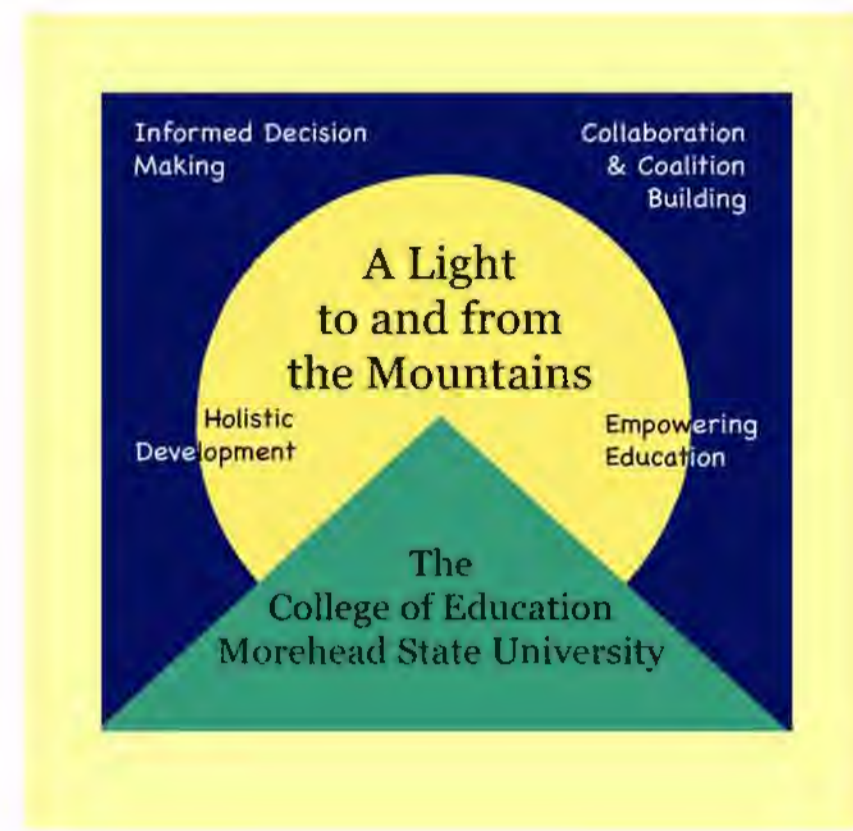


# Influence of Background Music on Reading Speed and Comprehension of Elementary-age Students



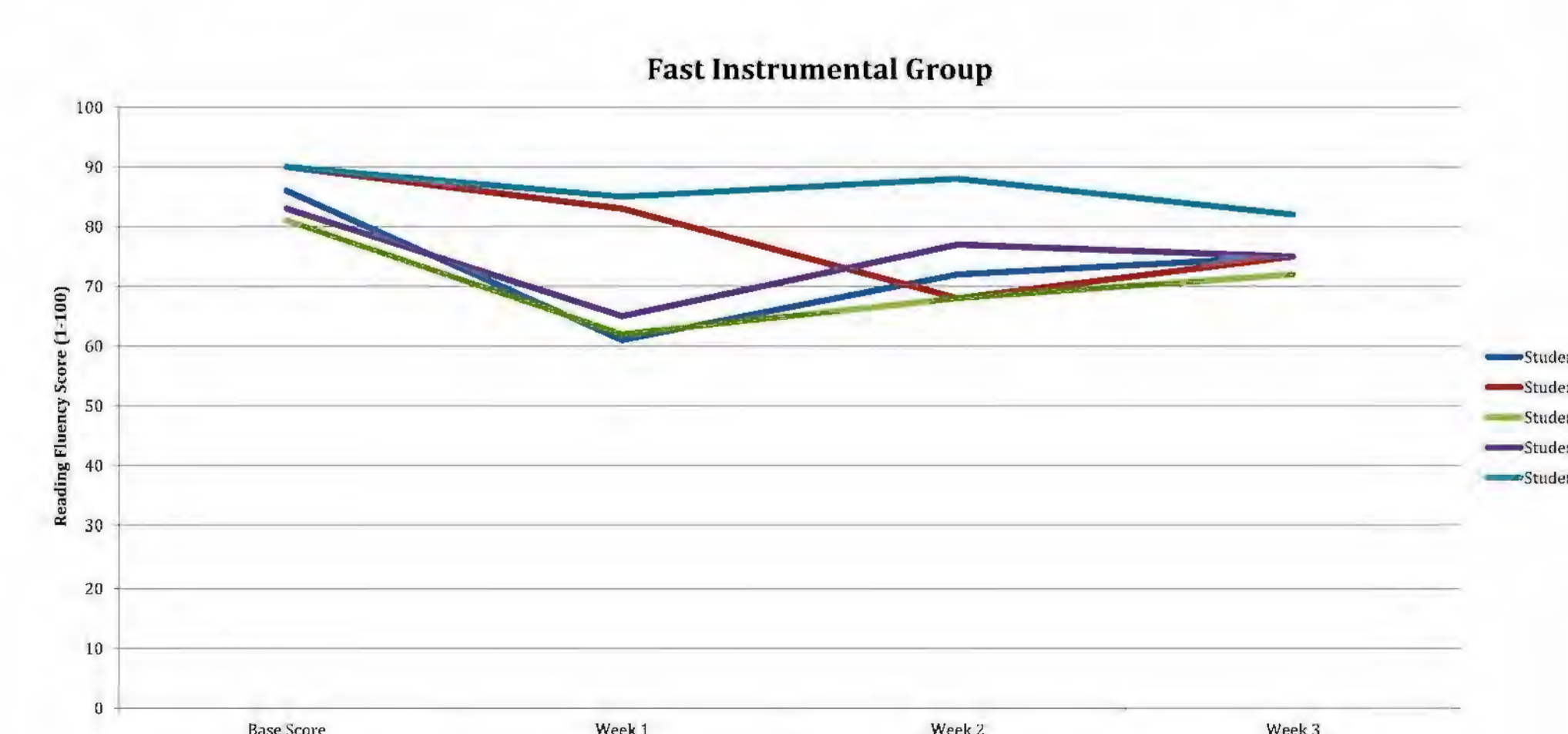
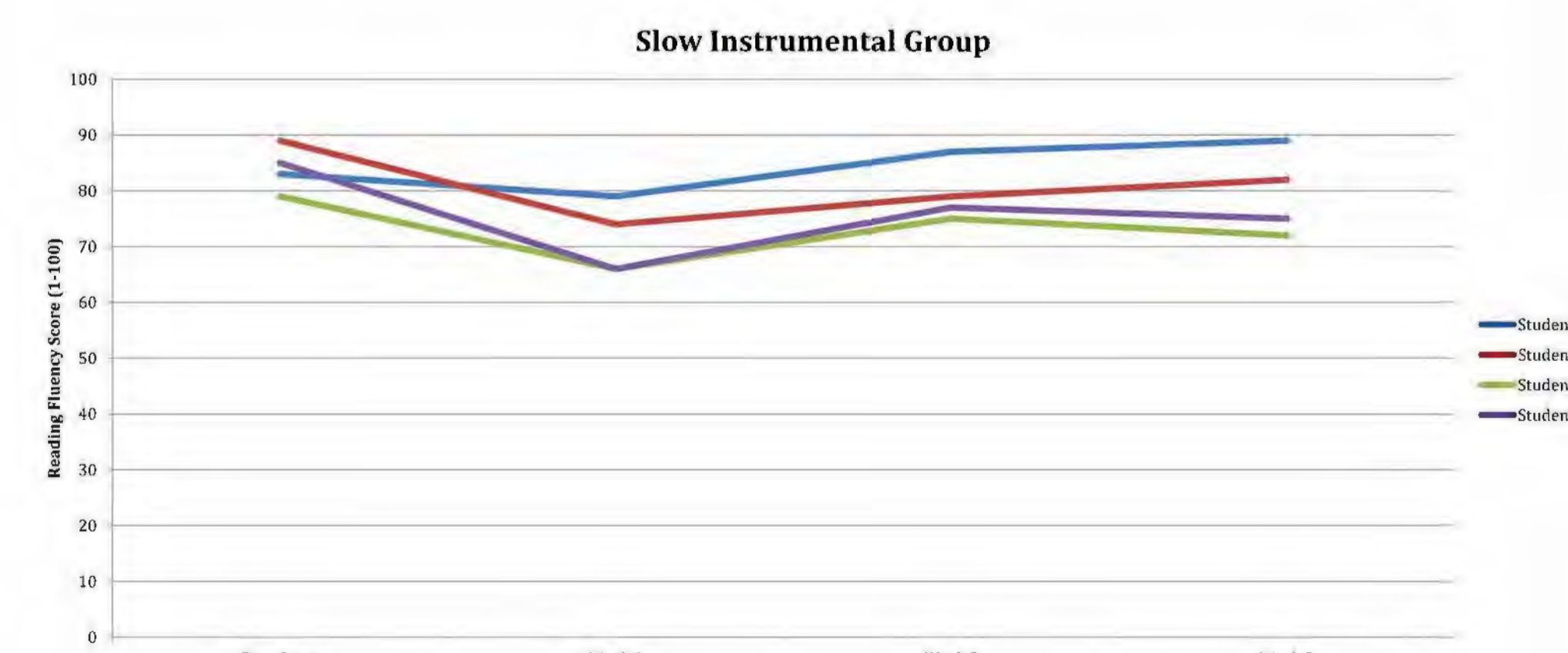
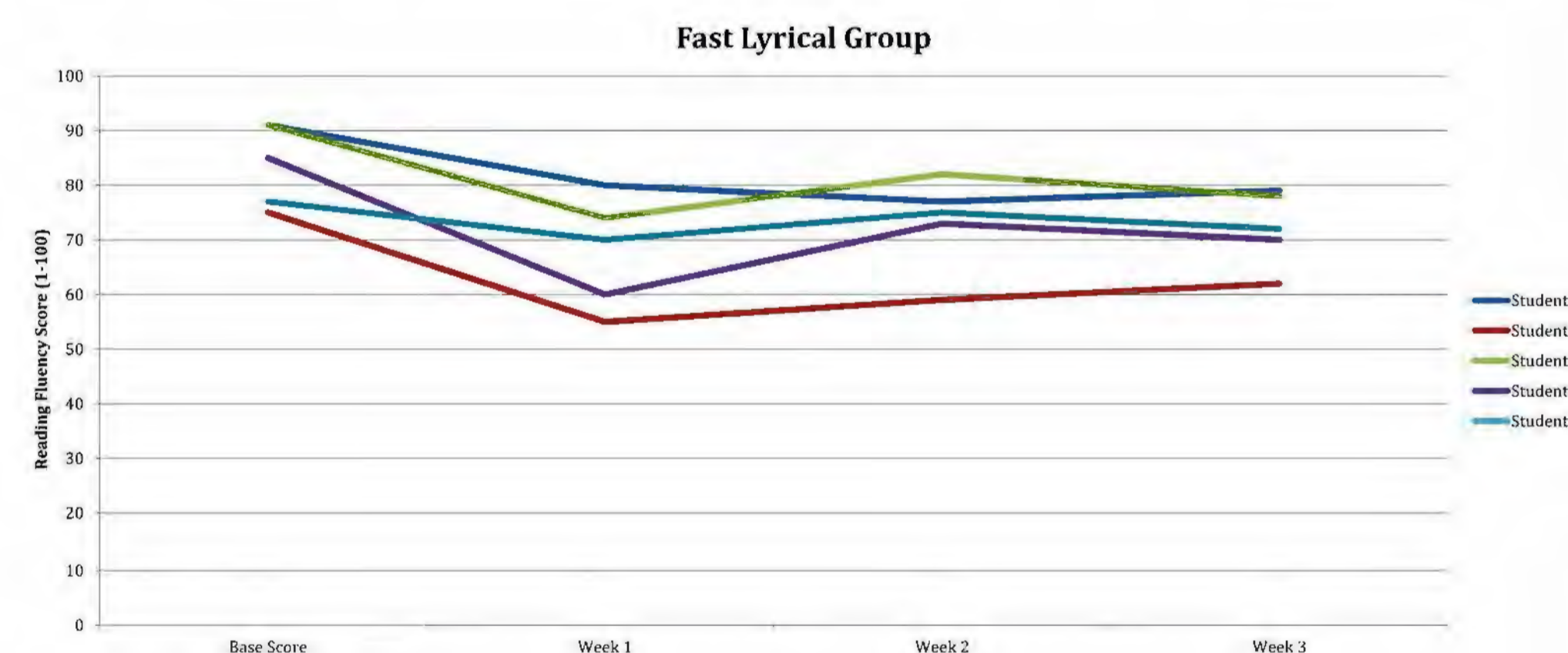
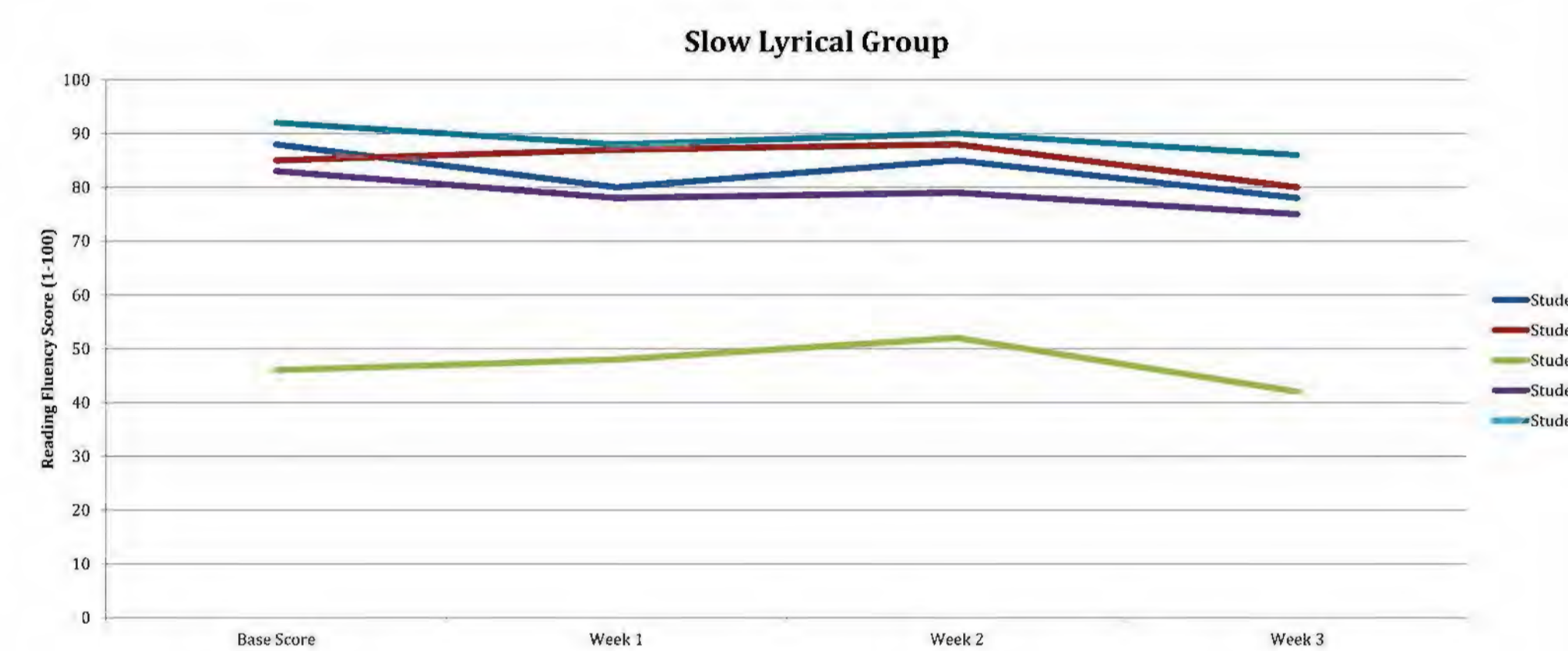
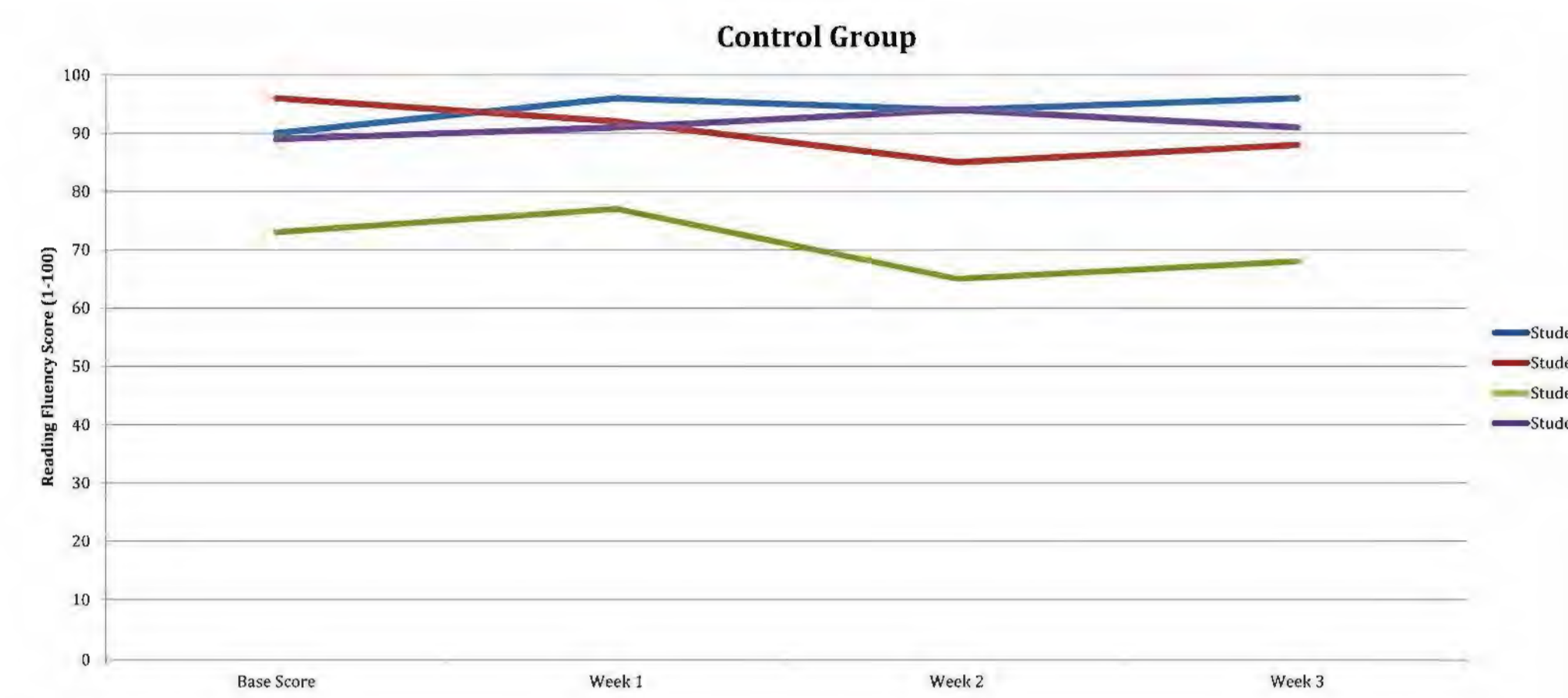
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## Abstract

This study was designed to research the effect of different types of music on the reading speed and comprehension of fourth grade students. The purpose of this study was to determine whether playing music while reading should be implemented class-wide, or only on an individual or small group basis, if at all. Instrumental and lyrical music were both utilized, and their efficacy determined through the use of reading passages from the program Reading A-Z. Both slow and fast music of both types were used, to determine if the tempo of the music has an effect as well.

Students were divided into five groups, based on the type or presence of background music played during oral reading. Each student was asked to record themselves reading an assigned passage based on their reading level, then retell the main ideas of the passage in their own words. A running record was collected for each student prior to introducing music, in order to have a baseline score to compare individual students' results to. After data collection, all running records were then reviewed, and each student was given a score out of 100 based on their overall reading fluency and comprehension of the passage.



## Conclusion

Exposing students to background music while reading out loud appeared to have a negative effect on students' reading speed, fluency, and comprehension across the board. During data collection, several students requested that the music be turned off while they were reading, as it was distracting to them. Still others said that they enjoyed listening to the music while reading, as it relaxed them. The majority of the students who requested that the music be turned off were in the fast lyrical and fast instrumental groups. These groups also saw some of the most drastic drops in fluency scores, according to the data.

This was to be expected, as many studies have found that listening to music, especially music that is high or fast, tends to disrupt students' cognitive ability and reading comprehension (Thompson 2011) (Cassidy 2007). The slower, softer music tended to have less of a dramatic effect, but both the slow instrumental and slow lyrical groups saw slight drops in achievement, except in the case of one student. This study seems to support the findings of other similar studies that found that background music, especially those with lyrics, tend to interfere with processing verbal information (Avila 2011). Based on this data, playing music while reading should be used only on a case-by-case basis, if at all.

## References

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