to orally read sentences expressively, using appropriate phrasing and intonation. Much current research points out the impact of prosody on fluency and comprehension and its role in reading development. While past definitions of fluency may have not emphasized the effects of prosody, Schrauben (2010) states that today there is a wide consensus that the definition of fluency includes the use of prosodic features which includes intonation, stress of words, length of phrases, appropriateness of phrases, pausal intrusions, and final phrase lengthening. Schrauben (2010) also references work of Miller and Schwanenflugel (2006) that highlighted the role of pitch changes, which they hypothesized to be an important variable in the prediction of reading comprehension and the work of Dowhower (1987) that proved that as rate, accuracy, and comprehension improved, prosodic reading equally improved. A recent study Veenendaal et al. (2015) examined the role of oral text reading fluency, which includes rate and prosody as a contributor to reading comprehension, and determined that inclusion of text reading prosody as an aspect of text reading fluency is justified and that a natural intonation is associated with better comprehension of what is read.

Analysis of word recognition, comprehension, and prosody demonstrate their necessary role in fluency instruction. These three components are integral parts of the action research study and are incorporated directly into the fluency intervention to provide complete fluency instruction.

Difficulties of Struggling Readers with Fluency Deficits

Close examination of readers with fluency deficits is important in determining what instructional approaches and strategies should be used to remediate their weakness (Koriakin & Kaufman, 2017). Once the causes of the difficulties are identified systematic, explicit instruction can be designed to meet the specific needs of the students. Research has identified two major causes of fluency deficits: lack of skills needed to decode multisyllabic words and lack of vocabulary.

Decoding multisyllabic words. Decoding multisyllabic words is a critical turning point for many students. Students that master this skill continue to understand harder and more complex texts, while students that do not master the skill lag behind their peers (Toste, Williams, & Caplin, 2016). Toste et al. (2016) agree that “poorly developed word recognition skills are the most pervasive and debilitating source of reading challenges for struggling reading and learning disabled students” (p. 270). As students continue to upper elementary school, the average number of syllables in words that students are expected to be able to read increases steadily, yet there is a notable decrease in word reading instruction: struggling readers are receiving fewer opportunities to develop proficient word reading skills (Toste et al., 2016). With these trends in mind it is not hard to understand that 74% of students identified with a reading disability in 3rd grade continue to have significant reading challenges in 9th grade (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003).

Archer et al. (2003) found that large numbers of secondary students read between a 2.5 to 5th grade level. A possible cause of this hindrance is students’ lack of ability to read multisyllabic words fluently. When students are not able to read and understand

multisyllabic words, the meaning of a content area passage is almost completely lost, negatively affecting their fluency and their ability to comprehend. Considering how educators can best meet the needs of these students is essential in resolving the trends of past data.

Students experiencing difficulty in reading fluency may benefit from direct instruction in decoding long multisyllabic words (Diliberto, Beattie, Flowers, Algozzine, 2009). There are three basic instructional strategies that have been used to teach students how to decode multisyllabic words; reading segmented words part-by-part, decoding different syllable types, and a flexible strategy (Archer et al., 2003). While direct instruction in how to decode multisyllabic word is necessary, these students also need extensive time and opportunity to practice this skill. Archer et al., (2003) suggest gains in reading are most likely when the teacher implement researched validated program that have a well designed sequence, provide systematic instruction to students, and furnish adequate practice time.

Vocabulary. Hart and Risley (2003) conducted a longitudinal study to discover the effects of poverty on children's academic growth. Specially, they were looking for early language experiences that might explain the differences in vocabulary acquisition in 4 years olds. Several astonishing finding resulted from the study including:

1. Eighty-six to ninety-eight percent of the words recorded in the child's vocabulary consisted also in the parent's vocabulary.
2. Students from families receiving welfare support had small vocabularies and acquired new words more slowly.

3. Vocabulary use at the age of 3 was equally predictive of measures of language skills at the ages of 9-10.
4. The number of words heard per hour in the home of the professional families was almost twice that of an average working class family, and almost 3.5 times as much as the families receiving welfare support.

This study suggests the great importance of language in the early years of development, demonstrating that the number of words a child may hear spoken may directly correlate to their acquisition of vocabulary, and furthermore predict academic success later in life.

Catts, Nielsen, Bridges, and Lui (2016) conducted a study to examine the early identification of reading difficulties. The purpose of the study was to determine if measures of language ability and response to language intervention in kindergarten predicted reading comprehension difficulties in third grade. Three hundred sixty-six students participated in the study over a 26-week period, during which the treatment group spent half of the intervention time on vocabulary instruction. The results showed that language abilities are good predictors of comprehension abilities while suggesting that language can be used as a screening method for comprehension difficulties (Catts et al., 2016).

Both studies reiterate the importance of language and vocabulary development. While formal education may not be able to take effect until the age of 4 or 5 for most students, there are proven vocabulary instructional methods that can help increase the vocabulary development of students that are behind their peers.

Fluency Strategies

The literature presented up to the present point supports the claims that reading

instruction continues to be a focus for education (NCES, 2015) and that fluency is a vital component of reading (Learning Point Associates, 2004). To address the element of fluency instruction in the process of reading, much research has been conducted on effective practices of implementation. This section will address the use of repeated readings, choral reading, read alouds, the use of appropriate text levels, and the use of appropriate text types as research based proven methods of fluency instruction.

Repeated readings. Repeated readings refer to the multiple readings of a meaningful short text (Samuels, 1979). Seminal work by Samuels (1979) on the influence of repeated readings was based on the theory of automatic information processing of LaBerge and Samuels (as cited in Samuels, 1979) suggested readers are able to read more fluently because they can decode automatically, which leaves attention free for readers to focus on comprehension. This research led to decades of fluency research that continued to support the use of repeated reading to increase speed and accuracy (Dowhower, 1987; O’Shea, Sindlear, & O’Shea, 1985; Rasinski, 1990).

Over time, research has offered several variations and combinations of using repeated readings as an instructional method to increase fluency that have proved successful. A recent study by Wilgong (2008) observed that almost half of third graders in a certain school were significantly below grade level expectations for words read correctly per minute. The mixed method research study aimed to validate the use of the intervention of the Poetry Academy program, which was based on the idea of repeated readings. The intervention program enlisted a volunteer to facilitate the following process.

1. The volunteer will read the poem to the student.

2. The student would read the poem back to the volunteer.
3. The student would read the poem to someone outside of the school setting
4. The students read the poem one last time to the volunteer at school the next day.

When compared to the control group, the intervention group made statistically significant gains in words read correctly per minute and word recognition. This proposed research study will utilize repeated reading of readers theater texts to examine its impact on fluency.

Choral reading. In essence, choral reading is a reading strategy in which the entire class or small group reads aloud in unison. There are several variations of choral reading. Among these are: echo reading, leader and chorus, small group reading, and cumulative reading. Echo reading involves a leader reading each line or sentence of a text and then the group repeating the line or sentence. Leader and chorus choral reading is when the leader reads the main part of a passage and the group reads the refrain. During small group reading, the class is divided into two or more groups and each group reads a part of the text in unison, and cumulative reading involves one student reading the first line and then is joined by another students for the second line and so on (Tompkins, 2010). Choral reading provides students with opportunities to read expressively and increase fluency (Rasinski & Padak, 2004) in a nonthreatening environment (McCauley & McCauley, 1992, Paige, 2011a).

Paige (2011b) conducted a research study to investigate how Whole-Class Choral Reading (WCCR) helps to develop oral reading fluency skills with sixth graders. The 112 participants of the quasi-experimental designed study participated in WCCR for six-weeks on a daily basis with repeated readings of a narrative text. The results of the study

reveal that participants in the treatment groups improved phonological decoding skills and oral reading fluency with moderate effect sizes. This proposed research study will utilize choral reading as an instructional strategy to improve fluency within the application of a readers theater text.

Read alouds. Much of what we learn comes from observations of things we hear and see in our environment (Bandura, 1977). Reading acquisition can work much in the same way. Boomer (2006) speaks of the importance of listening as a reading skill. Listening refers to attention to the voice of the text, the way the sentences sound, the noticing of shifts in voice when characters change, and having a visual movie playing in your mind. If a student is reading without hearing the shifts in voice, the student is most likely losing the meaning of the text. The voices of characters are tied to the way the character feels and relate to the action of the plot and are essential to gaining meaning. An essential part of fluency is the way language sounds when spoken aloud. Goodman (1976) describes this as the syntactic curing system. Boomer (2006) suggests direct modeling and teaching students to notice the sound of language in specific classroom examples.

Hutton (2015) demonstrates the importance of read alouds even before children reach formal schooling age. In his longitudinal study, parents of nineteen preschool children from the ages of three to five participated in a question survey to determine elements of their home literacy environments. Questions targeted information regarding the child's access to books, the frequency of shared reading activities in the home, the variety of books available, the amount of parental involvement, the teaching of letters, and the frequency of verbal interactions with the child. The results of the study showed

that higher reading exposure in the home of these preschool children positively correlated with activation of the left sided parietal temporal occipital association cortex. This part of the brain supports semantic language processing, helps develop mental images, and supports narrative comprehension supporting the conclusion that read alouds help to build foundational reading skills in children at a very young age.

Dollins (2014) advocates for the use of read alouds to help students build background knowledge in essential components necessary for future reading and writing success such as vocabulary, print concepts, phonemic awareness, and fluency. The purpose in using read alouds as a direct part of reading instruction is for students hear what fluent reading sounds like and then transfer these observations into actions during their own independent reading and writing. Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson (1985) suggest reading aloud as the “single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading (p. 23). Dollins (2014) supports the use of read alouds for fluency improvements. As teachers slow down their reading at suspenseful parts, quicken the pace during action sequences, and quiet their voice during sad or tender moments, children gain a sense of how pacing, inflections, and rhythm help a listener gain meaning. By attending to punctuation and using expression and intonation during read alouds, teachers help children hear the way texts need to be read for optimum comprehension. While reading aloud entire texts to students is not a part of this proposed action research study, reading aloud and modeling short phrases and passages for students is a strategy that will be utilized during the fluency intervention.

Appropriate text level. The text level at which a text is written compared to the student’s reading ability is critical in developing reading fluency and comprehension

(Allington, 2001). Tompkins (2010) reviews the importance of using classroom assessments as a method to collect meaningful information about students' reading levels. According to Tompkins (2010) there are three reading levels: independent, instructional, and frustration. An independent reading level requires the student to read with 95%-100% accuracy, an instructional level requires 90%-94% accuracy, and the frustration level is anything that receives below 90% accuracy. The implications of understanding the text and being able to read the text fluently are highly dependent on the text level.

Treptow, Burns, & McComas (2007) conducted a single subject, multi-element design study to replicate a foundational study conducted by Gickling and Amrstrong in 1978. The study sought to observe how differences in text levels impact students' time on task and comprehension of text of three third grade students. The students were selected after a screening that looked for low on task behavior during reading instruction and reading difficulties. The study revealed that comprehension was better for all three students, as each demonstrated the highest overall on-task behaviors at the instructional levels. This proposed action research study will take into account students' instructional levels to ensure the texts that are used during the intervention are not at the frustration level for students.

Appropriate text types. The type of text that is being used for fluency instruction is very important to the outcome of the intervention. Expanding beyond the traditional narrative and informational readings that are most common in reading instruction may have great benefits in the area of fluency. There are several types of texts that researchers deem appropriate for fluency instruction: readers theater, poetry,

speeches, monologues, presentations, and songs (Rasinski, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2014).

The aspects of performance that these types of texts have make them unique and appropriate for fluency instruction. Boomer (2006) suggests oral performances of a text make a difference in student thinking about the text. Rehearsal mediates the reader's attention on the sound and sense of language in the text promoting more fluent reading. These types of texts provide engaging and authentic reading tasks. For this proposed action research study, readers theater texts will be utilized as the reading text type. Rasinski et. al (2016) advocates for the use of readers theater for a focus on prosodic-orientated performance.

Implementation of Readers Theater

Readers theater is an appropriate text type to use as during a fluency intervention to promote an increase of fluency behaviors in students (Rasinski, 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2014). While the text type is appropriate, there are still other factors that must be considered before the implementation of such an intervention. The subsequent sections will examine the teacher's responsibilities of implementing a readers theater text, the importance of direct instruction, opportunity to practice, and opportunity to perform for an audience.

Teacher responsibilities. Rasinki (2005) speaks of the importance of the teacher in effective fluency instruction. Direct involvement of the teacher is essential in the effectiveness of instruction. Rasinki (2005) described six roles of the teacher that were taken into consideration during the planning of this action research study.

1. The teacher should model fluent reading. This allows students to see and hear what fluency is and how it brings depths of meaning into the text.
2. The teacher should act as a fluency coach. The teacher should listen to students reading and give informative feedback and praise that will continue the fluency growth in the individual. This idea of coach also relates closely to the words of Flowers (2017) as she describes the educator's "job is to coach students into their own personal excellence" (p. 3).
3. The teacher should promote paired reading and take the role as a partner in paired reading from time to time.
4. The teacher should be a resource collector that gathers resources needed to practice fluency such as poetry, songs, readers theater scripts, or put in place a listening center.
5. The teacher should provide space for performance of reading. This motivates students and sets a purpose for reading.
6. The teacher is responsible for progress monitoring students to reassess their needs and adjust instruction and activities as needed.

As an instructional coach seeking to improve the fluency of fifth graders at the research site, the intervention model incorporated these teacher responsibilities into its essence.

Direct fluency instruction. Mraz, Caldwell, Beiseley, Sargent, & Rubpley (2013) speak of the importance of teachers being intentional in applying instructional strategies that will help young readers move past the decoding of words toward being able to fluently identify words in reading. Several studies that have implemented direct methods of fluency instruction have shown effectiveness in increasing fluency and other

foundational reading components (Disalle & Rasinski, 2017; Kuhn, Rasinski, Zimmerman, 2014; Reis, McCoach, Coyne, Schreiber, Eckert, & Gubbins, 2007). Direct instructional strategies such as modeling, scaffolding, and repetition of reading have been shown to have positive impacts in fluency (Disalle & Rasinski, 2017; Kuhn et al., 2014; Reis et al., 2007). Readers theater provides a natural medium to deliver direct fluency instruction. In the intervention, readers theater texts were intentionally chosen as they allow for an authentic use of repetition of readings. Also during the intervention, the teacher-participant models the reading of the text for students and then provides intentional scaffolding throughout the weeks of intervention so that student-participants take ownership of their fluency skills.

Practice. In a study by Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho (2008) readers theater was chosen as the instructional method because of its capability to provide ample opportunity for oral reading practice. The participants of the six-week study were thirty-six eighth grade students. One readers theater script was practiced each week for six weeks to improve fluent reading. After this fluency intervention, the treatment group showed higher gains than the comparison group by a statistically significant margin in their reading ability, fluidity and expression, comprehension, and vocabulary. Feelings of success and confidence also increased because of the amount of time allotted to practice their parts in the script.

Mras et al., (2013) observed very similar results of increased word recognition, increased automaticity and reading rate, and improved prosody in study in a study of 19 third graders. This study also utilized a single readers theater script over the course of a week to allow for increased practice time. Ample amount of practice time was allotted in

the intervention, as well as the use of the same script for the duration of the week's instructional activities.

Performance. The aspect of performance of a readers theater script provides motivation through an authentic communication event (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). While at first thought, the performance aspect of readers theater may seem like a daunting task for the teacher, the logistics of performance can be quite simple. Young and Nageldinger (2014) suggest a five-day plan, with the fifth day as the performance day of the script. They suggest that the performance day require no props, no memorization, and no costumes. The entertainment comes strictly from the expressive oral presentation of the text. The audience may consist of parents, administration, other classes, school staff, or when these are not available, their classroom peers (Young & Nageldinger, 2014).

Examination of past research of the implementation methods of readers theaters that have been successful in increasing fluency was essential to the planning of this action research study. The research above reveals several commonalities among implementation methods of direct fluency instruction, practice opportunities, and performance events that are incorporated in this action research study.

Benefits of Readers Theater and Combined Fluency Strategies

The use of readers theater texts with other combined fluency strategies have been shown to increase fluency. In addition to solid research indicating fluency growth, other benefits of using readers theater as text for fluency instruction exist that go beyond academic reading development. The following section will discuss the benefits of

motivation and engagement and confronting issues of social justice that can be realized through the use of readers theater texts.

Motivation and engagement. Gambrell (2011) discusses seven rules of engagement to promote motivation to read. The first rule discussed is the need for student materials to be relevant to their lives. The reading materials should add value and meaning to the lives of the students and provide a springboard for making connections. Secondly, students should have access to a wide range of reading materials (Reutzel & Juth, 2014). This includes texts from different genres, text types, magazine, and Internet resources. Third, students should be given ample opportunity to engage in sustained reading. While the blocks of instructional reading time may be lengthy during the school day, the actual time students spend reading is minimal. Fourth, students should be allowed to make choices about what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks. Choice has been proven to be a motivating factor for students. Fifth, students should be encouraged and allowed to interact socially with others about the book they are reading. Collaboration is key to motivation. Sixth, students should be given opportunities to be successful with challenging texts so that they build confidence in their abilities. Lastly, classroom incentives should reflect the value and importance of reading and not be extrinsic.

Several of these rules for engagement proposed by Gambrell (2011) relate directly to the intervention in this action research study. When selecting the scripts for the readers theater passages that were used during the intervention, the dynamics, culture, and interests of the students in the intervention group were taken into consideration. The intervention also provided students with sustained reading time to become deeply

involved with the reading of the scripts each day. Readers theater also appeals to students because it is a cooperative learning environment in which students do not feel threatened or singled out (Gambrell, 2011; Mrza et al., 2013). Through the built-in motivational elements, the readers theater intervention in this action research study was motivational for students.

Issues of social justice. This action research addressed issues of social justice relating to socioeconomic status. Abundant research points to the idea that a great achievement gap exists between the students of low and high socioeconomic status families (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Reardon, Valentino, Kalogrides, Shores, & Greenberg, 2013). Hart and Risely (2003) discuss possible early onsets of this achievement gap as they sought answers to what was happening in children's early experiences that could account for the differences in the rate of vocabulary growth in children as young as four years old. Results of their study showed that the vast majority words recorded in a child's vocabulary was also present in the parent's vocabulary and children from families receiving welfare support had smaller vocabularies and added words to their vocabulary more slowly than children from families that did not receive welfare support (Hart & Risely, 2003). The National Reading Panel identifies vocabulary as the fourth component of reading and the previously mentioned study also found that vocabulary use at the age of three was equally predictive of language skills at the ages of nine to ten (Hart & Risely, 2003). Children in low socioeconomic settings are starting their educational careers behind their higher socioeconomic status peers. While this intervention was conducted with fifth-graders between the ages of ten and eleven, when achievement gaps are well established between students of differing socioeconomic

statuses, research has shown the classroom teacher's years of experience and quality of training are correlated with children's academic achievement (Gibber, Bol, & Wallace 2007). Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ (2009) also note that schools in low-socioeconomic status can combat these differences by focusing on teaching and learning, creating information-rich environments, and building learning communities. This action research study attempted to include all three of these components by bringing awareness to teachers of the importance of fluency focused instruction, providing students in the intervention information rich environments by incorporating social studies topics into their reading lessons, and by building a community of learners between the students in the intervention group as they work and learn together to perform the scripts for others.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to examine foundational and current literature related to the problem of practice described and to build foundational knowledge that will support the answering of the question: What is the impact of readers theater on students' overall fluency performance? This literature review examined theoretical perspectives of learning and curriculum theories and analyzed their relationship to the proposed research study. The literature review also reviewed national data and social concerns that are linked to poor reading abilities and impact communities on a global scale. The importance of conducting action research to improve fluency in adolescent readers was justified through the empirical research described in this literature review.

Fluency's role in the reading process was studied and implementation strategies of enhancing fluency outcomes were reviewed to assist the researcher in developing a comprehensive intervention to best enhance fluency with fifth-grade students at the action research site. Additional benefits of using readers theater texts for fluency instruction were discussed as they relate to social justice issues present in today's society.

Through the development of conducting the literature review, the action-researcher has become more knowledgeable of the foundations of fluency, its application in the reading process, and implications of fluency instruction in the classroom setting. New avenues of research and information have been explored and will aid in the continual development of this review through the action-research process. The subsequent chapter, Chapter 3, address the methodology used in the design of this proposed action-research study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

From personal experiences of teaching first, second, and fifth grade students in general education classrooms, teaching the lowest reading leveled first grade students in reading intervention classes, and now as the elementary instructional coach at the research site, I have seen across elementary grade levels the effects of low fluency in students' reading performance. Students who struggle with reading fluency are more likely to have difficulties with comprehension of texts and may lose interest in reading related activities. National data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2002) demonstrate a positive correlation between fluency and comprehension. My experiences have also allowed me to notice that as students progress through the grade levels of elementary school, intentional targeted fluency instruction becomes less frequent and perhaps nonexistent. As the elementary instructional coach at the research site, I seek to find ways in which I can support teachers to promote fluency instruction and effective fluency strategy use in their classrooms. This action research study used a mixed methods research design to examine the effectiveness of using readers theater texts in combination with other proven fluency instructional strategies with fifth-grade students.

Research Questions

As there are students in fifth grade who continue to struggle with fluency, the following overarching Research Questions (RQ) guides the present study:

RQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' overall fluency performance?

SRQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' fluency rate?

SRQ2: What is the impact of using readers theater text on students' accuracy?

SRQ3: What is the impact of using readers theater text on students' fluency retell score?

RQ2: How did the teacher-participant perceive the fluency intervention?

RQ3: How did the student-participants perceive the fluency intervention?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this action research is to analyze the effectiveness of using readers theater texts in conjunction with other proven fluency instructional strategies with fifth-grade students, in accordance with the identified Problem of Practice (PoP) for this Dissertation in Practice (DiP). Select students from two fifth-grade classes at the research site received a series of combined research based interventions such as choral reading, repeated reading, and modeling while using readers theater texts for the authentic reading purpose of performance over a four-week period of time. The study examines how this intervention affects the fluency components as follows: fluency rate, the number of words read within a one minute timing period; accuracy, the percentage of the number of words read correctly, divided by the total words read; and fluency retell, a measure that assess comprehension. The study also examines the participants' perceptions of the intervention.

Research Design

As an increasing number of educators seek ways to reform their own practices, action research, which provides a model for research to be conducted by practitioners, has gained popularity in the educational realm (Mertler, 2017). In contrast to traditional research, where the researcher is typically separate from the environment being studied, action researchers are immersed in the research environment. Action research provides unique perspective and understanding about the researcher's educational setting that cannot easily be gained from the somewhat disconnected nature of traditional research. The recursive cyclical nature of action research is also conducive to continual improvement in educational practices. Reflection is intentionally and systematically completed to plan next steps needed and continue the process (Mertler, 2017). Some of the earliest beginnings for this type of research can be recognized from the progressive work of John Dewey.

The theoretical foundations of action research in education are grounded in the importance that John Dewey gave to human experience in the generation of knowledge. From Dewey, it was a short step to the notion of taking the professional experience of teachers and other practitioners and using it as a source of knowledge about teaching. (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 18).

A more direct link of foundations for action research is attributed to the work of Levin who believed "knowledge should be created from problem solving in real-life situations" (as cited in Herr and Anderson, 2005, p. 11).

Action research has gone through scrutiny and questioning in regards to validity. When considering validity in action research, it is imperative to recall the purpose of

action research is not to be generalized into a board range of settings or populations of students, but is rather purposed to inform a specific classroom practice or local issue.

“Action researchers must be careful not to let their biases or wishes influence their results or actions” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 175). However, the benefit of such research empowers educators in a setting that has traditionally not esteemed the voice of the educator. “Teacher inquiry is a vehicle that can be used by teachers to untangle some of the complexities that occur in the profession, raise teachers’ voices in discussions of educational reform, and ultimately transform assumptions about the teaching profession itself” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014, p. 6).

Over time, action research has gained legitimacy as it now stretches into various fields of study such organization development, education, social work, criminology, nursing, public health, international development, and agriculture. Herr and Anderson (2005) identify various traditions of action research such as organizational development and learning, action science, participatory research, teacher-as-researcher movement, self-study, and practitioner research movements. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) suggest “looking closely at the three educational research traditions: process-product research, qualitative or interpretive research, and teacher inquiry” (p.6). Process-product research portrays teachers as technicians that follow a set regimen that has been given to them by outside researchers. This tradition discourages teachers as problem-solvers of educational issues. While qualitative, or interpretive, research takes into consideration issues of context, it continues to limit the role of the teacher, as the researcher is still an outsider to the educational setting. However, the third tradition of teacher inquiry empowers the teacher to be a knowledge generator and increases the likelihood of

teachers imparting change in their own classrooms (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Mertler (2017) suggests action research studies to have a great importance in the educational setting and potential benefits over traditional educational research because of the lack of attention to local variation and adaptations in traditional research. Therefore, my action research study is centered in the tradition of practitioner research or teacher inquiry. I conducted my own research on fluency interventions with the use of readers theater to potentially enhance classroom practices at the research-site for fifth grade students. Therefore, action research methodology provides the most appropriate framework to answer this research question.

Reflection of Problem of Practice

As I began identifying an area of interest that I sought to improve within my own classroom when I was a fifth-grade teacher and that I now see as a more sustained grade level issue or even perhaps upper elementary grades issue, my thoughts shifted to the reading ability of fifth-grade students. From my work with fifth graders, I often notice the lack of fluency in their reading. Problems in fluency can stem from issues with accuracy, speed, or prosody and flow over into issues with comprehension. As students are ending their elementary school years in fifth grade and making their way to middle school, I feel this is somewhat a final opportunity for many students to focus instruction on their reading abilities, as my general observation is that less systematic reading instruction takes place as students advance to each grade level. Next, I began to gather information related to fluency. After analysis of my own fluency data and that of my surrounding fifth grade teammates, I concluded that fluency intervention within the regular education setting is needed, perhaps on a greater scale or in a more purposeful

way than the previous instruction I had previously given. This led me to conduct a review of related literature that is current on my area of interest. Previous research reveals there are many instructional strategies that have been proven to increase fluency in older elementary school students (Paige, 2011; Rasinski, 2014; Young & Nageldinger, 2014). Now, as the elementary instructional coach, I continue to see the same trends and patterns I had observed in my own fifth grade classroom on a much larger scale.

Finally, I began to develop a research plan and specific questions to guide the research process further. I determined my research questions to be: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' overall fluency performance? How did the teacher-participant perceive the fluency intervention? How did the student-participants perceive the fluency intervention? To answer these questions, the action research was designed as a mixed methods study in which quantitative and qualitative data was collected. The triangulation or convergent design was implemented as collection of both qualitative and quantitative data took place simultaneously and then was interpreted together after the intervention was complete. The quantitative portion of this action research followed a non-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design as described by Mertler (2014). The independent variable for this portion of this mixed methods action research study is the use of reader theater passages as a method of fluency instruction. The dependent variables are the fluency rate, accuracy percentage, fluency retell, and quality score of each student after the intervention was completed. Qualitative data of perceptions of the teacher-participant and student-participants after the intervention was complete was also gathered through the use of an open-ended questionnaire for the student-participants and a semi-structured interview of the teacher-participant. Twelve

students that demonstrated lack of proficiency in reading fluency received the treatment of fluency instruction using readers theater texts.

Setting

The researcher for this action research is a certified teacher in South Carolina. The teacher-researcher has taught at the research site for 12 years in a variety of grade levels ranging from first to fifth grade and now serves as the elementary instructional coach for grades two through five. The research site receives Title One funding and is an elementary school in a rural part of South Carolina. The school currently serves 623 students in grades Pre-K through grade five. Currently, 59% of students are Caucasian, 35% Black or African American, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 3% two or more races, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and less than 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Approximately 78% of the student population receives free or reduced fee lunches (Horry County Schools, 2017). The student-participants in this action research are fifth-grade students in the teacher-participant's reading class and one other classroom at the research site.

The researcher's district is a countywide district that serves more than 43,000 students (Horry County Schools, 2017). More than 20,000 of those students are elementary students. The district contains 27 primary/elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 10 high schools, three academies, four charter schools, and one alternative school that serve grades six through twelve. In grades four through five the average class size is 24.5 students. The demographic makeup of the district is 64% White, 20% African American, 9% Hispanic, and 7% other (Superintendent's Report, n.d).

Sample

For this action research study, I used a non-probability convenience sampling of students within the research site. The students who received the fluency intervention were from the teacher-participant's reading classroom and one other fifth-grade ELA classroom. The student-participants were selected for the intervention by the criteria that they show a need for targeted fluency instruction based on DIBELS ORF measures. The two small groups of students in the teacher-participant's class have the lowest fluency scores in comparison with their peers in the two classrooms. The twelve students consisted of seven males and five females. The study was conducted in the spring semester of 2019.

Intervention

The intervention consists of four weeks of focused fluency instruction for the student-participants. Each week students followed the instructional plan below with a new readers theater text.

Day 1: The teacher introduced the script to the twelve students activating students' prior knowledge of the context of the text as necessary. The teacher read the script to the students to model fluent reading with correct expression, phrasing, and intonation. Finally, the teacher-participant and students chorally read the script.

Day 2: Students begin the lesson by chorally reading the script with the teacher. Next, the teacher will assign character roles for the script. During this phase, the twelve students will be randomly divided into two small groups so that there are six students in each group. Finally the teacher will listen to students individually as they read their assigned parts to themselves to check for word accuracy.

Day 3: The focus of day three is using appropriate expression, phrasing, and intonation. The teacher chooses one line of the text for each student's character to model fluent reading. The students then partner reads their parts to each other, providing each other feedback on their expression, phrasing, and intonation. The teacher also listens to partners reading and provides support as necessary.

Day 4: The purpose of Day 4 is for students to practice their script as a whole text with all students reading their parts as the scripts suggests. The teacher provides feedback and support as necessary.

Day 5: On this day, students will perform their readers theater text to another group of students, teachers, or parents. The teacher-participant coordinates this. Audiences could be another class in the school, the administrative team, or inviting parents to the classroom for the performance.

In summary, this fluency intervention utilizes a readers theater text with other combined fluency strategies such as teacher modeling, corrective feedback, choral reading, repeated readings, and performance.

Role of Researcher

The role of the researcher in an action research study is quite different than that of a traditional research study. In action research, the research is initiated by the classroom teacher or person in direct connection to the problem of practice, to make improvements in his or her own classroom setting or school environment. "Action research is characterized as research that is done by teachers for themselves" (Mertler, 2017, p. 4). Herr and Anderson (2005) describe action research as "inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them" (p. 3). These

descriptions show the multifaceted role of the researcher as an essential part of the research planning and implementation.

Currently at the research site, I serve as the elementary instructional coach. This position affords me the opportunity to examine student performance in all subject areas and the quality of instruction with the sole purpose of working with teachers to improve the effectiveness of instruction. As the action researcher, I have identified problems associated with low fluency rates, collected and analyzed data that shows which students in the teacher-participants class are in need of fluency intervention, and developed a plan of action to remediate the fluency deficits and increase fluency of those students in her educational setting.

During the implementation of this research my positionality fluctuated at various points of the process. During the implementation phase of the research, my positionality was more of an outsider. I communicated with the teacher-participant before the action research began to ensure that she understood the process and purpose of the intervention, but I did not implement the intervention myself. The quantitative data from the pre and posttests and the intervention was completed solely by the teacher-participant. The teacher participant also held the responsibility for administering the student-participant survey during non-instructional time. During the four-week implementation phase, I met with the teacher-participant two to three times a week and was available to discuss the implementation or any other questions or concerns that she had as needed. Finally, I served as an insider to the research during the semi-structured one-on-one interview with the teacher-participant.

Data Collection Instruments

To determine baseline fluency rates for the quantitative portion of this action research study, students were assessed with the first set of DIBELS fifth grade benchmark assessments *1.1 The Land Bridge*, *1.2 The Crow and the Pitcher*, and *1.3 Recycling Tires*. The passages used for these assessments are on a graded level, short texts that vary in genre. The word length of the passages ranges from 306 to 343 words. This assessment will provide a fluency rate, accuracy percentage, and retell quality score for each student in the intervention. For pre-test and posttest quantitative data, the teacher-participant used progressed monitoring passages from the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Measures to measure change in the individual fluency rate of each student. Progressing Monitoring Passage One is titled *Ride the Ice* and Progress Monitoring Passage Two is titled *The Best Present Ever*. These texts mirror the passages used in the collection of baseline data as they also vary in genre and range in word length from 332 to 351 words. All passages used for the fluency assessment will be presented to student-participants on a single sheet of paper in the Times New Roman font style in 12-point font. The DIBELS fluency assessments have been used by the district in which this research is being conducted for several years and is the district required measure for fluency performance. The six texts discussed in this section can be found in Appendix E.

During the study, the teacher-participant collected qualitative, or narrative data, by the administration of an open-ended questionnaire to the student-participants and a semi-structured interview with the teacher-participant was conducted. The student-participant questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions that allowed the participants to describe their perceptions of the intervention. The teacher-participant

semi-structured interview consisted of seven open-ended questions that allowed the teacher-participant to verbalize her perceptions of the intervention as well. The seven open-ended questions for the teacher-participant were pilot tested with another teacher at the research site ensure the clarity of the questions. The seven open-ended questions of the questionnaire for the student-participants were pilot tested with three fifth-grade students not participating in the intervention to ensure they were clear and easy to understand. Feedback from these pilot tests was used to revise the questions to increase their clarity. At the end of the student-participant questionnaire and the teacher-participant interview, participants were given the opportunity to make additional comments about the intervention that were not addressed in the question topics. The table below summarizes the alignment among the research questions, data collection instruments, and types of data collected.

Table 3.1

Alignment of Essential Components

Research Question	Data Collection Instrument	Type of Data
RQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' overall fluency performance?	Pre-test: DIBELS Fifth Grade Fluency Progress Monitoring Passage One Post-test: Fifth Grade Fluency Profess Monitoring Passage Two	Quantitative Data
RQ2: How did the teacher-participant perceive the fluency intervention?	Semi-structured Interviews	Qualitative Data
RQ3: How did the student-participants perceive the fluency intervention?	Open-ended Questionnaire	Qualitative Data

Data Collection Methods

One method of data collection for this action research is quantitative measures of student achievement. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) suggest, “these measures can be valuable sources of data for the teacher researcher” (p. 120). This action research study follows a one-group pretest-posttest design with DIBELS Fifth Grade Fluency Benchmark passages used for the pre-and post-assessments. Base-line data on students’ fluency was assessed prior to the intervention using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills-Next Edition Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS Next ORF) measures. The following data collection methods were utilized as the pre-and posttest. These data will identify three groups of readers in participating class. According to the DORF Words Correct Measure, students whose fluency rates are 130 words per minute or higher are considered at the benchmark level, students reading between 105-129 words per minute are below benchmark and in need of strategic support, and students reading 100 or few words per minute are well below benchmark level and are in need of intensive support (Good & Kaminski, 2011).

The DIBELS Next ORF measure also provides an accuracy percentage. This percentage will be examined to determine the readability of the text for the student. A 97% or greater accuracy percentage shows that the text is at an independent level for the student. An accuracy percentage between 94% and 97% demonstrates that the text is at the instructional level for the student, while any percentage below 93% reveals frustration for the students and most likely a lack of comprehension.

The final data collection derived from the DIBELS Next ORF measure involves the retell of the passage. For the retell score each word that the student retells from the

story will be given a point. Only words retelling correct events will be counted.

Additional a score of one, two, three, or four will be given to describe the students overall understanding of the text as they retell. This number is referred to as the quality score.

This proposed action research study also utilizes qualitative data. Questionnaire results of the student-participants and the results of the semi-structured interview with the teacher-participant were used to collect data. Fields notes were also be used to capture the action in the classroom (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). During the intervention, the teacher-participant recorded notes on the implementation of the fluency strategies, student engagement, reading behaviors observed, and other observations she thought may have an impact on the effectiveness of the treatment.

Data Analysis

Mertler (2017) suggests, “the primary goal of data analysis is to reduce vast amounts of data into smaller, more manageable sets of information” (p. 171). The data collected from this study is both qualitative and quantitative. During collection of the quantitative data, the researcher acted as an outsider while the teacher-participant gave the pre- and posttest. The quantitative data of fluency rate, accuracy percentage, retell, and retell quality score was gathered using a one-group pretest-posttest design.

“Descriptive statistics allow researchers to summarize, organize, and simplify data (Mertler, 2017, p. 11). Descriptive statistics was used to measure central tendencies such as the mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation of fluency scores from the pretests and posttests. A paired t-test was also used to compare the sample populations testing means before and after the intervention. The researcher also acted as an outsider while the teacher-participant administered the questionnaire to the student-participants.

However, during the gathering of the qualitative data from the teacher participant interview responses, the researcher was an insider, or “fully functioning member of the ‘community’ as well as a researcher” (Mertler, 2017, p. 96). From the qualitative portion of the data gained from observations recorded as field notes, the researcher used a constant comparison to note patterns and changes in students’ behaviors (Mertler, 2017).

Students should have an active part in their learning and should take ownership of their learning and growth. To help promote a growth mindset in my students (Dweck, 2006), participants chart their fluency rate at the beginning of the study and then again at the end. After the study was complete, the teacher-participant conferenced with each student-participant. For students that made fluency gains, those accomplishments were celebrated and the idea that their work efforts contributed to their growth as a reader were center focus of the discussion. For student-participants that did not experience fluency gains, participants were reminded that their teacher, either the teacher-participant or the teacher or the additional class in which student-participants were selected from will reflect on the outcome of the study and make adjustments to better meet their fluency needs in the future. Reflection also occurs with the teacher-participant through the use of the semi-structured interview. This time allowed the teacher-participant time to not only describe her perspective of the intervention as it was delivered during the four-weeks, but also allowed the teacher-participant to suggest modifications that may be beneficial for other teachers that may incorporate similar instruction in their classrooms in the future.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

Throughout this action research study, the concepts of rigor and trustworthiness were considered and will be summarized below. The DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency

measure used for the collection of quantitative data has been proven to measure the components of fluency through the extensive research that has been conducted on the tool beginning in the early 1990s and continuing today. It is well documented that childrens' performance on DIBELS is predictive of and strongly related to childrens' reading success (Abbott, Wills, Greenwood, Heitzman-Powell, Kamps, & Selig, 2010; Ardoin & Christ, 2009; Elliott & Tollefson, 2001). To aid in the validation of the student-participant questionnaire questions and the teacher-participant interview questions, peer review and debriefing of the forms was used and questions were pilot tested (Creswell, 2007). To establish credibility of the qualitative data, triangulation was used as data was collected from multiple sources.

Inquiry is a natural and necessary part of the teaching profession. Educators engage in inquiry to improve their teaching practices to help all students learn. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) suggest, "choosing *not* to engage in the process can almost be viewed as *unethical*" (p. 149). While teacher inquiry is commonplace in the educational setting, ethical considerations must be considered to protect to the rights of all participants involved in an action research study. Mertler (2017) suggests that permission can usually be obtained for minors by having parents of participants sign a parental consent form and student participants an assent form. To adhere to this in my study, parent permission and student assent forms were completed. This process also complies with the principle of honesty, as all participants will be aware of what type of research they are participating in and how data will be collected (Mertler, 2017). Another important aspect of research ethics is confidentiality and anonymity. To attend to this matter, I used numbers instead of names to discuss individual student-participants

and a pseudonym for the name of the research site. This action research project adheres to the principle of beneficence by trying to further develop the fluency of participants and lastly the principal of importance, as the results of my study help further the fluency development of older elementary students in my school.

Summary

As reading continues to be a focus for students from primary grades to high school across the country, and I have personally noticed in my own classroom the effects of low fluency in fifth grade students, action is needed in classrooms to try to remedy this problem. This mixed methods action research study was developed to explore best practices to improve fluency of fifth graders. Though implementation of the intervention in the rural, low socioeconomic area of the research site, fifth graders who struggle with fluency in the teacher-participants' class received a fluency intervention using readers theater texts. The intervention employed several researched-based strategies along side the repeated readings of readers theater texts for an authentic purpose of performance. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected through the use of pre- and post-test measures, an open-ended questionnaire for the student-participants, and a semi-structured interview with the teacher-participant. Analysis of data looked for fluency changes within the components of fluency such as fluency rate, accuracy percentage, retell, and quality for each individual student. Qualitative data was also examined for teacher and student-participant perceptions all while the research study ensured rigor and trustworthiness during the process. Next, Chapter Four will discuss and analyze the findings of this action research study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of chapter four is to communicate the findings of this action research study, which sought to determine the impact of using readers theater texts on the fluency of fifth-grade students. Fluency is one of the five essential components of reading as determined by the National Reading Panel in 1999. Fluency is a combination of reading automatically to clear working memory for other functions, such as comprehension and natural expression (DiSalle & Raskinski, 2017; Learning Point Associates, 2004). Research has shown that instruction to improve fluency such as repeated readings, reading along with an affluent adult, and guidance with grouping words into meaningful phrases can be effective (Hudson, Lane, & Dullen, 2005; Learning Point Associates, 2004). From my personal experiences, I have observed a diminished focus on fluency as students progress from primary to elementary grade levels. At the research site, it is common that once general education students reach fourth and fifth grade, fluency becomes a component of reading that is assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of year; however, its importance and effects on reading and comprehension appear to be inadequately understood. This is demonstrated by the lack of instructional focus and fluency strategies apparent in small group reading lessons. The data collected during the study was used to address the following research questions.

RQ1: What is the impact of using Readers Theater text on students' overall fluency performance?

SRQ1: What is the impact of using Readers Theater texts on students' fluency rate?

SRQ2: What is the impact of using Readers Theater texts on students' accuracy?

SRQ3: What is the impact of using Readers Theater texts on students' fluency retell score?

RQ2: How did the teacher-participant perceive the fluency intervention?

RQ3: How did the student-participants perceive the fluency intervention?

The problem of practice for the action research study identified the need for a fluency focus and direct fluency instruction for fifth grade students in an attempt to support higher fluency performance. To address the problem of practice, the teacher-researcher designed a fluency-focused intervention using readers theater texts. The intervention consisted of four weeks of focused fluency instruction for participants. Each week, students were introduced to a new readers theater text in which they were led through a process that included discussion of the text, modeling of fluent reading, choral reading, repeated readings, partner reading, and finally performance of the text by the teacher-participant. The readers theater texts are play-like scripts that are divided into character parts for students to perform for an audience. The scripts chosen for this intervention relate to U.S. History content that fifth-grade students are expected to learn from the South Carolina Social Studies State Standards. The intervention was implemented during the Fall 2018 semester for four weeks between the months of

October and November. Twelve students participated in the intervention. As described in greater detail in Chapter 3, the intervention was initially planned for a small group of six students. However, due to data release requirements set by the district of the research site, a minimum of twelve students was necessary to participate in the study to ensure students were not easily identifiable. The following sections discuss the quantitative data from baselines results, pretests, and posttests and will present the analysis of qualitative data collected during the intervention to determine if the combination of using readers theater texts and several research-based instructional strategies were effective in improving the fluency of the twelve fifth-grade students.

Quantitative Data Analysis

This proposed action research study used quantitative data to select the twelve student-participants for the intervention and to assess students' fluency measures before and after the intervention. The sole source for quantitative data used in the research process was DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Measures Assessment. This assessment measures students correct words read per minute rate, accuracy, retell, and retell quality. The word per minute component assesses the speed at which a student read. Scores are recorded by the rate of how many correct words per minute the student can read in a minute. The accuracy component measures how precise the student is when reading. The score is recorded as a percentage. The benchmark level for the beginning of the year data is 98%. The retell score attempts to gauge students' comprehension by evaluating how much a student is able to recall from a text and the retell quality score assesses the quality of the retell in terms of details recalled, meaningful sequence, and if a main idea

is stated. The quantitative data described in the sections below are derived from these four sources of the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Measures

Baseline data for selection of student-participants. In examination of the teacher-participant class' beginning of the year DIBELS data, there were thirteen out of twenty-three students whose data showed a need for fluency intervention. Eight of these thirteen students were already selected for a district mandated pullout intervention during the ELA small group time and would not be able to participate in the fluency intervention developed by the teacher-researcher. Data from fluency measures were not considered in the selection of those eight students for the district mandated intervention. The district solely uses results from the MAP Growth interim assessment from NWEA, which is used as a predictor for performance on the end of the year state assessment SCReady, to select students to receive the district intervention. Data from the Fall 2018 administration of MAP Growth testing found those students to be in the bottom quartile, which qualified them for the pullout services. Lack of consideration of fluency data by the district to screen students for intervention, supports the problem of practice identified by the action-researcher.

Four students from the teacher-participant's class showed a need for fluency intervention and were available to participate during the approved time block. To meet requirements of the district for data release, student participants from another fifth-grade classroom were selected to receive the intervention in the teacher-participant's classroom. This additional teacher has twenty-two students on her ELA roster during this portion of her day. After examining her beginning of the year DIBELS oral reading fluency data, sixteen of those twenty-two students showed a need for fluency intervention. One of

those sixteen students was already selected for the district mandated pullout intervention. The students with the lowest fluency rate scores were asked to participate in the study from her room. Eight students from this additional teacher's room would participate in the fluency intervention in the teacher-participant's classroom along with the four students from the teacher-participant's classroom to make the intervention group of twelve students.

The twelve students selected for the fluency intervention demonstrated a need for fluency instruction based on their beginning of year DIBELS ORF data. Eight of the twelve students scored in the well below range for words per minute while the remaining four students scored in the below grade level range. In regards to accuracy, one student scored well below benchmark, six students scored below benchmark, and five students scored at or above the benchmark level. Overall students scored higher in the retell and retell quality sections of the assessment than in the words per minute and accuracy categories. Four students scored below benchmark in retell words, while eight students scored at or above benchmark level. The retell quality scores for all twelve participants were at or above benchmark level for the beginning of the year range. The baseline data results show that the greatest needs for the twelve student-participants is increasing their words per minute and increasing their accuracy while reading.

Beginning of the year data confirm the need identified in the problem of practice. Although there were more than twelve students that could possibly benefit from the developed fluency intervention, twelve students with the lowest fluency rates were selected for the study. This decision was influenced by the nature of the intervention needing to be led and directed by a teacher in close contact with the teacher-researcher,

the terms of the intervention agreed upon by the school principal, and the feasibility for myself, as the teacher-researcher to investigate and monitor the time requirements of the action research process. It is also notable to mention that one student whose data qualified for the intervention did not participate due to lack of parent permission. Table 4.1 summarizes the beginning of the year DIBELS assessment results in terms of percentages of students considered at or above, below, or well below the benchmark ranges.

Table 4.1

Baseline Levels from DIBELS Beginning of Year Data for Intervention Group

Benchmark Level	Words Per Minute	Accuracy %	Retell Words	Retell Quality
At/Above	0%	42%	67%	100%
Below	33%	50%	33%	0%
Well Below	67%	8%	0%	0%

Pretest results for student-participants. After the identification of the twelve student-participants, the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Progress Monitoring Passage One was administered to students. Students were assessed in correct words read per minute, accuracy, retell, and retell quality.

Correct words read per minute. The correct words read per minute assessment was conducted by having student-participants read the DIBELS passage for one minute. The total number of words the student read was recorded. Next, the number of errors, exemptions, or substitutions was subtracted from the total words read. The results from the pre-test identify that when continuing to analyze correct words per minute scores by

the beginning of the year cut scores, six students scored in the well below grade level expectations range, two students were below grade level expectations, and four students were in the at or above grade level expectation range. The correct words read per minute scores ranged from 72 to 137. When taking a closer look at the four students that were in the “at or above” grade level range, concerns with accuracy were still evident as their accuracy scores were below the expectation of 98%.

Accuracy. Accuracy is assessed by dividing the total number of words read correctly by the total number of words read. For example, if a student read 98 words correctly out of a total number of 101 words read, the accuracy percentage would be computed by dividing 98 by 101, to receive an accuracy percentage of 97%. In regards to accuracy, the pre-test results revealed only three students at or above the grade level cut scores for at or above benchmark level, eight students’ scores were in the below grade level range, and one student’s accuracy was well below grade level expectations.

Retell. After reading the fluency passage, the assessor prompted the students to retell the text. While the student retold, the assessor kept track of the number of words the student used in the correct retelling of the text. In examination of the retell word count scores, ten students are considered to be on grade level, while two students fell into the below grade level expectation range.

Retell Quality. The retell quality was scored considering the descriptions below.

- A score of one indicates that the student provided two or fewer details.
- A score of two indicates that the student provided three or more details.
- A score of three indicates that the student provided three or more details in a meaningful sequence.

- A score of four indicates that student provided three or more details in a meaningful sequence that captured a main idea.

All students in the intervention group received quality retell scores of level two or higher, which indicate they were at or above grade level expectation for retelling at that time of year. One student received a quality score of two, ten students received a quality score of three, and one student received a quality score of four. The results for each student-participant are presented below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Pre-test DIBELS ORF Results of Intervention Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Words Per Minute</u>	<u>Accuracy %</u>	<u>Retell Words</u>	<u>Quality Score</u>
1	137	97	47	3
2	82	99	40	3
3	111	93	53	3
4	95	95	57	3
5	88	99	33	3
6	72	97	41	4
7	95	97	42	3
8	110	100	40	3
9	98	95	23	2
10	132	97	70	3
11	112	97	31	3
12	76	97	39	3

Posttest results for student-participants. After the four-week intervention concluded, the twelve student-participants in the intervention were given DIBELS Oral Reading Progress Monitoring Passage Two. This progress monitoring assessment followed the same format as described above for the pretest, including components of correct words read per minute, accuracy, retell, and retell quality. The sections that follow describe the results of the posttest for each component in detail and summarize categorical shifts in student-participant performance.

Correct Words read per minute. The results from the posttest identify that when continuing to analyze correct words per minute scores by the beginning of the year cut scores, three students scored well below grade level expectations. This was a decrease from six students on the pretest. Three students were below grade level expectations on the post-test, which was an increase of one student from the pretest. Six students fell into the at or above grade level expectation range, which was an increase from four students on the pretest. The minimum correct words read per minute from the pretest increased from 71 words to 88 words on the posttest.

Fifty-eight percent of student-participants made growth in the number of correct words read per minute on the posttest. The average correct words read per minute on the pretest were 92.75. The average correct words read per minute on the posttest were 109.5. This reveals an average growth of 16.75 words from pre-test to post-test. This information can be viewed in Table 4.11 later in the chapter. To evaluate if there was significance in growth in the correct words read from the pretest to the posttest, a paired t-test was used to compare the sample populations testing means before and after the intervention. Although seven students experienced growth during the intervention, there

was no significant difference in the scores of the posttest ($M = 100.67, SD = 19.65$) and the pretest ($M = 109.5, SD = 13.42$); $t(11) = -2.11, p = .058$. These results suggest that the readers fluency intervention did not have a significant effect on the correct number of words read per minute for these fifth-grade students. Individual differences in correct words read per minute from the pretest to posttest are described Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3

Individual Comparative Data of Correct Words Read per Minute for Intervention Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>	<u>Difference</u>
1	137	131	-6
2	82	113	+31
3	111	120	+9
4	95	94	-1
5	88	94	+6
6	72	96	+24
7	95	115	+15
8	110	108	-2
9	98	127	+29
10	132	120	-12
11	112	108	-4
12	76	88	+12

Accuracy. The accuracy component of the posttest results showed that ten students scored at or above the grade level cut scores, which was an increase from three

students on the pretest. Two students scored in the below benchmark level range. No students scored in the well below benchmark range on the posttest, which was a decrease from one student. The minimum accuracy percentage on the pretest was 93% and increased to 97% on the posttest. Individual differences in student-participants' accuracy percentages from the pretest to posttest are described Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4

Individual Comparative Data of Accuracy for Intervention Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>	<u>Difference</u>
1	97	98	+1
2	99	100	+1
3	93	99	+6
4	95	98	+3
5	99	98	-1
6	97	99	+2
7	97	98	+1
8	100	97	-3
9	95	100	+5
10	97	99	+2
11	97	100	+3
12	97	97	0

Seventy-five percent of student-participants made growth in the accuracy component on the posttest. The average accuracy on the pretest was 96.9%. The average

accuracy on the posttest was 98.6%. This reveals an average growth of 1.7% of accuracy from pre-test to post-test. This information can be viewed in Table 4.11 later in the chapter. To evaluate if there was significance in accuracy growth from the pretest to the posttest, a paired t-test was used to compare the sample populations testing means before and after the intervention. There was a statistically significant difference in the scores of the posttest ($M = 98.58, SD = 1.04$) and the pretest ($M = 96.92, SD = 1.85$); $t(11) = -2.35, p = 0.039$. These results suggest that the readers theater fluency intervention had a statistically significant effect on the accuracy percentage for these fifth-grade students and therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected for this component.

As mentioned in the pretest results section, the following two sections of retell and retell quality were assessed on the pre and posttest, however, the baseline and pretest data revealed the greatest fluency needs for these twelve students related to the number of correct words read per minute and accuracy percentage. The sections below will report the data for retell and retell quality, however, these components were not the central focus of the intervention.

Retell. In examination of the post-test retell word count scores, all twelve students scored on or above the grade level expectation. This was an improvement from the pretest results which identified only ten students scoring in the on or above grade level range. While several individuals did not increase the words they used in their retell, they remained in the on or above grade level range. One possible explanation for the decreases in some student-participants' posttest retell scores is perhaps higher-level synthesis statements were used, which show a deeper understanding of the text, but could also require less words to be spoken than retelling several details in isolation (Allington,

2006; Reading Teacher, 2010). This action research study will not be able to determine if this was the case, as data is not available to analyze exact student responses during their retells. Although four students experienced growth during the intervention in regards to retell and the two student-participants who were below grade level increased to the on grade level range, there was no significant difference in the scores of the posttest ($M = 41.92, SD = 4.27$) and the pretest ($M = 43, SD = 12.52$); $t(11) = 0.29, p = .039$.

Individual student-participant results for retell can be examined in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5

Individual Comparative Data of Retell for Intervention Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>	<u>Difference</u>
1	47	45	-2
2	40	41	+1
3	53	45	-8
4	57	46	-11
5	33	44	+10
6	41	40	-1
7	42	40	-2
8	40	38	-2
9	23	50	+27
10	70	42	-28
11	31	35	+4
12	39	37	-2

Retell quality. All students in the intervention group received quality retell scores of level three or higher which indicate they are at or above grade level expectations for retelling at this time of year. This was an improvement from the pretest results, as one student had received a quality score of two, indicating they had not retold the text in a meaningful sequence. There was no significant difference in the scores of the posttest ($M = 3, SD = 0$) and the pretest ($M = 3, SD = 0.43$); $t(11) = 0, p = 1$ for retell quality. The quality retell results for each student-participant are presented in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6

Individual Comparative Data of Retell Quality for Intervention Group

<u>Student</u>	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>	<u>Difference</u>
1	3	3	0
2	3	3	0
3	3	3	0
4	3	3	0
5	3	3	0
6	4	3	-1
7	3	3	0
8	3	3	0
9	2	3	+1
10	3	3	0
11	3	3	0
12	3	3	0

Post-intervention DIBELS levels. Before the intervention began, the twelve students selected for the fluency intervention demonstrated a need for fluency instruction based on beginning of year DIBELS ORF data. This data is displayed in Table 4.2 prior in the chapter. Post-intervention DIBELS ranges for the group of students showed growth and improvement. Six of the twelve students scored at or above the grade level range, three below grade level, and three students well below grade level. In regards to accuracy, ten students scored at or above grade level and six students below grade level. No students remain in the well below grade level range for accuracy after the intervention. All students scored at or above the grade level range for retell and retell quality after the intervention. When comparing the percentages of the twelve intervention students that fell into each range post-intervention to baseline data, improvements are observed. A summary of the post-intervention DIBELS levels is presented in terms of percentages of students considered at or above, below, or well below the benchmark ranges as determined by DIBELS is displayed in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7

Post-Intervention Levels from DIBELS Beginning of Year Data for Intervention Group

Benchmark Level	Words Per Minute	Accuracy %	Retell Words	Retell Quality
At/Above	50%	83%	100%	100%
Below	25%	17%	0%	0%
Well Below	25%	0%	0%	0%

Correct words per minute. In analysis of the post-intervention levels of students' data for correct words read per minute, there were improvements observed in the

intervention group. Baseline data indicated no students in the “at or above” grade level range. Post-intervention data show that six students are considered in the “at or above” grade level range, which is an increase of 50%. A reduction from four students to three students scored in the below grade level range and a reduction from eight students to three students scored in the well below grade level range. This data comparison reveals possible positive impacts of the intervention on correct number of words read per minute for the students in the intervention group. A summary of these results can be viewed below in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8

Correct Words Per Minute Comparative Data of Baseline and Post-Intervention Ranges

Benchmark Level	Baseline	Post-Intervention	Difference
At / Above	0%	50%	+50%
Below	33%	25%	-8%
Well Below	67%	25%	-42%

Accuracy. Post-intervention results show improvements in the accuracy of the intervention group. Baseline data indicated five students in the “at or above” grade level range. Post-intervention data show that ten students are considered in the “at or above” grade range, which is an increase of 41%. A reduction from six students to two students scored in the below grade level range and a reduction from one student to no students scored in the well below grade level range. This data comparison reveals possible positive impacts of the intervention on accuracy for the students in the intervention group. A summary of these results can be viewed below in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Accuracy Comparative Data of Baseline and Post-Intervention Ranges

Benchmark Level	Baseline	Post-Intervention	Difference
At / Above	42%	83%	+41%
Below	50%	17%	-33%
Well Below	8%	0%	-8%

Retell. Post-intervention results show improvements in the retell of the intervention group. Baseline data indicated eight student scored in the “at or above” grade level range. Post-intervention data show that all twelve students are considered the “at or above” grade range, which is an increase of 33%. This data comparison reveals possible positive impacts of the intervention on retell for the students in the intervention group. A summary of these results can be viewed below in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Retell Comparative Data of Baseline and Post-Intervention Ranges

Benchmark Level	Baseline	Post-Intervention	Difference
At / Above	67%	100%	+33%
Below	33%	0%	-33%
Well Below	0%	0%	0%

Retell Quality. Post-intervention results show no changes evident in the percentage of students who scored in each of the DIBELS ranges of at or above, below,

and well below grade level ranges. All students in the intervention scored in the “at or above” grade level range on the baseline data and on post-intervention data.

Interpretation of quantitative data. Analysis of the quantitative data from the pre and posttest scores show that the implemented fluency intervention involving pairing readers theater texts with other proven fluency strategies was successful in improving some components of fluency assessed by the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency assessment. The main focus of the fluency intervention was to improve the correct number of words that student-participants read and the accuracy percentage at which they read. The DIBELS ORF assessment also evaluated students’ ability to retell the text read and the quality of the retell.

When examining the mean growth of the intervention group in the areas of correct words read per minute and accuracy, the intervention proves to be successful. On average, the intervention group gained 16.75 correct words per minute and 1.7% in their accuracy score. Decades of research on the positive effects repeated readings can have on the correct number of words read per minute and accuracy were the justification for including such components in the fluency intervention (Dowhower, 1987; O’Shea, Sindlear, & O’Shea, 1985; Raskinski, 1990; Wilgong, 2008). The repeated reading of the readers theater texts each week and the repeated reading of the student-participants’ assigned parts in the intervention, proved to increase the majority of students correct number of words read per minute and accuracy. Table 4.11 below summarizes the averages for the intervention group of students in each of the four components tested. Although only the accuracy percentages proved to be statistically significant, the correct

words read per minute increased as well. The research shows promise, however, further research is needed to confirm the effectiveness of the intervention.

Table 4.11

Comparative Mean Data for Pre- and Post-test of Intervention Group

	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>	<u>Difference</u>
<u>Words Per Minute</u>	92.75	109.5	+16.75
<u>Accuracy</u>	96.9	98.6	+1.7
<u>Retell Words</u>	43	41.9	-1.1
<u>Quality Score</u>	3	3	0

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data for this action research study was collected from three sources. The twelve student-participants from the intervention group completed an open-ended questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions that aimed to help the researcher understand the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the student-participants towards the intervention. The second form of qualitative data collected came from a one-on-one interview with the teacher-participant who implemented the fluency intervention. This interview was formatted as a semi-structured interview with six predetermined questions but also allowed for the researcher to ask additional questions based on the responses from the teacher-participant. The final form of qualitative data was derived from observational field notes written by the teacher-participant. The qualitative data results from these three sources, the student-participant opened ended

questionnaire, the teacher-participant interview, and field notes, will be described and analyzed in the sections below.

Results of student-participant open-ended questionnaire. After the intervention was complete and post-test data was collected, participants were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire to reveal their feelings and perspectives about the intervention. The questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions. Students were asked to record their responses to the questions. Interviewing the student-participants, which may have resulted in additional information, was not an option due to the school district's research guidelines that prohibits students bring interviewed. Although possibly more limited than an interview, the perceptions gained from the participants through the open-ended questionnaire were insightful into their thoughts and viewpoints. There were several common themes developed among the responses of the student-participants. The section below will share the most agreeable themes among the students-participants and also point out other notable reflections.

Enjoyment. The conclusive viewpoints of the student-participants of the fluency intervention involving readers theater texts was overwhelmingly positive. All twelve student-participants indicated that they enjoyed the intervention. Their reasons for enjoyment varied, but one of the most recorded responses was that the intervention was fun. The word "fun" was recorded nine times in the student questionnaires. One student-participant wrote, "I enjoyed this because I had fun acting and I learned a lot." Another student wrote, "I enjoyed this because it is fun and I loved reading in front of many people." The enjoyment and excitement of students throughout their participation in the

intervention was strongly evident throughout the student responses on the open-ended questionnaire.

Collaboration. Embedded within the intervention were multiple opportunities for interactions with other student-participants. Students-participants were encouraged to practice their assigned roles with their peers and to read through the readers theater text in their small groups. Student-participants found joy working within small groups of students. One student-participant indicated, “My favorite part of the reading activities was reading with a group because I can practice more with people I know who are going to read with me.” Another student wrote, “I met a lot of friends and had fun reading the stories with them and hearing others read.” A third student wrote their favorite part of the intervention was “reading with my friends.” These responses reveal the satisfaction the students had in participating in the intervention and engaging in authentic reading activities.

Self-reflective of improvement. Another commonality between the students’ responses was that they understood the purpose of the intervention and were able to self-reflect on how the intervention helped them to become better readers. Words and phrases comparing how their reading sounded before the intervention to how they perceive their reading sounds after the intervention were all throughout the responses. Thirteen replies mentioned the reading intervention helped them to read more fluently and several others responses spotlighted other fluency factors with references to expression, attending to punctuation, and reading naturally throughout the questionnaire. A few quotes from student-participants that attend to the self-reflections described above are as follows:

- “Yes, I feel that the reading activities help me by reading words together and not word by word.”
- “I think that the readers theater helped me to become a better reader because I am now using the tips that the teacher was telling me and my mom said she would tell that I improved.”
- “Yes, because before I was reading things word for word and now I read it like I would say it to a friend.”
- “Yes, because I used to read like a robot, but now I read fluently.”

These quotes show that students understood the purpose of the intervention and personally feel that the intervention made a difference in their reading fluency.

Confidence. As students are able to reflect on how the intervention has promoted fluent reading within them, a theme of confidence was discovered. Confidence refers to the thoughts of the student-participants about their ability to read fluently and in front of others. Connections between the fluency intervention to the increase of self-confidence as a reader and the understanding they gained through the texts were evident in the twelve student-participants responses. Student participants shared the following responses:

- “I liked it because it helped my self-confidence in reading out loud. I need self confidence for the career I want to to do.”
- “The more people I read to, the better my self confidence is.”
- “...the stories are helping me in social studies.”
- “Yes, because now I feel like I can read faster than before and more confident reading in front of people.”

An increase in the student-participants' confidence of themselves as a reader and in their knowledge of social studies content presented in the texts was evident throughout the responses of the students-participants' responses. It is evident that the students viewed the fluency intervention as a means of improving themselves as readers and learners.

Several themes were illuminated throughout the student-participants' responses on the open-ended questionnaire. The themes of enjoyment, collaboration, self-reflection, and confidence all demonstrate some of the positive outcomes that the fluency intervention had on the student-participants. These themes can increase motivation and perseverance during the daunting task of reading for struggling readers. They also point beyond the quantitative data, which solely relates to fluency measures, and reveal value in the fluency intervention relating to students' self-perceptions.

Results of the teacher-participant one-on-one interview. After the intervention was complete, the teacher-participant was also interviewed to gain her thoughts and feeling of the intervention and how it impacted the student-participants' fluency. From the analysis of her responses to the six predetermined questions and other discussions that were had during the interview time, several themes surfaced.

Time. During the interview with the teacher-participant the idea of the gift of time kept emerging. Overall the teacher-participant perceived the intervention to be effective in increasing students' fluency and she felt that the activities were an excellent use of small group instruction time. Elements of the intervention that she felt brought about the most growth and increased its effectiveness was the time given "for the children to read aloud and for them to hear others reading, which is not something they get to do often." The teacher-participant felt the time given to model fluent reading and provide

feedback to students on improving their phrasing and expression was most effective. She mentioned that normally during “small group instruction the focus is more on a content standard” and she does not usually get time to focus on fluency. This intervention allowed the teacher-participant the time needed to have a fluency focus and teach using some of the proven fluency instructional methods embedded into the intervention.

Self-awareness. The teacher-participant noted during the interview that she saw evidence that students were becoming more aware of how they sounded as a reader. In order for diffident readers to increase fluency, they need to recognize how their reading is different from fluent reading. This idea is supported throughout research, which calls for the modeling of fluent reading, paired reading, and feedback with phrasing support (Basaran, 2013; Clay, 2005; Morris, 2008; Neddenriep et al., 2010; Paige, 2011a; Paige, 2011b; Pikulski & Chard, 2003; Rasinski, 2014; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2014; Wilfong, 2008; Wood, 2006). The teacher-participant stated, “Reading orally in front of their peers made them conscience of how their reading sounds.” By fifth-grade most reading at school is done silently and alone. This intervention purposely brought reading back to the forefront requiring students to read aloud which in return help students to become more aware of how they sound as a reader.

Confidence. One unexpected benefit of the fluency intervention the teacher-participant described was the building of confidence throughout the four-week time period. She described students at the beginning of the intervention that “were shy and timid” when reading in front of their group members. She saw students transform over the course of the intervention into students who enjoyed reading aloud to others and “asked for more opportunities to read aloud.” Another benefit that teacher-participant

has observed is their participation in social studies when they are studying a topic that was addressed in one of the readers theater texts. She said students were excited to be able to share with their classmates the in-depth perspectives that they gained through readers theater texts. Their confidence as readers and as historians grew greatly over the four-week time period.

Continuation. The teacher researcher stated that she enjoyed facilitating the intervention and would continue to incorporate the fluency instructional practices such as modeling fluent reading, specific feedback to students on phrasing and intonation, and reading with others into her regular small group instruction time. She stated, “The strategies I have used during this time could be used easily in my regular instruction to help the students with their fluency all throughout the year.” She felt that the time was well spent and that the intervention was effective which motivates her to continue aspects from the intervention into her daily reading instruction.

Several themes were discovered throughout the teacher-participant’s responses in the one-on-one semi-structured interview. The themes of time and continuation demonstrate positive impacts that the teacher-participant experienced for herself because of the fluency intervention. She was thankful for the time that she received to focus on fluency with her struggling readers, and she valued the time to the extent that she plans to continue the instructional strategies in her regular reading instruction. The themes of self-awareness and confidence relate to positive impacts that she observed within her students and are reiterated in themes derived from the student-participant responses, strengthening their credibility as effects of the intervention.

Field notes and observations. Field notes and observations provided by the teacher-participant were also useful in the analysis of the effectiveness of the intervention. Beyond the quantitative data from the pre-test, the pre-test also revealed some reading tendencies among the twelve student participants. The following reading tendencies, which can be harmful to fluency acquisition, were noted on the pre-assessment: monotone voice, word by word rereading, excessive rereading or backtracking, tracking with finger, and inattentiveness to word endings. These anecdotal notes were helpful as the teacher-participant instructed students during the intervention. During the intervention, the teacher-participant made notes documenting times that she addressed such issues with targeted feedback.

Numerous times during the intervention, the teacher-participant documented specific students in which she observed word-by-word reading and then suggested and modeled appropriate phrasing, observed students reading without expression and then she modeled intonation, and times in which she read chorally with certain students to improve their fluency. The documentation from the observations and field notes show her intentionality with keeping a fluency focus during the intervention. Along with notes of her interventions and feedback to students she also noted when students were reading expressively, displaying confidence in their reading, and when positive praise to encourage the continuation of these positive reading behaviors.

Triangulation of Findings

To understand the outcomes of this study, data was triangulated to enhance descriptions and provide a comprehensive set of data. Each method of data collection provided information to help answer the research questions and sub questions. Fluency is

a multifaceted component of reading in which several factors must be considered when assessed. Each data collection method was carefully chosen to gather data that can be used to determine if the fluency intervention was successful in increasing the fluency of the twelve fifth-grade student-participants.

Quantitative data was collected through the use of the pre and post assessments. The pre-test specifically gathered information on students' correct word per minute rate, accuracy, retell, and retell quality scores. The post-test mirrored the pre-test by collecting data on the same components. However, several other factors can influence how students perform in reading. Some of these factors can be best described by the means of qualitative data. Therefore, the open-ended student questionnaire and the one-on-one teacher-participant semi-structured interview were created to collect information on the perceptions and feelings of the participants toward the intervention.

The combined sets of data from this study suggests that the use of the prescribed fluency intervention may have positive effects on students' fluency and their perception of themselves as a reader. The fluency intervention was shown to have a statistically significant impact on the fluency component of accuracy and although not statistically significant, 58% of the student participants increased their correct words per minute rate. Although the other quantitative research areas of retell and retell quality were not significantly impacted by the intervention, the open-ended questionnaire revealed that students felt the intervention helped them to become more better readers by increasing their enjoyment in reading activities, allowing them to work with peers on improving their reading, promoting self-reflection of their reading, and building confidence in themselves as a readers. Some of the same concepts were echoed through the themes

depicted from the teacher-participant's interview as she noted students were felt more confident in their reading and were eager to read aloud to peers and became more self-aware of how their reading sounded when they read aloud. These data show that components of the quantitative data converge with the qualitative data to suggest that the fluency intervention impact on students' fluency was overall positive in increasing measured components of reading fluency and the student participants' perceptions of themselves as readers.

Summary

The purpose of this mixed-method research study was to answer how the fluency intervention using readers theater texts and other research based fluency instructional strategies impacted fluency in fifth-grade students. The research sought to gain an understanding of how such an intervention would impact the correct words read rate, the accuracy at which a student reads, the students' ability to retell the text, and the quality of the retell given. After analyzing pre and posttest results, student open-ended questionnaire responses, and the teacher-participants viewpoints from the one-on-one semi structured interview, the intervention shows several positive outcomes on students' correct words read per minute rate, the accuracy at which they read, and their perceptions of themselves as a reader. In addition to the positive effects on the student-participants, the teacher-participant also experienced encouraging results of the intervention relating to her teaching practices as she valued the time that was allowed to focus on reading fluency and will continue aspects of the reading intervention into her other reading instructional times.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of chapter five is to review and conclude the current action research study concerning the implementation of a readers theater fluency based intervention and its effects on fifth-grade students' reading fluency. To promote the maximum opportunity of success for this action research study, the fluency intervention was grounded in research based instructional strategies for increasing fluency such as: using readers theater texts in conjunction with direct fluency instruction, modeling of fluent reading, repeated readings, and choral reading (Boomer, 2006; Dowhower, 1987; Mraz, Caldwell, Beiseley, Sargent, & Rubpley, 2013; O'Shea, Sindlear, & O'Shea, 1985; Rasinski, 1990; Rasinski, Rupley, Paige, & Nichols, 2016; Rasinski & Radak, 2004). This study highlights the growth of students' reading fluency as demonstrated by improved performance on the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency progress monitoring passages used for the purpose of pre and posttests. Additionally, the study focuses on the thoughts and perceptions of the student- and teacher-participants of the fluency intervention. The results of this action research study will be used to determine the best instructional fluency strategies to be used with fifth-grade students at the research site.

Statement of Problem of Practice

The identified problem of practice was developed from personal observations noticed at the research site over the past decade. From my experiences teaching first,

second, and fifth grade classes, serving as a Reading Recovery first-grade interventionist, and now as the elementary instructional coach, I have seen first-hand the effects of low fluency on students' reading abilities and comprehension. Such effects have included but are not limited to, laborious and disengaging reading and the lack of sufficient meaning making processes to understand texts adequately. As an instructional coach, the lack of students' ability to make adequate meaning from text is often discussed when analyzing student work samples and test scores. However, the relationship between students' fluency and lack of comprehension are seldom, if ever, mentioned by teachers and other leadership members as a contributing factor to struggling readers in upper elementary students.

Purpose of Research

Although the effects of dis-fluent reading are abundant, I have observed a decrease in fluency focus and instruction in the upper elementary grades. As a previous fifth-grade teacher, it was common to have more than one-third of my students in need of direct fluency instruction. However, support and time to address fluency concerns has not previously been made a priority in the upper elementary grades at the research site. Instead, a focus on specific skills relating to the meaning and context section of the South Carolina standards has taken front-stage. Now as an instructional leader at the research site, I desire to bring more awareness to the importance of fluency and assist in equipping teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to address the fluency needs in their classrooms.

Research Questions

As there are students in fifth-grade who continue to struggle with fluency, the

following overarching Research Questions (RQ) and Secondary Research Questions (SRQ) guide the action research study.

RQ1: What is the impact of using Readers theater text on students' overall fluency performance?

SQ1: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' fluency rate?

SQ2: What is the impact of using readers theater text on students' accuracy?

SQ3: What is the impact of using readers theater texts on students' fluency retell score?

RQ2: How did the teacher-participant perceive the fluency intervention?

RQ3: How did the student-participants perceive the fluency intervention?

Participants

One fifth-grade teacher was selected as the teacher-participant for this action research study. The teacher-participant has been a teacher at the research site for over a decade. This teacher was chosen as the teacher-participant because of her desire to also grow herself in research based instructional practices. When asked if she would participate in the study and implement the fluency intervention with fidelity, she immediately accepted the invitation and showed excitement for trying something new that she felt would meet the fluency needs of her students.

There were twelve fifth-grade students selected as student-participants for the fluency intervention. These students were in the teacher-participants' ELA small group instruction class and one additional fifth-grade ELA small group class. The students

demonstrated below grade level or well below grade level performance on one or more of the four fluency components tested on the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency measures: correct words read per minute, accuracy, retell, and retell quality. The goal of student selection was to select the students with the lowest fluency measures from these two classes. Several students in need of fluency intervention were already receiving a district-mandated intervention during this time of the day. Therefore, the students remaining in the rooms at this time of day with the lowest fluency scores were selected for participation. It is also noteworthy to mention that there were additional students between these two classes that demonstrated a need for fluency intervention based on their DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency measures but were not selected due to the restraints of the action research study. The group of students selected for the intervention consisted of four females and eight males. All student-participants are regular education students without an individualized education plan for reading.

Methodology

This action research study used mixed methods to explore best practices to improve fluency of fifth graders. Through the implementation of an intervention in a rural, low socioeconomic area of the research site, fifth graders who struggle with fluency received a fluency intervention using readers theater texts. The intervention employed several researched-based strategies along side the repeated readings of readers theater texts for an authentic purpose of performance. Quantitative data was collected through the use of pre- and post-test measures and qualitative data was collected from an open-ended questionnaire for the student-participants and a semi-structured interview with the teacher-participant. Analysis of quantitative data looked for fluency changes within the

components of fluency such as fluency rate, accuracy percentage, retell, and quality for each individual student. Qualitative data examined teacher and student-participant perceptions, all while the research study ensured rigor and trustworthiness during the process.

Conclusions from Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was collected from baseline data and pre-and posttest data from DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Measures. Analysis of quantitative data from the pre and posttest scores reveal that the implemented readers theater involving readers theater texts was successful in improving various components of fluency assessed by the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency assessment. In examination of the intervention group as a whole, the growth in the mean score of correct words read per minute increased by 16.75 words per minute and the growth of the mean score of accuracy increased by 1.7%. The growth in accuracy percentage proved to be statistically significant when evaluated by a paired t-test of posttest ($M = 98.58$, $SD = 1.04$) and pretest ($M = 96.92$, $SD = 1.85$); $t(11) = -2.35$, $p = 0.039$. The intervention did not prove to have positive effects on the mean score for retell and retell quality score, however, growth was observed in examination of the benchmark ranges that students scores placed in. Posttest data reveal that all students scored in at or above grade in retell and retell quality score, which was an improvement from baseline and pretest data. Overall, the intervention was shown to have positive results in improving the fluency of fifth-grade students at the research site.

Conclusions from Qualitative Data

Qualitative data for this action research study was collected from three sources: an open-ended questionnaire completed by the student-participants, a semi-structured

interview with the teacher-participant, and field notes and observations taken by the teacher-researcher during the intervention. Through analysis of the student-participant open-ended questionnaires, several themes emerged from the students' responses. Overwhelming students found the intervention enjoyable, a collaborative experience of growing with their peers, an activity to monitor their own progress as a reader, and a way to build confidence within themselves as readers. Results from the teacher-participant one-on-one interview found that the teacher valued the time she was given to focus on a reading component that she does not normally give as much attention to and plans to continue components of the fluency intervention in her regular reading instruction. She also noted increased self-awareness within students regarding how their reading sounds orally and an increase in the confidence of the student-participants to read aloud. Field notes and observations show documentation of how the teacher-participant took notice of students' tendencies harmful to fluency and addressed these concerns with direct and purposeful feedback. Overall, the qualitative data sources show positive effects of the fluency intervention relating to the perceptions of all participants involved.

Action Plan

“Action research allows teachers to study their own classrooms – for example, their own instructional methods, their own students, and their own assessments – in order to better understand them and to be able to improve their quality or effectiveness (Mertler, 2017, p. 4). The final step of the action research process, before the cyclical process restarts, involves developing a plan of action to promote change to improve educational practices (Mertler, 2017). In the present action research study, the addition of appropriate texts to promote fluent reading, readers theater, and the incorporation of

various research-based fluency instructional strategies were embedded into a fluency intervention to explore its effects on the fluency of fifth-grade students at the research site in need of fluency instruction.

The results of this study support the notion that correct words per minute and accuracy as measured by DIBELS Oral Fluency Measures increased through the incorporation of readers theater texts and various researched based fluency instructional strategies. The integration of these proven fluency strategies will be an ongoing platform that I, as the instructional coach for the elementary grades, will promote and encourage the use of at the research site. The enthusiasm for reading that was described in the student-participants' reflection of their own perceptions and feelings toward the intervention as a method of building confidence within themselves as readers also ignites a passion within me to increase the occurrence of these types of activities at the research site. I believe that by incorporating fluency strategies into any ELA instruction when texts are read could benefit all students and especially those that struggle with speed and accuracy. The incorporation of readers theater texts, like the ones used during the intervention with a U.S. History focus, could be incorporated into the Social Studies block of instruction as well. This type of integration demonstrates that fluency instruction does not have to be confined to one certain time of the day in the school schedule. In such an experience, students would learn the content of the social studies standards through a unique perspective of people who lived during the time period. Whatever the subject matter of the readers theater text may be, readers theater can be used a means to improving students' fluency.

Consideration of the positive impacts from the fluency intervention has led me to create a plan of action. The initial action below has three main goals.

1. Create awareness of how fluency difficulties may hinder comprehension of texts.
2. Support teachers in examining their fluency data to create their own personal plan of action to address fluency concerns in their classrooms.
3. Support teachers in learning how to implement research-based instructional strategies to support fluency.

In order to meet the goals described above a detailed plan of action plan for each is needed. The plan below will specify the steps that will be taken to accomplish the goals. Each plan will consider specific actions steps, the time-line of action, resources needed to follow through on the action steps, and how the effectiveness of the action step will be determined. This plan of action is planned to begin at the start of the 2019 - 2020 school year and carry throughout the year.

Goal one. The first goal of the action plan is to create awareness of the importance of fluency to students' overall reading performance. As the instructional coach at the school, I am charged with the responsibility to create professional development learning opportunities for teachers within my school. Many times these learning opportunities are presented during teachers' grade level planning times through Professional Learning Community meetings, otherwise known as PLC meetings. During the months of September and October, I plan to provide professional development on the importance of fluency during PLC meetings. This is the first step in the action plan, as it is imperative that all teachers solidify their foundational knowledge of fluency and its impacts, before shifts in educational practices can take place.

After foundational knowledge of fluency is understood by grade three through five teachers, the next step will be to provide the time and opportunity for teachers to see the impacts of fluency in action. One may think that teachers should see this first-hand in their classrooms each day, however, setting aside time for this specific purpose will bring attention to the issues that may sometimes get overlooked in the hustle and bustle of the regular school day. To remove any preconceived notions of students' reading abilities and to take away bias attitudes towards their own students, teachers will listen to students from different grade levels than the grade level they teach. During this observational time, students will read a text that they have selected on their own. The teacher will essentially produce a running record of their reading while also noting descriptions relating to the students' fluency. Afterwards the teacher will ask comprehension questions about the text to check students' understanding. Patterns and trends observed during the observations will be discussed during a follow-up PLC meeting. These patterns and trend will later be used as data to inform instruction.

Because a focus on fluency has not been the forefront of conversations recently in the upper elementary grades, I am sure that during the previous PLC meetings and observations of students activity in this action plan will raise many new questions that teachers' have about fluency, its impact on reading performance, and which strategies are most beneficial to use during instruction to support students with fluency concerns. At this point in the action plan, I will provide additional professional literature that teachers can read and investigate at their leisure to support themselves in their learning journey on this topic. This will allow teachers who are ready to move forward in their learning the chance to do so, at their own pace. Table 5.1 summarizes the action steps, timeline,

resources needed, and evaluation method that will be used to determine if Goal One has been met.

Table 5.1

Goal One Action Plan

Goal One: Create awareness within teachers of how fluency difficulties may hinder comprehension.			
Action Steps	Timeline	Resources Needed	Evaluation
Plan professional development with a focus on the importance of fluency	September – October 2019	Research supporting importance of fluency	Teachers’ self-reflection of their understanding of the importance of fluency before and after the professional development opportunities
Create times for teachers in grades 3-5 to listen to children in a grade level different from their own read	October – November 2019	Schedule for teachers to examine readers in regards to fluency in other grade levels Guiding questions and “look for” list to guide teachers’ observation	Teachers’ discussion of how students’ fluency positively and negatively impacted their comprehension
Provide professional literature for teachers to read on fluency	November 2019	Fluency literature	Discussion of major takeaways from literature during grade level team meetings

Goal Two. The second goal of this action plan is to support teachers in examining their fluency data and to create their own personal plan of action to address fluency concerns in their classroom. At the beginning of each year, grades three through

five teachers administer the beginning of the year DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Measures assessment per district requirement. In order to ensure that we have the most accurate data possible, before the beginning of the year testing window opens, I will have a PLC meeting with teachers to ensure that everyone understands the proper way to administer the test. We will practice administering the assessment by listening to a recording of a student reading the passage and sharing their retell. Teachers will compare their assessment scores and discuss any discrepancies. These discrepancies will provide us with the opportunity to discuss how we can streamline our assessing skills to get more comparable results. The steps above will be repeated until there is consistency among the assessment results. These practice rounds will help to ensure that teachers are administering the test accurately and in the same manner, so that scores are valid among classes.

Once teachers have completed their beginning of the year assessment, I will ask for their data to be brought to a grade level PLC meeting. During this meeting, I will instruct teachers on how to group their students based on their fluency scores. We will classify students into four categories: students who read quickly and accurately, students who read quickly but are inaccurate, students who read slowly and accurately, and finally students who read slowly and inaccurately. The conversation will then be focused on what steps should be taken to support students within each group to continue their reading fluency growth. Each category of students lends itself to a different method of support. My hope is that through the planned PLC meetings and professional readings that teachers have had experiences with, they will be able to brainstorm appropriate plans

of action for each group of students. I will monitor and provide support of the action plans during this phrase. Table 5.2 summarizes the process of meeting Goal Two.

Table 5.2

Goal Two Action Plan

Goal #2			
Support teachers in examining their fluency data to create their own personal plan of action to address fluency concerns in their classrooms.			
Action Steps	Timeline	Resources Needed	Evaluation
Plan professional develop to ensure teachers are administering DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Measure accurately.	September 2019	Recording of “student” reading passages from beginning of the year DIBELS assessment.	Commonalities between teacher recordings on assessments
PLC with teachers to analyze their DIBELS data to identify which students will most likely benefit from fluency instruction	Late September 2019	Teachers will bring their assessment records.	Suggestions made by teachers on how best to support each group of students

Goal Three. The final goal of this action plan is to support teachers in the implementation of research based fluency. In this action plan, support will be provided in three ways. First of all, teachers will be supported through the opportunity to watch fluency instructional strategies in action. A model of how the strategy is to be implemented is beneficial to teachers. Secondly, teachers will be supported within their classrooms while implementing fluency strategies. As an instructional coach, one of my most valued roles is side-by-side coaching. In this type of scenario, I give support and make suggestions in the teaching moment. A final support for teachers will be providing

appropriate texts until the teachers have had some time to get comfortable in selecting texts for their students. Finding appropriate texts for fluency instruction can be time consuming. I do not want time requirements to discourage the implementation of fluency strategies. Appropriate texts will be suggested during the beginning phrases of this action plan. Table 5.3 summarizes the action plan to meet goal three.

Table 5.3

Goal Three Action Plan

Goal #3 Support teachers in learning how to implement research-based instructional strategies to support fluency.			
Action Steps	Timeline	Resources Needed	Evaluation
Teachers watch videos of masterful teachers implemented fluency strategies	October – November 2019	Videos of teachers implementing fluency strategies.	Teacher discusses aspects of the videos that resonated with them. Evidence of strategies used in classroom
Provide research-based literature with specific strategies for fluency	October – November 2019	Research-based literature	Evidence of strategies used in classrooms
I will observe implementation of strategies in ELA small group instruction.	October – November 2019	None	Evidence of strategies used in classrooms
Provide readers theater texts and other appropriate fluency reading materials to classroom teachers	October and throughout year	Readers theater texts, poems	Evidence of use of reading materials in classrooms and lesson plans

Through the strategic action steps developed to meet the three action goals of this research study, I believe fluency instruction in grades three through five at the action research site will be strengthened. These steps will help to ensure that teachers are well equipped and supported to begin changes in their instructional practices to meet the needs of students' struggling with fluency.

Teacher-researcher as Curriculum Leader

Brubaker (2004) speaks of the importance of a creative curriculum leader giving attention to their personal and organizational vision. In keeping to this belief, the purpose of this action research was to analyze the effectiveness of fluency instruction with less fluent fifth-grade students and to seek instructional practices that would benefit students in becoming more fluent readers. The reading abilities of students have been a continued focus throughout several years at the research site and in elementary education across the nation. As a curriculum leader, it is important to work towards finding the best instructional practices to increase fluency in upper elementary school aged students.

My educational path has been somewhat concentrated around reading instruction. Brubaker (2004) describes this as developing my own curriculum. I began my teaching career as a first grade teacher, where the teaching of how to read is a primary focus, and then transitioned to second grade. After a few years in second grade, I became a Reading Recovery reading interventionist and also taught another reading intervention program to struggling first grade readers. During this time, I received my master's degree in Reading and Literacy, and now I am keeping a reading focus, as it is the focus of this action research. While I do not claim to be an expert in reading instruction, I do have a unique background shaped by the educational choices I have made in my career.

Brubaker (2004) speaks of creative curriculum leaders using “his or her own talents to help others identify and use their talents” (p. 71). Senge (2013) also alluded to this same idea as he stated, “The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization” (p. 4). As a curriculum leader with extensive reading experience, I plan use my knowledge of fluency instructional strategies to help other members of my learning community. Through the process of researching instructional fluency strategies and sharing the findings, others may become inspired to join the cause to reignite their passion for improving the reading abilities of students with fluency in mind.

In continuing my role as the elementary instructional coach at the research site, I find myself in a role to provide direction for the research site’s overall instructional programs through support, training, and coaching of teachers. While this position may grant some form of *positional authority*, I plan as a creative curriculum leader to use sources of power such as expertise, experience, and succor to help others identify and use their talents to increase student achievement (Brubaker, 2004). Robinson (2013) spoke of the importance of leaders having access to “up-to-date, evidence based knowledge of how students learn and of how teaching promotes that learning in diverse classroom contexts” (p. 298). In order to lead by expertise, it is my responsibility to stay abreast of new information relating to reading and fluency, so I can guide others. This action research study has enabled me to become more informed of best reading practices, which supports me in assisting teachers in their reading instruction as a partner in our learning community.

Implications for Future Research

Perhaps one of the most reassuring aspects of the action research process is its cyclical nature. Understanding that no action research study is perfect or without revision and that the purpose of this type of research is in effect discover a new wondering that can lead new learning and discovery is refreshing and empowering for educators. Mertler (2013) suggests that there are several possible outcomes of action research studies which include the gaining of a better understanding of the situation being studied, the discovery of a new problem, the confirmation that a practice is effective, the realization that a practice needs to be modified or may be in fact ineffective. This action research study found the described fluency intervention of using readers theater texts with a combination of fluency instructional strategies was effective in improving students correct words read per minute, their accuracy, and the student-participants views of themselves a readers. While effective in improving correct words read per minute and accuracy, the action research leaves many questions for further research. To further the research, the teacher-researcher would like to explore in more detail the components of reading fluency that the fluency intervention did not gain positive results in. Key questions for future research are provided below.

1. The results of the retell scores showed a decrease in the number of words used to retell the text. As fluency increases, does retell of the text become more sophisticated with synthesis or summary statements that possibly decreases the number of words used when compared to more verbatim retells?
2. One challenge that the teacher-participant mentioned during the semi-structured interview was the length of the readers theater texts. Would the use

of shorter texts, which would allow for more repetition of assigned reading parts have a greater impact on fluency?

Summary

The use of readers theater texts with combined fluency instructional strategies provides educators with the opportunity to improve students fluency in an engaging and collaborative process. Throughout this action research study, the teacher-participant implemented a fluency intervention designed by the teacher-researcher which incorporated researched based fluency instructional strategies to be used through the reading of readers theater texts. The nature of the intervention allowed fluency components to become the focus of the instruction as the teacher-participant would model fluent reading, chorally read along with students, and give direct feedback to address phrasing and intonation. Student-participants had the opportunity to read aloud to others and were given opportunity to improve their reading the repetitive nature of the intervention. The findings of the study suggest that fluency intervention using readers theater texts and other proven fluency strategies were successful in improving the overall fluency performance of the fifth-grade students at the research site. Because of the positive findings relating to this action research study, a detailed action plan involving support for teachers to strengthen their awareness of the impacts of fluency concerns in their classroom, to ensure thoughtful analysis of fluency data and appropriate plans of actions are in place to meet student needs, and to support teachers as they implement instructional fluency strategies in their classrooms. I believe these action steps will change the outlook on fluency at the research-site and will promote the value of fluency and its implications on reading performance. Although, much was gained through the

process of this action research study, further research is needed to solidify understanding of the effects of this action research study. Future research could possibly determine if the fluency text type of poetry is effective in the same type of intervention used in this action research study and if students' retell of the text becomes more sophisticated in nature as fluency rate and accuracy percentages increase.

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APPENDIX A

Readers Theater Script One

Take Home Script: Narcissa Whitman and the Westward Movement

Narcissa Whitman and the Westward Movement

Characters

Narcissa Whitman
Marcus Whitman
Catherine Pambrun
Pierre Pambrun
Helen Mar Meek
Chief Tiloukaikt

Setting

This reader's theater takes place in November of 1847 at the mission outpost of Waiilatpu, which means "the place of the rye grass." Missionaries Narcissa and Dr. Marcus Whitman have built numerous buildings there for missionary and medical outreach to the local Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians. The outpost has become a stop for the many white settlers who use the Oregon Trail to travel west.

Act 1

Narcissa: Hello, Mrs. Pambrun! Please come sit down in my parlor. We can have your English lesson there.

Catherine: Your big house with white paint is very strange to us. You have a fence outside and yellow wood floors. This is not like the log cabins and tepees we are used to.

Narcissa: Do you remember how long it took for us to build this house? Now we have a parlor and glass windows and wooden doors. It is just like the houses back east in New York. All of this came by wagon train on the Oregon Trail.

Catherine: You have a great many books. Now I can learn English. My husband says that more white people are coming here. He says it will be good for me to know their talk and ways. I already speak French and a few native languages. It is good to learn English now, too.

APPENDIX B

Readers Theater Script Two

Take Home Script: Child Labor and the Industrial Revolution

Child Labor and the Industrial Revolution

by Harriet Isecke

Characters

Pauline
Daniel Tompkins
Mr. Newman
Lewis Hine
Roberta
Leonora Barry

Setting

This reader's theater takes place at a linen mill in North Carolina in 1919. Poor and hungry men, women, and children walk to the mill early in the morning and leave late at night. Meanwhile, at the National Child Labor Committee headquarters, government officials look through photographs and narrative accounts of child laborers.

Act 1

Pauline: I know that my papa was upset that my sister and I couldn't go to school when we were little, but we weren't alone. In the early 1900s, times were hard. Children all over America had to go to work to help support their families.

Mr. Newman: I injured both of my hands when my daughters were young. The only work I could find was delivering newspapers. After my wife's death, I had no choice. I wish my girls could have gone to school, but what could I do?

Pauline: We were hired as doffers and sweepers at the North Carolina linen mill. I think being a doffer was the worst job at the mill.

APPENDIX C

Readers Theater Script Three

Take Home Script: Immigration for a Better Life

Immigration: For a Better Life

by Harriet Isecke

Characters

Aaron
Carmella
Sarah
Angela
Joshua
Mario

Setting

After an overview section, this reader's theater begins in the steerage class of a ship. It is crowded and dark, and many people are ill or seasick. When the ship reaches Ellis Island, the immigrants are greeted by the Statue of Liberty. People bustle about to go through inspection. After a brief hospital scene, the setting changes to the tenement apartment buildings. The script ends with a patriotic outdoor celebration.

Act 1

Aaron: What does it mean to be an American? Who belongs here? Who does not? America is a country of immigrants. People have left their countries of birth to come here. People come here for many different reasons. They come to get rich and move back to their birth countries. Or they come to become citizens and start new lives.

Sarah: Some people come for freedom, and some for better jobs. Some think the streets here are "paved with gold." Many people want a chance for their children to go to school. Some people leave their countries because of widespread disease or famine. Others leave because they are persecuted.

APPENDIX D

Readers Theater Script Four

Take Home Script: The Great Depression

The Great Depression

by Dorothy Alexander Sugarman

Characters

Joshua Owens

Bill Ganzel

Florence Owens

Dorothea Lange

Leroy Owens

Isaac Wilkes

Setting

This reader's theater takes place between 1965 and 1983, at Florence Owen's trailer home and author Bill Ganzel's office. Florence's trailer is small but comfortable, and it contains a number of personal items accumulated in the years following the Great Depression. Bill Ganzel's office is professional and spacious, but less of a treasure trove.

Act 1

Joshua Owens: It all started in 1965. My dad, Leroy, and I were visiting my grandma, Florence Owens. Grandma lived in a trailer park in Modesto, California. I was looking through a box of old photos when I found a newspaper from 1936. It had a picture of my grandma and an article, too. I couldn't wait to show it to her.

Florence Owens: What do you have there, Joshua?

Joshua Owens: Look, Grandma! I found an article about you! The headline says, "Ragged, Hungry, Broke Harvest Workers Live in Squalor." There's a picture of you when you were young. You look very sad. What's this about?

APPENDIX E

DIBELS Benchmark Assessment Passages

Dynamic Indicators of Basic
Early Literacy Skills 6th Edition

DIBELS

Fifth Grade Scoring Booklet
DIBELS Benchmark Assessment

Edited By:

Roland H. Good III

Ruth A. Kaminski

University of Oregon

Available:

<http://dibels.uoregon.edu/>

Instructions:

This packet includes 2 parts: the student response form and student stimulus materials. The student response forms are photocopied back to back and saddle stapled. The same form is used by each student for each benchmark assessment throughout the year. The second part is the reusable student stimulus materials. Make one copy for each person who is doing the benchmark testing. They can be laminated and comb bound for reuse.

Good, R. H., & Kaminski, R. A. (Eds.). (2007). *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (6th ed.). Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement.
Available: <http://dibels.uoregon.edu/>

Revised 06/11/07

APPENDIX F

DIBELS Rubric for Scoring

Fifth Grade Benchmark Goals and Cut Points for Risk

Measure	Score Level	Likely Need for Support	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
DIBELS Composite Score	At or Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support	357 +	372 +	415 +
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support	258 - 356	310 - 371	340 - 414
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support	0 - 257	0 - 309	0 - 339
DORF Words Correct	At or Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support	111 +	120 +	130 +
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support	96 - 110	101 - 119	105 - 129
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support	0 - 95	0 - 100	0 - 104
DORF Accuracy	At or Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support	98% +	98% +	99% +
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support	95% - 97%	96% - 97%	97% - 98%
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support	0% - 94%	0% - 95%	0% - 96%
Retell	At or Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support	33 +	36 +	36 +
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support	22 - 32	25 - 35	25 - 35
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support	0 - 21	0 - 24	0 - 24
Retell Quality of Response	At or Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support	2 +	3 +	3 +
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support	1	2	2
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support		1	1
Daze Adjusted Score	At or Above Benchmark	Likely to Need Core Support	18 +	20 +	24 +
	Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Strategic Support	12 - 17	13 - 19	18 - 23
	Well Below Benchmark	Likely to Need Intensive Support	0 - 11	0 - 12	0 - 17

The benchmark goal is the number provided in the At or Above Benchmark row. The cut point for risk is the first number provided in the Below Benchmark row.

APPENDIX G

Post Intervention Semi-structured Interview Guide

Interview with the teacher-participant

- How do you perceive the effectiveness of the Readers Theater intervention?
 - What do you believe led to its effectiveness/ineffectiveness?
- Which element of the intervention do you feel was most effective in increasing fluency? Why do you feel it was most effective?
- Were there any unexpected challenges that you encountered as you implemented the intervention in your classroom? If yes, please explain.
- Did you observe any unexpected benefits over the course of the four-week intervention? If so, please explain.
- Would you encourage another teacher to implement the Readers Theater intervention in his/her classroom? Why or why not?
- Do you plan to continue to use aspects of the Readers Theater intervention in your small group reading instruction? If so, please explain.

APPENDIX H

Student-participant Survey Questions

Thank you for your participation in the fluency intervention using Readers Theater texts.

Below are seven questions that I would like for you to reflect upon and answer as completely as you can to provide me with your perceptions and feelings about the intervention.

1. Did you enjoy the Readers Theater activities? Please explain why you did or did not.
2. What was your favorite part of the reading activities?
3. What was your least favorite part of the reading activities?
4. If you could change something about the activities you have been doing with your teacher over the last four-weeks, what would it be? Please explain why you would make that change.
5. Do you feel that the Readers Theater reading activities helped you to become a better reader over the last four-weeks? Please explain why or why not.
6. Do you feel that the Readers Theater reading activities helped you to become a more fluent reader over the last four-weeks? Please explain why or why not.
7. Do you hope that your teacher will continue the Readers Theater activities with you in your classroom? Please explain why.