Theses and Graduate Projects

Summer 8-1-2011

Student' Perceptions of Read 180 at the Middle School Level

Erica L. Johnson
Augsburg College

Follow this and additional works at: https://idun.augsburg.edu/etd
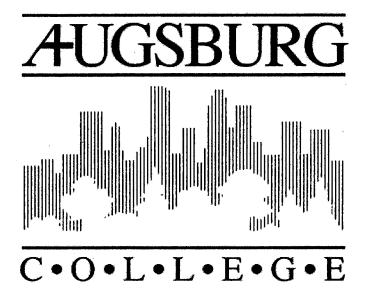
Part of the Education Commons

ÆUGSBURG

C • O • L • L • E • G • E

MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION

Erica L Johnson

Students' Perceptions of Read 180 at the
Middle School Level

2011

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF READ 180 AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

ERICA L JOHNSON

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

2011

MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the **Action Research Final Project** of:

Erica L. Johnson

Has been approved by the Review Committee, and fulfills the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Education degree.

Date of Symposium: _June 28, 2011_

Date Completed: _August 1, 2011_

Committee:

Susan O'Conn
Adviser

Kevan Fype
Reader

II

Acknowledgements

This paper would not have been possible had it not been for the innumerable amount of help I received from different people around me.

First and foremost, I am ever grateful to my Augsburg adviser Ms. Susan O'Connor. Only with her constant help in answering my many questions, queries, e-mails, and phone calls was I was able to complete this project.

I also would like to thank Ms. Dana Wagner for graciously being my reader and providing valuable feedback on the paper.

I would like to thank my parents for their unending love and support.

Also, Mr. Jeremy Jones, my research partner in EDC 593 was always available for moral support, questions, and guidance. He was never too busy to answer when I called.

Last of all, I would like to thank my fiancé, Dan, for his patience, love, support, feedback, praise, and encouragement. Without his intelligent ideas and strong editing skills this paper would not have been possible. I love you.

Abstract

Students' Perceptions of Read 180 at the Middle School Level

Erica Johnson

June 28, 2011

Action Research Project (EDC 593)

Read 180 is an intensive intervention program designed for middle level elementary up through high school. This is a program that teaches students through a combination of instructional, modeled, and independent reading components. The Read 180 class period is 90 minutes long and begins with 20 minutes of whole-group literacy instruction in which the teacher and students engage in shared reading, read aloud, or do direct instruction skills lessons. Next, students are split into three groups and each group participates in three 20-minute rotations. During each rotation the teacher works with one small group of students in the Small group rotation. The remaining two groups work independently at either the Software/Computer based literacy or the Independent Reading station. After all rotations are completed the instruction is completed with a 10-minute wrap-up for student reflection time. The Read 180 website (Scholastic, 2011) touts this statistic: "Read 180 is the most thoroughly researched and documented reading intervention program, proven to raise reading achievement for grades 4-12+.

This research examines the question, "Can gaining an understanding of struggling middle school readers' perceptions of an intervention class (Read 180) help educators develop successful strategies to teach students?" I conducted in-depth interviews with four of the students who participated in my eighth grade Read 180 class. Themes that emerged from these interviews were: (1) Reading books that are relatable is the best, (2)

Read-alouds are a helpful learning tool, (3) Technology is a great motivator, (4) pop culture is a powerful "hook," (5) autonomy and decision making is very important to teens in their own learning, and (6) general lack of self-understanding among teens. The project showed that students perceive Read 180 as an effective program with positive benefits.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Who are the struggling readers today? What do we do with these struggling readers? Is there an effective program that can help older struggling readers? These are all critical questions to consider when deciding how to help these students in our schools today.

Consider Simon, a male eighth grade student enrolled in a Read 180 classroom. Simon has been in Read 180 for nearly 2 years now. Period 4 Simon walks into the Read 180 classroom, grabs his Read 180 binder off the shelf and sits down. He knows that the teacher is about to put the warm-up on the big screen. He realizes that once again he has forgotten his pencil. He was in such a rush to get inside the classroom before anyone saw him go into the "dumb" class. Everyone knows Read 180 is for "dummies." He knows he has to ask for a pencil in order to get started, but suddenly he feels stupid interrupting the teacher when all the other kids have already started their warm up. Next is whole group instruction. They are starting a new Workshop today. Simon isn't interested in the topic. *Crime scene stuff is gross and I hope this video doesn't make me sick,* Simon thinks. After the video they are reading a fiction story out loud. The teacher is calling on kids to read. *Please don't call on me. Please don't call on me,* Simon pleads in his head. He realizes he is holding his breath. After whole group the students transition to their rotations. Everyone is expected to go to their first rotation. Simon has Independent Reading. *Oh man I hate reading!* Simon thinks to himself. He quietly walks over and grabs the book off the shelf he has been reading for the past 2 weeks. *I am so sick of all these books; I wish we could make our own book choices.* Simon is clearly dreading the 20 minutes of reading time. Simon can hear the other students reading into the computers

to record their reading passages in the Software Zone. *That is so distracting! I can't even keep track of where I am in my book.* The other two zones go by in a blur and Simon feels frustrated and overwhelmed by the time class comes together again for the last ten minute warm-up.

Jenner is in the same period 4 Read 180 class as Simon. Jenner comes into class with a smile on his face. He grabs his Read 180 binder off the shelf and sits down to open his notebook. He is ready for the warm-up. It is a fill in the blank question. The teacher gives the class a hint. The answer is one of the Read 180 vocabulary words from the current workshop. Jenner is deciding between the two similar vocabulary words. Suddenly it clicks. *Yes! I've got the answer!* Jenner raises his hand, and the teacher calls on him for the answer. Next is whole group. *We start our new Workshop today! It's about crime scene investigation. I'm so pumped! This stuff is really cool.* Jenner thinks as his teacher plays the video clip before beginning the reading. The reading commences after the video and Jenner's hand shoots up. *I know I'm not the best reader, but I'm getting so much better.* Jenner is ready and willing to practice his skills in front of an audience. Next the students transition to their small group rotations. Jenner starts with the Software Zone. *I am still working on completing "Extreme Sports." I watched the video yesterday and now I'm in the reading zone. I can't wait to read more about skydiving!* Jenner is ready to begin. By the time the class gathers back at their desks Jenner feels really good. He has accomplished so much today and learned so many new things!

These two students are in the same Read 180 classroom. Both students are struggling readers. Both students are reading at least two grade levels behind their same

age peers. However, they are experiencing very different reactions to the class. Why does one student have a meaningful and worthwhile experience in the class and another student dreads going to class everyday? How can we make Read 180 an engaging experience for all students? This study poses to discern the answer to that question.

The "struggling" reader is a student who chooses not to read for many reasons, the main reason being, they can't read well (Ruddell & Shearer, 2002). The definition of the struggling reader must also be expanded to include a disengagement from literacy (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000). This means that these students lack confidence in their reading abilities and their ability to improve their reading skills. Often these students are motivated by "tangible" or extrinsic motivators versus an intrinsic desire to do well. Grades, meeting teachers' requirements, candy, food, and prizes are all motivators; however they are unlikely to read for pleasure or to gain knowledge. The goal of educators is to teach these students to read well enough that they want to read on their own and to develop a culture of readers. Unfortunately, it is quite common for struggling readers to develop "self-handicapping" strategies to look rebellious rather than stupid. By avoiding academic tasks they can preserve their self-image. It looks better to attribute low grades to lack of effort versus lack of intelligence (Midgley & Urdan, 1995). The self-handicappers are concerned with how others perceive them, but they do not try to increase their reading skills. Low achievers in middle school are likely to feel disrespected and uncomfortable in school, and lack a sense of belonging. These students are less likely to care about forming positive relationships than are high achieving students. All of this evidence points to

disengagement, not only with literacy, but also with those that surround the student in a school setting (Anderman, 1999).

Sadly, a lack of motivation only increases in the secondary grades. According to one study in Maryland done by Guthrie and Davis (2003) a comparison of grades 3, 5, and 8 was done to show the decline in reading motivation. A student questionnaire was administered by teachers from the same schools but different classrooms of the students at the same time as the statewide assessment, with the support of the Maryland State Department of Education. Guthrie & Davis (2003) concluded that overall students' engagement with reading content area text decreases from grade 3 to grade 8. Students in grade 8 perceive that they have fewer choices in their book selection than in grade 3 or grade 5. It was also found that 64.5% of eighth grade students found reading "boring," while only 27% of third graders found reading "boring."

The overall trend for readers from elementary school to middle school is a negative one. More and more autonomy to make choices is taken away in the secondary grades, very little grammar or punctuation work is done in the content areas, and students are also expected to know how to use reading strategies to figure out content literature. How does this affect our struggling readers? Students fall further and further between the cracks. Clearly schools need a strong, comprehensive program to remediate the ills of secondary reading. Struggling readers need to have reading strategies reinforced on a daily basis, continuous grammar and punctuation practice, more choices, and more power in order to succeed in the reading classroom and all other facets of life.

Read 180 seems like one such promising intervention reading program. As the Read 180 website tells us, it is a research-based program "proven to raise reading

achievement for grades 4-12+" (Scholastic Inc, 2010). However, what do the students think? How will students in the Read 180 classroom perceive Read 180 at the middle school level? How will Read 180 affect students both in and outside of the classroom? What motivates these students to learn? This research examines these questions from the perspectives of four middle school students in the Read 180 classroom who participated in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Much of the literature on the struggling reader tells us that intervention needs to be intensive and early. What happens when the intervention does not happen at an early age? Can intensive intervention reading programs such as Read 180 help these students to become proficient readers? This literature review will examine some of these issues by exploring the multi-facets of the struggling reader. This literature review contains several parts: (a) identifying the struggling reader, (b) students with specific learning disabilities as struggling readers, (c) the emotions and motivation of the struggling reader, (d) characteristics of effective reading intervention programs, and (e) Read 180 and intervention background.

Defining the Struggling Reader

Some studies have found (as cited in Hall, 2010) that many middle school students in U.S. schools today do not have the reading skills necessary to comprehend text, complete reading assignments, and learn content area subject matter (Allington, 2001; Curtis, 2004; Kintsch, 2004). These students, also known as struggling readers, are reading one year or more below grade level but are not identified as having a learning disability (Ruddell & Shearer, 2002). Hall (2007) found that the majority of eighth graders tested in the area of reading had mastered few of the skills needed to comprehend text. A number of reasons indicate why they have trouble comprehending text they are expected to read in school. Some struggling readers may have problems decoding words, others may be able to read fluently but do not attach any meaning to the words. Last, some students do not know how to apply general strategies to their reading, such as identifying main idea (Hall, 2007). Motivation also plays a role in struggling readers'

skill to understand text. Often after so many years of battling with reading, struggling readers believe they will have little to no success with comprehending the text, so they don't even try. Although some researchers and authors use the terms "struggling" and "reluctant" interchangeably, let the distinction be made in this Literature Review. The difference between "reluctant" reader and "struggling" reader is skill. A reluctant reader chooses not to read because they don't want to for whatever reason. Conversely, the struggling reader chooses not to read for many reasons, the main reason being, they can't read well. For the purposes of this Literature Review the struggling reader will be examined. According to a report produced in 2009 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress from the U.S. Department of Education, (http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard) American students are doing poorly on standardized reading tests. In 2009, only 32% of students in Grade 8 were achieving proficient reading standards on standardized tests. However, this is a one point increase from 2007 in which 31% of students were proficient, and also an increase of four points from 1992 in which only 28% of students were proficient. Even though the scores are increasing, they are increasing at a much slower rate than expected, and still an estimated 8 million middle and high school students are struggling readers. The probability of these students dropping out of school is high (Grigg, Daane, Jin, & Campbell, 2003).

If a student cannot read by the 8th grade, the likelihood of dropping out is almost certain. In our current economy one cannot get far in life without a high school diploma. Even military service and most entry level service-oriented jobs require a high school diploma (Papalewis, 2004).

Specific Learning Disabilities as Struggling Readers

Josh is a 14-year-old eighth grade student from a medium sized Minnesota suburb. He is a respectful boy with a great sense of humor. He is polite and genuinely kind to students and teachers alike. Josh wants to join the Marine Corp after graduating high school and then plans to become a cop. Josh loves to draw and has become quite talented at creating origami. One would never guess this boy to have complex processing issues. Josh has received special education services since kindergarten. According to his IEP, Josh had a specific learning disability in reading. In elementary school Josh displayed some behavioral challenges. Interviews of Josh's previous teachers indicated that in moments of frustration he called himself "retard" and on many occasions banged his head on the wall. Now in middle school Josh didn't like "sticking out" from the crowd. He made much simpler choices like raising his hand only when he knew the answer 100%. He didn't take any risks in the classroom. He didn't act out emotionally. He began to keep to himself. When Josh doesn't know an answer he avoids all eye contact with the teacher. Josh is writing at a first grade level and reading at a second grade level. He knows he will never be like the "normal" kids in his classes. He just does his best to fly under the radar and not get singled out.

Josh's story is not unique. Many students suffer from a specific learning disability in reading. Some students act out to hide their insecurities and weaknesses. Other students simply just try to blend in and become invisible to the teacher and other students. A specific learning disability is defined as a neurological disorder found in children of normal intelligence who have difficulties in specific learning skills (http://www.ldonline.org/index.php). The brain is "wired" differently than the average brain. The disability may affect the child in various ways such as: math, reading, writing,

spelling, reasoning, recalling, or organizing information. Some common learning

disabilities are described in Table 1 below:

Table 1:

Disability	Description
Dyslexia	A language based disability in which a person has trouble understanding written words.
Dyscalculia	A mathematical disability in which a person has difficulty solving arithmetic problems and grasping math concepts.
Dysgraphia	A writing disability in which a person finds it hard to form letters or write within a defined space.
Auditory and visual processing disorders	Sensory disability in which a person has difficulty understanding language despite normal hearing and vision.
Nonverbal learning disability	A neurological disorder which causes problems with visual-spatial, intuitive, organizational, evaluative, and holistic processing functions.

A learning disability is a lifelong issue that affects as much as 15% of the

American population. The most common learning disability is difficulty with basic

reading and language skills. Eighty percent of students with learning disabilities have

reading problems. There is a great challenge of meeting the needs of a widely diverse

student population, including those with learning and/or behavioral differences in our

schools today. Teachers struggle to meet the demands of standards and accountability in

the classroom, while at the same time fostering strong readers with a love for reading

(Atkinson, Wilhite, Frey, & Williams, 2002).

In an effective reading program the teacher must individualize strategies for the

student based on the students' individual needs along with best practice strategies. The

struggling readers need more exposure to texts at their reading level and application of skills and strategies to help them become more successful (Atkinson et al., 2002).

Those who teach students with learning disabilities frequently juggle teaching these students how to read with accommodating their reading disabilities in the classroom. A balanced approach to literacy is crucial for students with learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities do not quickly pick up on decoding text and reading fluently. There are several underlying problems that cause difficulties for students with learning disabilities such as: auditory processing, visual processing, language development, memory skills, metacognition, and attention. Problems in any of these areas may cause students to have distinct preferences in learning styles that not all teachers can accommodate to. Decoding skill instruction is critical for students with learning disabilities to become skilled at. Without particular instruction in this area of phonics these students may never catch up (Coleman & Vaughn, 2000). Students with learning disabilities need to learn appropriate ways to approach text with strategies. In other words, they need to develop reading strategies to help them decode and comprehend text.

As educators we can never assume anything with students with learning disabilities. We can not assume they will be able to decode or comprehend text simply by being exposed to it. Also, if they do possess decoding and comprehension skills we can not assume they will generalize these skills without frequent reading opportunities with meaningful text. A balanced approach targeting skills and strategies attainment along with immersing the student in literature can set the readers with learning disabilities up for success (Atkinson et al, 2002).

For the purposes of this paper we will focus on reading disabilities. Combining the negative factors that struggling readers face and the difficulties that students with reading disabilities face we can quickly ascertain that an emotional toll plagues these students as well (http://www.ldonline.org/index.php).

The Social, Emotional, and Motivational Impact on the Struggling Reader

Cognitive psychology states that emotions are a result of our own individual interpretation of situations. Understanding the emotions of a struggling reader can help educators become more efficient at teaching this population (Triplett, 2004). Students experience a range of emotions associated with experiences of being unmotivated readers. Anger and helplessness were predominantly expressed. Students felt that learning situations were beyond their control and they were not responsible for their frustration. They presumed that the frustration and anger they felt was someone else's fault, such as the teacher or school. Only those students who took accountability and responsibility for their own reading felt that reading was personally relevant and beneficial (Oldfather, 2002). Erickson (2008) discusses the student-centered approach which allows students freedom of choice thus improving accountabililty and ownership of their own reading. Erickson states that instructing students at their individual reading levels and using authentic reading materials within their interests motivates students to want to read. The student-centered approach allows students to pick their text, puts material at the correct reading level, and teaches students to question text for themselves.

Furthermore, Triplett (2004) found that students who identify an emotional connection with their teachers and with school tend to be better readers. In this study the target student felt alienated by teachers who did not laugh and "joke around" with the

11

students. She felt fearful of these teachers, angry, and alienated. This lack of connection

to these teachers and his school made this student feel unmotivated to read. Also noted

was a lack of personal relevance or connection to the reading and lack of choices which

further alienated the student from reading.

Triplett concludes that there are many emotions of the literacy learner. Feelings of

enjoyment tell us that the learner interprets his experience as beneficial. Pride shows us

that he looks at himself as accountable for his accomplishments. Anger, frustration, and

struggle signal to the student that someone else is responsible for the lack of success.

Many struggling readers have problems with word decoding and reading comprehension

and are often accompanied by a range of academic, behavioral, and social problems

including stress, low drive, and low confidence and self-esteem (Barden, 2009).

All of this can affect the formation of a person's identity, or sense of self and

sense of others. Identity is very important in education because it shapes how we see the

world and their experiences. It shapes how students experience text (Barden, 2010).

Because identity reciprocally shapes experiences with texts, it also has important

instructional implications. Adolescent students frequently reject texts that are

meaningless to them or have no connection to their lives; meanwhile, teachers often

construct identities for students- as poor or strong readers- that do not accurately reflect

those students' engagements with out-of-school reading.

Students who are perceived as capable and motivated readers tend to enjoy having

choice in reading material and pace. Resistant, reluctant, or struggling readers are more

likely to have choices imposed upon them. They are then likely to reject the material that

has been thrust upon them which results in reading becoming even less desirable. This

exclusion from the good readers- or readers with choices- further alienates the struggling

reader affecting their behavior and fragile middle school identity (Anderson, 2007 as

cited in Barden, 2010).

A study by Alvermann, Hagood, Heron-Hruby, Hughes, Williams, and Yoon

(2007) finds that reading attitudes decline during the middle school years. Students read

less frequently in general. Middle school students spend most of their reading time

seeking out information for homework or in-class assignments for which they will be

held accountable. Success in school often depends on how they are able to use this

information they gather from assigned readings. Reading for pleasure has declined over

the past two decades for middle and high school level students and they read less than

they did in previous years such as elementary school (Alvermann et al., 2007). This leads

us to middle school intervention reading programs. How can we remedy the adolescents'

negative reading experience? How can we make reading fun once again, improve test

scores, and improve overall comprehension of text? One such solution indicates a

movement toward a reading intervention program called Read 180.

Characteristics of Effective Reading Intervention Programs

What reading programs have been proven to help struggling younger grade level

students succeed? Considerable research on this topic has been done over the years.

Reports indicate that the best student results occur when explicit, systematic instruction is

provided in foundational skills such as phonics, and also in higher level skills such as

fluency and comprehension. Putting all of these elements together has been proven to

reduce reading difficulties (Torgesen, 2000). In addition, research has been done on

older students indicating positive outcomes when explicit instruction is provided in: a)

wordy study strategies to decode words, b) word meanings and strategies are developed

to determine the meanings of unknown words, and c.) comprehension strategy instruction

is done. These findings hold true specifically for students with reading difficulties and

learning disabilities (Torgesen, 2000). Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, and Ciullo (2010)

complete a review of the best reading intervention studies of the past twenty years done

in the upper elementary grades. Their research addresses the question: How effective are

reading interventions on reading outcomes for students with reading difficulties and

disabilities in fourth and fifth grade? Upper elementary is important to examine, because

there is a shift from "learning to read" toward "reading to learn" which is of considerable

difficulty for our struggling readers who have yet to master the basic reading skills.

According to Wanzek et al. (2010) their review shows that instruction in comprehension

strategies before, during, and after reading increases comprehension outcomes for upper

elementary and middle school students. Positive effects were found for vocabulary

interventions for secondary readers as well. In this particular study, no other positive

effects were found for other strategies (Wanzek et al., 2010).

Slavin, Cheung, Groff, and Lake (2008) reviewed over a hundred adolescent reading

programs to determine effectiveness. Slavin et al. (2008) examines the evidence of

effectiveness of four types of research-based programs designed to improve the reading

achievement of students in grades 6-12. They are as follows:

- Reading Curricula (Curr) such as *LANGUAGE!, McDougal Litel,* and other

  standard and alternative textbooks. This category encompasses textbooks and

  curriculum.

- Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI), these programs are usually supplementary such as going to the computer lab to work, or such as *Jostens/Compass Learning* and *Accelerated Reader* which uses computer-managed instruction which uses computers to assign readings and determine progress.

- Instructional Process Programs (IP), such as cooperative learning, strategy instruction, and other approaches primarily intended to change teachers' instructional methods rather than curriculum or textbooks. Simply stated, IP programs rely on professional development to give teachers tools to become better educators.

- Mixed Method Model (MMM), uses CAI and IP approaches to include whole group and small group instruction along with a technology approach, such as *Read 180* and *Voyager Passport*.

The review only included studies that used randomized or matched control groups, lasted at least twelve weeks, and used valid achievement measures independent of the experimental treatments, among other criteria.

All four categories listed above were found to have some effectiveness within their programs; however within each category some programs were more effective than others (Appendix A). The most robust and positive effects were shown in Mixed Method Models (MMM) such as Read 180 and Voyager Passport and also for Instructional Process Programs (IP) using cooperative learning. However, effects of Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) were small, as were effects for reading strategy programs that did not emphasize cooperative learning.

Using a rating system to determine effectiveness, no program was found to have "strong evidence of effectiveness," but a few were considered to be "moderately effective," such as two cooperative learning programs *The Reading Edge* and *Student Team Reading*, *Read 180* (MMM) and the CAI program *Jostens* also fell into this grouping. Several were considered to have "limited effectiveness," such as *SIM*, *Benchmark Detectives Reading Program*, both which provide strategy instruction to students, as well as Voyager *Passport, PALS, Accelerated Reader*, and *TDMS*. Many were considered to have "insufficient evidence" or "no qualifying studies" (Slavin et al., 2008). Please see Appendix A for a detailed list of programs and the categories they fall in to.

Slavin, Cheung, Groff, and Lake's (2008) synthesis of effective reading programs for struggling adolescent readers suggested that studies of mixed-method models that include large-group, small-group, and computer assisted individualized learning had positive effects, as did instructional-process programs that used cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is an approach to organizing classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. Students must work in groups to complete the two sets of tasks collectively. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds (Cantrell et al., 2010).

How does an effective middle school reading intervention program function? For one, the simplistic use of reading strategies enables readers to comprehend text when it becomes difficult. According to Shippen, Houchins, Steventon, and Sartor (2005) most children begin to use a range of strategies to comprehend difficult text in the upper elementary grades, however some adolescents experience difficulties with reading strategy use and need targeted interventions to specifically teach them reading strategies.

Strategies are cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral processes that are intentionally used as a means of reaching a goal (Cantrell, Almasi, Carter, Rintamaa, & Madden, 2010). Cognitive strategies (paraphrasing, questioning) and behavioral strategies (using a dictionary to clarify the meaning of a word) are used to make advancement toward the goal, and metacognitive strategies (comprehension monitoring, rereading) are used to observe progress made toward reaching the goal. In gaining reading comprehension readers must use the strategies and also become strategic in their thinking processes. This means that teachers need to teach students how to set goals, plan actions, and select the appropriate strategies. Readers must also have an arsenal of reading strategies ready for use to tackle different reading situations, as it is not a "one size fits all" situation.

Erickson (2008) states that strategies can only be taught by teachers who demonstrate the strategies. The goal is to teach students to become independent in their reading practices. All in all, teaching readers to become strategic means teaching students to be able to quickly shift from one reading context to another (Cantrell et al, 2010). The ultimate goal would be to construct meaning from text. After all reading is just words if there is no comprehension.

When we examine the link between cooperative learning communities in connection with academics it is clear to see that when students learn social skills along with academics it is more beneficial then individual pencil and paper worksheets or teacher-lecture activities. Sometimes the most valuable learning occurs between peers.

In a study by Shippen et al. (2005) direct instruction practices were examined. Direct instruction involves fast-paced, scripted, well-sequenced, rule-based, and highly focused lessons. Students in direct instruction classes are usually instructed in small

groups and given many opportunities to respond in unison and individually, with instant feedback using precise correction procedures. Direct instruction uses principles of Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding. Scaffolding is a process in which students are given support until they can apply new skills and strategies independently (Rosenshine & Meister, 1992; Oldfather, 2002). It involves modeling (teacher shows how to do something), guided practice (teacher and student do together), and independence with immediate feedback (student does on his/her own).

In Shippen's (2005) study of a 6-week direct instruction program students showed gains in word reading efficiency, reading rate, reading accuracy, and reading fluency. This study confirms the previous studies proving the effectiveness of highly structured, explicit, teacher-directed instruction for struggling readers.

Reading fluency is yet another vital part of becoming a strong, well-rounded reader. Lock (2006) states that reading fluency is having the ability to read text rapidly, smoothly, and effortlessly with little attention paid to decoding. When fluent readers read aloud it sounds like a smooth conversation. Non-fluent readers sound choppy and inconsistent, often not stopping at punctuation or changing their voice inflection. Lock (2006) discovered many strategies to increase oral fluency. See Table 2:

Table 2:

Using repeated reading (learners practice reading one passage at their level)
Using repeated reading with a teacher model
Using repeated reading with modeling by a more proficient peer
Using repeated reading, modeling with an audiotape or cd
Use prepractice preview (reading assigned to them before class lesson)

Use choral reading
Use predictable or patterned text, use a word drill (challenging words on flashcards)
Use corrective feedback
Use models of fluent reading (teacher can read effortlessly and with expression)
Classwide peer tutoring
Use a computer (games that promote reading speed by providing feedback)
Use a parent/school reading program (encourage parents to read at home everyday)

Another important piece of an effective intervention reading program is simply engagement. Engagement is when the learner is interested in the activity being taught. Engagement can be witnessed when a reader stops to look at particular phrases he or she finds interesting or the way an unfamiliar word is spelled. The reading is interesting enough to stay with it, no matter how difficult (Erickson, 2008). In order for a student to be engaged in reading material, it must be material that interests them.

Choice is a very powerful tool when it comes to reading. Middle school classrooms tend to be teacher-directed rather than student-led. With this lack of students' autonomy and decision-making students tend to lose motivation. Struggling readers need choice in order to become engaged in their literacy development (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This does not mean complete freedom, but it does mean that students should be given opportunities for decision making, independent thinking, and have some control over their learning activities such as book choice (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Read 180 and Intervention background

In 2001 President Bush signed the No Child left Behind (NCLB) legislation in to law. One promise of this plan was to rid our country of its "reading deficit." The NCLB

took years of scientific research on reading and attempted to apply it to all schools in America. The National Reading Panel (NRP) reviewed 100,000 studies on how students learn to read. Resulting was a guide for scientifically based reading instruction. The aim was to ensure that no matter the background or ability, every student had equal opportunity to achieve reading success (No Child Left Behind Act, as cited in Demko, 2010). With the implementation of NCLB came the Reading First Initiative. This initiative provided funding to schools which adopted scientifically based reading programs. Along with the scientifically based reading programs came scripted curriculum materials that reflected a focus on explicit, direct, systematic skills instruction touted as a method to boost sagging standardized test scores and narrow the achievement gap between children growing up in poverty and those who were more affluent (Coles, 2001). Before the NCLB came into existence most schools relied on remediation as a means of helping struggling readers succeed. Overall, remediation was an ineffective means of getting these students up to speed. However, intervention strategies help struggling readers to accelerate their growth more quickly. Intervention strategies reflect a shift in the promise of better reading for all students, in particular the older lower readers. The earlier schools intervene the higher their chances are of eliminating low readers (Papalewis, 2004).

One such scientifically based direct intervention program that has made an impact on schools and students in recent years is Read 180. Read 180 is a reading intervention program that is the result of over ten years of research by Vanderbilt University and one of the creators, Ted Hasselbring. Between 1994 and 1999 the Read 180 pilot was used with more than 10,000 students in a collaborative effort between Vanderbilt and the

Orange County Public School System in Florida. The pilot project indicated that students in the Read 180 program showed irrefutable improvement in reading achievement, positive attitudes and behaviors, and overall higher school achievements (Papalewis, 2004).

Read 180 is a program designed for students reading below grade level in upper elementary, middle school, and high school. Read 180 combines research-based reading practices combined with the use of technology. This is a program that teaches students through a combination of instructional, modeled, and independent reading components. The Read 180 class period is 90 minutes long and begins with 20 minutes of whole-group literacy instruction in which the teacher and students engage in shared reading, read aloud, or do direct instruction skills lessons. Next, students are split into three groups and each group participates in three 20-minute rotations. During each rotation the teacher works with one small group of students in the Small group rotation. The remaining two groups work independently at either the Software/Computer based literacy or the Independent Reading station. After all rotations are completed the instruction is completed with a 10-minute wrap-up for student reflection time (Papalewis, 2004).

There are Read 180 instructional components such as: Teacher's Guides, Resource books, Scholastic software management (SAM), the SRI test to determine Lexile reading levels, quick-writes, tests every two workshops, and tests after every book read, vocabulary in R books, and comprehension wrap-ups at the end of workshops. Read 180 is a comprehensive program designed to break the cycle of failure and show significant growth in reading.

According to Papalewis (2004) students enrolled in Read 180 program when compared with a comparison group made significant gains. For Reading, Read 180 students gained approximately 3 NCEs from one year to the next (a significant gain). Also, in Language Arts, Read 180 students gained approximately 2 NCEs (also a significant gain). District percentile ranks for students in regular Language Arts classes remained the same. The Read 180 students, however, gained four percentile ranks in Reading and three percentile ranks in Language Arts. In contrast, the comparison group students lost ground in NCEs in both Reading and Language Arts from 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. This finding is not surprising since this comparison group of students had identical low reading scores to Read 180 students without the benefit of the intensive intervention of the Read 180 program. In summary, Read 180 students significantly improved in Reading and Language Arts from pre (1999-2000) to post (2000-2001) while the comparison group of students lost ground.

<u>Summary</u>

While their needs may not be identical, studies have shown that struggling middle school readers and students with reading disabilities can both benefit from intensive intervention programs. Research has shown that middle school students need to have their fragile emotional needs met, be highly motivated, and have the power of choice. The program being researched in this study is Read 180. We will look at students' perceptions of Read 180 in an eighth grade middle school classroom. There is plenty research on intervention programs, including Read 180, but very little in the arena of examining students' perspectives of the Read 180 program and what is happening in their own classrooms.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study uses a qualitative action research method that "uses narrative, descriptive approaches to data collection to understand the way things are and what it means from the perspective of the research participants" (Mills, 2007, p.4). Data were gathered using in-depth interviews with student participants to understand their perspectives and form the basis for analysis. These in-depth qualitative interviews were informal face-to-face interviews where there was a comfortable conversational exchange with no hierarchical chain of command between teacher and student (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). This method allowed me to explore the Read 180 program and examine the reasons behind my students' views. This methodology allowed me to directly interview the participants.

The students participating in this research were chosen based on one factor: they were enrolled in my eighth grade Read 180 class in the suburban middle school where I teach. The interviews consist of students discussing their perspectives of Read 180 and reading in general, their strengths, and their weaknesses.

Participants are between the ages of thirteen to fourteen and are all in eighth grade. Of the four students all students qualify for special education services under the label Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD or LD) or Other Health Impairment (OHI or OHD). Their below average reading abilities landed them in my Read 180 classroom. All of the students were enrolled in the program for the entire 2010-2011 school year. All students in my Read 180 classroom were reading at least two grade levels below their same age peers.

In the 2010-2011 school year, there were 760 students attending this particular school, which is located in a suburb of the Twin Cities. Of those 760 students, 12% identified as African American, 8% as Hispanic, 10% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% as Native American, and the rest as Caucasian (MN Edu, 2010). Of this population 36% receive free and reduced price lunch, 10% are in special education, and 4% are limited English proficient.

Within this school there are three Read 180 classrooms: one sixth grade class, one seventh grade class, and one eighth grade class. I teach the eighth grade Read 180 class. Out of 17 students in my class, 16 are students in special education who received services through their individualized education programs (IEP). All of these students receiving special education services are Federal setting I students (spending less than 20% of their day in special education classes). Ten of these students are male and seven are female. Eight students in the class are Caucasian, five are African American, two are Middle Eastern, and two are Hispanic.

The Read 180 classroom

Within the eighth grade Read 180 classroom myself and another teacher co-teach the class for a total of about 105 minutes per day. This class is two periods long back-to-back. Each period is roughly 52-53 minutes per day depending on where it lands in the schedule. This middle school has a drop schedule, meaning that every day the school day begins with a different period- one through seven- with the students having only six classes per day. This means that twice in an every seven day rotation one Read 180 period drops off and that day we only have a 52 or 53 minute Read 180. When one Read 180 period drops, we do not have rotations in Read 180. However five days out of the

seven day rotation we do have regular Read 180 classes with whole group, small group, three rotations, and a wrap-up at the end. Read 180 is a program designed for students reading below grade level in upper elementary, middle school, and high school. Read 180 combines research-based reading practices combined with the use of technology. This is a program that teaches students through a combination of instructional, modeled, and independent reading components.

The Read 180 class period in my school is roughly 105 minutes long and begins with 20 minutes of whole-group literacy instruction in which the teacher and students engage in shared reading, read aloud, or do direct instruction skills lessons. Next, students are split into three groups and each group participates in three 20-minute rotations. During each rotation I work with one small group of students in the small group rotation. The remaining two groups work independently at either the Software/Computer based literacy or the Independent Reading station. My colleague sits in the Independent Reading area to monitor student behavior in the Reading group and the Software/Computer group. After all rotations are completed the instruction is completed with a 10-minute wrap-up for student reflection time (Papalewis, 2004).

There are also many Read 180 instructional components such as: Teacher's Guides, Resource books, Scholastic software management (SAM), Lexile test (SRI), quick-writes, tests every two workshops, and tests after every book read, vocabulary in R books, and comprehension wrap ups at the end of workshops.

Recruitment of the Participants

To determine participants for this study, I reviewed the Read 180 classes being taught at my school. I chose only to select the students enrolled in the eighth Read 180

class that I teach. Two of the 17 students were transferred to different classes. This narrowed the number of eligible participants down to 15 students in my class and two new students that I didn't want to interview due to their lack of knowledge of the Read 180 program. I explained my research to each of these classes, detailing what participation entailed and disturbed forms to be filled out for participation. Of the 15 students, four students returned their forms.

The interviews took place in my classroom which is located next to the Read 180 classroom at the middle school during independent reading and writing class time. The other students were with another special education teacher. The room was a quiet and private place with no other students or distractions. Many of the students had been in my classroom before, so they were comfortable with the setting. I had been working with these students for 6 months now and a rapport has been developed with each student. I attempted to ease their comfort by giving them squish toys to hold and manipulate during the interviews. At the beginning of the interviews, I reviewed with the students the purpose of the research project. I also clarified that during this interview I was "acting as a researcher, not as your teacher," and reassured them that I wanted honest responses to the questions. I also told the students that they did not have to continue the interview or answer any questions that they did not feel comfortable discussing.

In an in-depth interview process, each participant was asked a series of questions related to reading in general and the Read 180 curriculum. The interview process allowed the students to discuss their thoughts and ideas about Read 180 and reading in general. The interview questions about the Read 180 curriculum, what they liked/disliked about the curriculum, and what they had learned or gained from the

curriculum. In each interview, the order of the questions was altered slightly, as I would ask the students questions based on their responses. For example, some of the students brought up questions that I had planned to ask later in the interview, so I asked the questions in a natural manner as they were brought up in conversation. At the end of the interview, each student had a chance to talk about anything they wanted in relation to Read 180 and reading.

The Participants

All participants' names have been changed and other possible identifying information, including the name of the school they were attending. All the participants have a documented need for Read 180 instruction identified by educational testing such as NWEA and MCA testing, grades, and teacher recommendations.

Sasha

Sasha is an eighth grade African-American student who has been receiving special education services for several years for a Specific Learning Disability for reading. This is her third year of Read 180. Sasha is a bright student with low self esteem. She second-guesses everything she does. So much so in fact, that it starts to impair her judgment to complete tasks because she is so uncertain of her work. She is a popular girl with many friends. Sasha loves supportive teachers who are able to pay a lot of attention to her. She lives at home with her mom and sister. Dad is a homeless man out on the streets and mom is a drinker. They often leave Sasha at home alone or alone with her ninth grade sister. Sasha, a thoughtful, kind girl is often looking for attention whether bad or good. Sometimes her attention-seeking behavior causes problems in the classroom, including disrupting class and not following teacher directions.

Jimmy

Jimmy is an eighth grade Caucasian student who has been receiving special education services for several years for a Specific Learning Disability for reading. This is his second year of Read 180. Jimmy spent his sixth grade year in Systems 44, a phonics class. Read 180 is a higher level class then Systems 44. Jimmy is a gentle hearted student who is willing to help a friend at any time, ever loyal to his friendship circle. He is a compliant boy who wants to please others. He is often able to help others through their problems. Jimmy lives with his single mother, younger sister, and mom's boyfriend. He hasn't seen dad in many years, and seems to have a good relationship with his mother's live-in boyfriend. Overall Jimmy is a submissive student, but sometimes needs reminders to stay on task.

Gina

Gina is an eighth grade Caucasian student who has been receiving special education services for 3 years under the label of Specific Learning Disability for reading. Gina is an incredibly creative person, always drawing, doodling, or creating some sort of origami creature. Gina is quick to embrace others differences. She is constantly volunteering her genuinely intelligent thoughts during class discussions. She is a student who may not qualify for special education services next year due to her exceptional grades and test scores. Gina is one of the rare students in my class who lives in a two-parent home. She is a warm-hearted girl who is unsure of her gender at this point. She is still deciding if she wants to be a boy or a girl. She dresses in traditional male clothing, but does not mind if people call her "he" or "she." Her parents do not push her in either direction; they are letting gender be her choice.

Pete

Pete is an eighth grade Caucasian student who has been receiving special education services for several years under the label of Specific Learning Disability for reading. Pete is a genuinely kind hearted student always willing to help out others. His positive demeanor and go-getter attitude makes it impossible for everyone to not love him. Pete is such a hard-worker that it doesn't matter how difficult the assignment he will still try to accomplish it to the best of his abilities. Pete lives with his brother, mother, her boyfriend, and boyfriend's children. Pete's father is an alcoholic and infrequently visits Pete. Due to these life circumstances Pete has become very familiar with alcoholism and is very knowledgeable and open with his teachers and classmates about the disease.

Analysis of Data

To start the grounded theory analysis, I used the transcripts from the interviews and coded the key points that were discussed. After this process, some follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify key points. Following the coding of the data, I grouped the coded data into similar concepts. These concepts were analyzed to see which of the concepts could form a larger category, which then shaped the basis for the themes. Applying grounded theory process, I found themes from the data that were the basis for theories about service learning research (Dick, 2006; Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Upon completing interviews, I transcribed the data into field notes and coded the data to look for themes. Using grounded theory, a process by which theory is generated based on data; I was able to interpret "relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and application" from the data (Glasser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). Grounded theory is

different from hypothesis testing in which the data is used to prove an existing hypothesis; instead it is trying to find what theories account for the existing data. First, you code and develop your themes and from these themes theory is generated. This type of research examines what the research situation is and then attempts to find theories that may explain that situation (Dick, 2006).

The themes that emerged from the interviews were as follows: (1) Reading books that are relatable is the best, (2) Read-alouds are a helpful learning tool, (3) Technology is a great motivator, (4) pop culture is a powerful "hook," (5) autonomy and decision making is very important to teens in their own learning, and (6) general lack of self-understanding among teens. Through examining and coding the data, these themes became readily apparent, as they were present in almost every interview. These themes were used to develop a theory that Read 180 has motivating elements to help students become stronger readers and lacks other elements that if implemented would help Read 180 be a more successful program.

Chapter 4: Findings

There were six themes from the data that emerged. The first was Relatable books/Shared experiences which looked at how the students in Read 180 most enjoyed the books that were about teenagers like them, sometimes with similar circumstances. The second was the Power of reading aloud to teens which looked at how the classroom read-aloud became an integral part of each daily lesson. The third was Technology promotes active engagement which examined students' motivation and willingness to use technology in the Software rotation of Read 180. The fourth theme was Autonomy and decision-making, this theme examined how having many book choices and a need for more non-fiction books helped motivate students to read. The fifth theme was Using pop culture to arouse curiosity which looked at how Read 180 video clips and stories in the text are having a positive influence on increasing student motivation to read and classroom engagement. The sixth theme was General lack of self-understanding among struggling readers, this theme examined how the students didn't seem to understand their weaknesses and the need to remediate.

"They talk about like teens…It's not like other books": Relatable books/shared experiences.

Each of the four students interviewed stated that they like to read books about people like them, in similar situations, and similar life circumstances. Sasha spoke about two books she liked in particular based on the character's life circumstances.

> I'm a slow reader, but I do like *Money Hungry,* but it's a long book. I like it because it's like *Lush.* I mean *Money Hungry* is about the girl's life and she is like 14 so that's cool. I like books about people my age and funny books.

When I ask Sasha to tell more about *Lush*, she states *"Lush is like about this girl who is in ninth grade and she has to deal with the popular girls. That is just like I have to deal with girls here in eighth grade."* Sasha went on to describe another book series she liked, stating *"My favorite books are Bluford High books, because it's like, they talk about like teens. It's not like other books."* Clearly, having shared experiences with book characters in her age bracket was a huge factor in Sasha's book choice. Last of all, Sasha referenced a story out of the text book titled *Diamond Land*. This story is about African men and women in South Africa mining in the 1980s for diamonds under very dangerous conditions. Sasha is clearly able to relate to this story based on her ethnicity in relation to the main character's ethnicity:

> That story Diamond Land was jacked up! I can't believe that those black
>
> people had to work for those white people and die! I would have told them
>
> mmm-mm no way! I mean that isn't fair for blacks to work so hard so white
>
> people can just sit and eat bon-bons! Who do they think we is?

When asking Jimmy about his favorite type of books he responded *"I think Give a Boy a Gun is an interesting book. I don't know why. I like reading books about boys."* *Give a Boy a Gun* was a classroom read-aloud in which a school shooting occurs and the main characters are all boys.

Gina is another student in Read 180 who enjoys books she can relate too. *"Right now I'm reading Daniel's Story about the Holocaust. It seemed interesting. I would rate it an eight on a scale of one to ten. I like the real life stuff. He (Daniel) has lots of people in his family die. I can get it, my grandma died last year."* Gina is clearly defining a

shared experience between herself and the main character Daniel. Because of the death in Gina's life she feels she can relate to Daniel.

When asked what kinds of books he enjoyed the most, Pete echoed the other students' thoughts and comments that he too enjoyed books about topics he could relate to. He shared:

> So I'm reading this book called A Dog's Life. It's an adventure book. It's about this dog and it starts out when he is a puppy. It talks about what it's like to be a stray dog. It's pretty cool. I have a dog too and I think maybe he was a stray before we adopted him.

Pete is able to relate to the book *A Dog's Life* because the book contains a relatable experience to his life. Clearly the students want to read stories about teens like themselves. They really enjoyed the classroom read-alouds I picked this year. The read-alouds were hand-picked just for my students who I thought might be experiencing similar issues in their personal lives.

"Can't you just read to us for the whole period?!": The power of reading aloud to teens.

Jim Trelease, long time crusader for getting parents and teachers to read aloud to their students and children, and author of the Read-Aloud Handbook (2006), made the statement that it is impossible to get students excited about reading if you only shove a textbook in their face. Students want books that pique their interest, and students want to be read to. Reading to kids, including struggling teen readers, has been shown to boost reading comprehension, increase their vocabularies, and even can help them become better writers. Research has shown that students who are read to, read more themselves.

This increases the likelihood that they will one day become lifelong readers, reading

independently, maybe even for pleasure (Blessing, 2005). Trelease (2006) states that the

single most important activity for building strong and successful readers is reading aloud

to children. Zehr (2010) found that reading aloud adds interesting content and helps the

literature to come alive. Trelease (2006) found that there is a direct correlation between a

decline in students recreational reading and and a decline in the amount of time adults

read to them. By the time students reach middle school almost no one is reading to them.

However, some educators do read to their middle school students. Some educators read

to their students to model fluent reading and still other educators do it simply because the

students love it!

I didn't ask any of the students a direct question about the classroom read-alouds I

engage the students in the last 15 to 20 minutes of class each day. Each student simply

brought it up on their own during conversation, proving read-alouds to be a theme worthy

of noting.

Sasha was talking about the Read 180 rotation she liked the least, independent

reading. In independent reading, the students were expected to do just that- read

independently. Sasha shares:

> I wish we didn't have reading group. I don't like that part. I'm not
>
> interested in the books. It's the longest time, it takes forever to get through that
>
> 20 minutes. I wish we could have 40 minutes for small group and keep
>
> computers at 20 minutes and just get rid of the reading group. But it's weird
>
> because I like it when you read to us. We should have an hour of you reading to
>
> the class. I think it really helps when you read to us. If I don't know a word I

skip it if I don't know it. Then I don't even know what the book is saying. When you read the word then I'm like Oh that's what that word is! On papers I'm really good and on computer time I do a good job, but test-taking and reading alone is hard.

Sasha's description of skipping words she doesn't know indicates a lack of vocabulary and comprehension. If she can't sound out or read the word- how can she possibly know what it means? She explained that when I pronounce the word, it clicks and the story makes more sense to her, thus heightening her comprehension and enjoyment of the story. Sasha explains: "If I read a word and don't get it then I just move on. When you read it then I usually know what it means and I don't get confused with the story."

Jimmy indicated similar feelings regarding independent reading group and read alouds. He shared, "Independent reading is too long. It's my least favorite part. I do like it when we read together. It's good that you have us follow along in the book." All the students were expected to keep pace as best as they could with my reading. Their job was to read with their eyes and be on the same page I was on. In September their job was to read along with an index card to keep place. That was faded out and now they are allowed to follow with their eyes only if they wish.

Gina also liked the read-alouds and stated, "I like when you read. It helps me out with my reading. I like when I can follow along with what you say. You read faster than the kids do, and it's easier to follow your reading than other kids." I believe Gina was referring to oral fluency and how I read the text in a smooth and flowing way demonstrating how reading should sound like a conversation and not choppy snipets.

Everyday when Pete arrived to class he would say "Can't you just read to us for the whole period! That book is so good!" What a testament to the power of a really good read aloud!

"I actually like to learn in the Software Zone. It like keeps my attention": Technology promotes active engagement.

When I asked the students about their favorite Read 180 zone they all replied "the computer zone." This did not surprise me with the generation of digital natives we are teaching today. On a daily basis these students are using cell phones, multi-media, video games, im, the internet, chat rooms, Facebook, Twitter, and the list goes on and on. With the ever-increasing range of technological options, flashy in-your-face images, and a generation of students unwilling to "wait" for anything the computer seems like a very important tool in education. Lusk (2010) states that internet usage has increased over the past decade. Digital natives are readily immersing themselves in an online life. In the past ten years, teens' use of the internet has risen from just under 75% of teens in 2000 to over 93% of teens in 2009.

I asked Sasha about her favorite rotation and she commented, "well for sure the computers! Don't get rid of that one." When I asked her why she responded this way, she said, "it goes quick. I need things to go quick or I get bored. Ms. Weber says I have a lot of excuses, but I get distracted really easily." The swiftness of the computer seemed to fill Sasha's need for speed. Jimmy also responded enthusiastically about computers, he stated:

> I think the computers are kinda cool. I get excited to go on them. My favorite
>
> part is going on the spelling zone. It really helps me to become a better speller. I

really don't like spelling tests in like other classes, but on the computer it's fun.

You have to type pretty fast.

Jimmy is referring to the Spelling Zone in the Computer rotation. They have four

sections to get through before a topic is mastered: spelling, reading, word, and success.

Once these zones are mastered they are able to move on to a new story and topic.

Clearly, in a generation where images are consistently thrown at these students on

television, video games, the internet, ipods, ipads, and so on, a rapid paced technological

component is crucial in holding the students' attention and increasing their learning.

"The crime scene stuff was cool. People like died!": Using pop culture and current

events to arouse curiosity.

Pop culture in the media today plays a crucial role in the engagement of students

in reading. Pete reminises about a classroom read-aloud about a duo of teenage boys that

shot up their high school, similar to the Columbine shootings a few years back. Pete

states:

> I really liked the book Give a Boy a Gun. It was awesome. All these people got
>
> shot at. It was like a real keep-you-wanting-more book. No one really dies in the
>
> book, but that one dude committs suicide. I like all the action and guns in the
>
> book.

Jimmy had similar views on Give a Boy a Gun, he stated, "the book we read in class was

so cool. The kids were texting each other and sending instant messages all the time.

They use short words when they text. That makes it more real." Jimmy was referring to

the use of instant messaging and text messaging on the computer used throughout the

novel to illustrate the characters thoughts and feelings. Jimmy is able to relate, because of his use of text messaging and instant messaging.

Jimmy also mentioned the Natural Disasters unit in the Read 180 R book. He said, "I liked reading about the tsunami stuff. It's cool that we just read it and now there is like this tsunami in Japan." Jimmy is aware of the Japan tsunami and the media attention it is getting. Because our Natural Disaster unit and this real-life disaster happen to coincide that makes it more interesting for Jimmy to study. The unit became so much more realistic and Jimmy could connect the text to a real-life event.

One of our R book units is on Teens and Technology. The stories are all regarding the good and the bad sides of technology. Sasha brought up a cyberbullying incident that occurred last year. In homeroom last year, we showed a short video on Phoebe Prince, a young girl bullied in Massachusetts who committed suicide after suffering months of bullying from classmates. Much of this bullying was in the form of cyberbullying. Sasha is able to relate the real-life incident to the class readings in our R book, she states, "I like reading about cyberbullies. That's what happened to that girl, Phoebe. She was like my age. That could happen to anybody. People are so mean. I mean all this stuff totally happens on Facebook."

Two students mentioned the Crime Scene Investigation unit in the R book. Gina said, "The crime scene stuff was cool with the autopsies and the investigations at the murders, because people die and it's exciting. I like exciting stuff that you might see on a tv show." Jimmy was in agreement with Gina. Jimmy said, "The one about CSI was awesome. CSI is my favorite show on tv. I like to figure out the mystery, like who is the killer. It's cool to see what the cops do. I want to be a cop when I'm done with school."

Clearly the students were able to link the CSI crime scene unit in the text book to the television drama CSI. Immediately their curiosity was piqued when images of the television show were cast on the screen when I showed them the video to open the unit. Another unit in our R books was about the famous author Edgar Allen Poe. I found a video clip of The Raven re-done by Bart Simpson on YouTube. I showed this clip to my students during this unit. Pete remembered the video and brought it up. He said, "The Bart Simpson video about Halloween was so funny. They talked just like the poem in the book."

Engaging television, media, video games, and so forth is what arouses curiosity and might be the first step in getting our struggling readers to pick up a book! Most teachers have seen signs of engagement during a project, presentation, or lively class discussion. Then why is it so hard to see this type of engagement between student and book? Our challenge as teachers would be to intertwine the real-world media with a love for reading to get our students inspired!

"...Why can't we pick the books we want to read? We get stuck with boring ones":
Autonomy and decision making.

Another theme that emerged during the interviews is that the students want to pick their own books. Read 180 is a "canned program," meaning all the lessons, materials, and resources are all laid out to be executed precisely as the Read 180 program determines. This means the Read 180 library is not as extensive as students would like it to be. Through my student interviews this was proven to be true as well among my own students enrolled in Read 180.

Gina states, "I like independent reading the least. I don't like the book choices. They aren't as exciting as books I would pick at home. I like horror books. They don't have any zombie books here. I'm reading *Daniel's Story* about the Holocaust. I would give it an eight out of ten. Some people die, so that is cool. But zombie books would be the best." Upon further questioning about interest in other genres of books, Gina said, "Assassin books would be my next choice after zombie books. I really wish we had *The U.S. Army Zombie Survival Guide*. Sometimes I go to Border's on the weekends and read it."

I asked Pete about his favorite genre of books. Pete said, "My favorite is adventure and mystery. I like fiction and non-fiction, but there isn't enough non-fiction stuff on the shelves."

Jimmy agreed that there wasn't enough of a non-fiction selection in the Read 180 room and also that he would like more choices overall. I also asked him what book he is currently reading. He said, "I'm reading about Jewish people, because it explains what they did way back when. I like to know about how people used to live. We don't have very many choices in Read 180 for stuff like that. I also like tornados and storms. We have one tornado book (in Read 180) that I read." Clearly Jimmy is indicating a desire for more non-fiction choices.

Last of all, Sasha comments on book choices and is in agreement with the other students. She states, "I like the Bluford series, but the Quick Writes are so hard. I wish we didn't have to do the Quick Writes and had more series books like Bluford series." The Bluford series books are new to Read 180 this year. They were added by the teachers in our school who did some curriculum writing this past summer and created the

Quick Writes. Sasha is indicating that she would like more fiction books, like Bluford, but without the difficult Quick Writes that accompany them.

As evidenced by these interviews and extensive research on middle school students, choice is a powerful tool that students crave. Resistent, reluctant, or struggling readers are more likely to have choices imposed upon them. They are then likely to reject the material that has been pushed on them. Thus reading becomes even less desirable (Anderson, 2007 as cited in Barden, 2010).

"...Gum would help me read better...": Lack of self-understanding among struggling readers.

Countless research papers have been written on struggling readers. We know that struggling readers likely struggle with making inferences, integrating information into their own lives, critically analyzing and evaluating information, decoding text, comprehending text, finding main idea, and reading fluently, just to name a few. A number of reasons indicate why struggling readers can not comprehend text they are expected to read in class (Hall, 2007). If adults and educators are able to determine why students struggle with reading, then shouldn't students themselves be educated enough to be able to make that determination?

I asked Jimmy the question, "What would help you become a better reader?" He responded by saying, "I don't know." Upon further probing he responded, "When you read to us that helps. It's good that you have us follow along in our own books." This comment from Jimmy was not very in-depth. I wanted him to take a good look at himself, so I did some further investigation, I said, "So it helps your reading when I have you follow along? In what way does that help you?" Jimmy looked at me quizzically

and responded with a weak shrug. Gina was in agreement with Jimmy about the read-alouds, "When you read to us it helps me out." Again, I asked for more clarification. I got more of the same response back. Gina responded by saying, "I don't know. It helps me to become a better reader."

Not wanting to lead either Jimmy or Gina to any answer, I let it go. Clearly these students could agree that the read-alouds were helping to strengthen their reading, but they weren't able to articulate how or why they were helping.

I asked Pete "What would help you become a better reader?" Pete responded by saying, "If I had candy to suck on. Or gum. Gum would help me read better and concentrate more." I asked him if there was anything else he would like to add. After a moment of thought he said, "I wish we had bookmarks. Sometimes I can't remember where I left off from the day before." Nothing in Pete's statements indicated he was thinking intensely about how he could make himself a better reader internally. Only Sasha had an idea of why she was struggling and what could help her become a better reader. When I asked her the question "What would help you become a better reader?" She responded:

> We should have an hour of you reading to the class. I think it really helps
>
> when you read to us. If I don't know a word I skip it, and then I don't know what
>
> the book is saying. On papers and on the computer I'm really good and I do a
>
> good job, but not on testing. Ms. Weber says I have a lot of excuses. When we
>
> test in Read 180 it's distracting with kids talking on the couch. I want to pay
>
> attention to my friends more than the test.

Sasha identified several real problems with her reading abilities. First, she states that she skips words she doesn't know. This is an issue with a lack of vocabulary and fluency. Sasha is able to identify her weakness and also how to fix it; by having the teacher read to her. She is also able to identify that tests are difficult for her. Since she knows she is a poor test taker and is easily distracted by friends and noise, she knows she needs silence to test. This kind of insight into her abilities as a reader is what educators would like to see develop and blossom within students.

Summary

Looking at the six emerging themes as a whole group shows that students in Read 180 most enjoy the books that are about teenagers like them, reading aloud to them is important, technology promotes active engagement and motivation, the students want more book choices and decision making power, students like learning about popular topics in the media and helps to connect academia to real life, and last of all the students seem to be lacking in self-understanding of their own reading weaknesses. All of these themes are important for future programming for these students, whether it be a Read 180 program or not.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The primary focus of this study was to understand middle school struggling readers' perceptions of the Read 180 program. Due to the repetitive nature of this program and that often students repeat Read 180 for two or more years, one would tend to believe that students would become burnt out and begin to dislike the program. One might also feel that students who are a part of Read 180 feel left out or different than the students in regular Language Arts classes, thus adversely affecting their self-esteem.

However, evidence from the students in this study suggests that this is not the case. When asked about their thoughts on Read 180 there was an overall positive consensus that Read 180 is indeed a helpful and enjoyable class. Students were able to pick out problems with the class, but still have much more positive than negative comments regarding class content. Not one student indicated that they felt any discomfort being enrolled in Read 180. No one indicated feelings of embarrassment or shame when entering the classroom known as the "Read 180 room." It is important to mention that since this particular study involved such a small sample of students, other students, in a different setting may have had different responses to the questions asked, and could have shown evidence of negative connotations toward Read 180.

The first theme I discovered in the interviews is that my students want to read books about people like them. They enjoy reading books about teens their age and in similar life circumstances. Simply put, they want to read books they can relate to. Looking at the specific population I teach can lead me in the appropriate direction for book choices. I know that most of my students come from low-income homes and are students of color. Based on this information I can guess that they might not be as

44

interested in the *Twilight* series about Caucasian teenagers in small town suburbia as they would be interested in the *Bluford* series, a series of books about African-American teenagers dealing with tough real-life situations. The biggest finding from this information for educators is simply to know the population of students that they are teaching before they decide on a classroom library. This could make or break students' interest and connection with independent reading.

This study also found that a good read-aloud can be extremely engaging and can increase students' interest in reading. It can be concluded from this study that the read-aloud not only gets the students interested in reading, but it also helps to increase their comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. During independent reading when the students didn't know a vocabulary word they would skip it in the reading, further decreasing their comprehension. When I read aloud to the students they were able to make the connection between the meaning of the word (when I would stop to explain it) and what the word looks like. Also, the students were able to hear what a fluent reader sounds like. In conclusion, I found it is important to make sure to stop and clarify vocabulary as I am reading. Often students won't speak up to ask what a word means. If I clearly define the vocabulary word in context this can increase students understanding of the text and hopefully they will generalize the word when they see it again in other text.

This study found that technology promotes active engagement thus increasing learning. Not surprisingly, my students all stated that they love the software zone component of Read 180. Most of the students stated that they look forward to this rotation. It means they get to zone out a little and not have human contact for 20 minutes. This is a very important finding because it tells me two things. For one, technology can

help students learn. Secondly, technology should be used in moderation. I am very hesitant to use too much technology in my classroom. I don't want my students to become too dependent on it to the point were human interaction becomes difficult. Children of this generation spend enough time on computers during their free time after school and on the weekends. We need to be very careful to create a generation of students that can work with and learn from technology and also learn from and work with human beings.

Another finding from this study was that students are highly interested in pop culture and current events. Sometimes it can be difficult to understand a concept until it is actually happening in real life or happening to you. For example, when we got to the tsunami unit it happened to coincide with the tsunami that was occurring in Japan. In my lessons I was able to include the current statistics, photographs, and videos of the events in Japan. This seemed to increase the students understanding and interest in the topic. Also, with the explosion of Facebook and Twitter the students really seemed to connect with the Teens and Technology unit. From this I have learned that I will try to include as much relevant media coverage as I can in my lessons. This might be a key way to get students to develop a love for reading.

In support of the research from the Literature Review, this study also found that students want to have more decision-making power when choosing their own novels. I have never picked out one book and told my students that this is the book they would have to read independently. However, I am guilty of picking out a dozen books and asking the students to take their pick from that grouping. After hearing groans of frustration I began to realize that maybe a dozen books isn't really much of a choice after

all. Also, after teaching Read 180 and having over 100 books for the students to choose from; it still isn't enough! The students don't want to be so marginalized. They want the autonomy to pick whatever book they desire.

Of utmost concern, I found that many of my students had little to no understanding of why they can't read well or how they could improve their reading. During the interviews I posed the question "What would help you become a better reader?" I received various responses to this question. None of these responses were what I was expecting. I was expecting answers such as, "more help with spelling in the software zone" or "give us more time to work on the vocabulary words" or maybe "I need to slow down when I'm reading" or "I need to chunk my words when I read." I was expecting responses that reflected upon their own weaknesses in reading. I did not get those responses. Most of the responses were directed at things the teacher could do to make them better readers. Only one student said something that she personally could do to make herself a better reader. Sasha identified several reasons why reading was hard and ways to make it easier. This particular finding is alarming, because it indicates a glaring gap in the school system. It reflects not only on me, but also on teachers these students have had over the past years. How could these students not be aware of their weaknesses? Self-esteem is crucial, especially in middle school, but it seems naïve to have no comprehension of your own weak areas. It is imperative that as an educator I stress the importance of knowledge of oneself to my students.

Recommendations

A recommendation for the Read 180 library would be to either expand it or to allow the students to pick their own books from the school media center or another public

47

library. Of course this could create some problems for the Read 180 teacher. The teacher would have to make sure that the book is appropriate for their Lexile level and school-appropriate as well. In short, this would make the job of the Read 180 educator much more difficult. It would have to be the decision of the teacher and the administrators to decide if it is worth the risk and work involved in allowing the students more freedom of choice.

A second recommendation is to know your audience and pick a good read-aloud based on this information. Also, even though it can be time-consuming, clarifying vocabulary as you read is crucial in students understanding. Taking time to stop and describe difficult words can only heighten students' enjoyment and understanding of the read-aloud.

Another recommendation is that technology should be used sparingly. Sticking students in front of a computerized program would be an easy trap for educators to fall into. Although technology is an engaging learning tool, it should only be used for the allocated amount of time for the Read 180 program.

My recommendations after this study are for educators to help students to recognize their individual needs. It would be highly beneficial for the Read 180 teacher to have individual meetings with each student after gaining some data from the software program, testing, and in-class work. After looking at the student's work and determining their areas of weakness then the students can track and chart their progress in their particular area of weakness. This acknowledgement can help to bridge the gap from failure to success.

When looking at the best possible education for these students we can use these themes to re-work some facets of Read 180. The most vital theme is students' lack of self-understanding. As an educator this is an eye-opening revelation. I now see a gap in my teaching, and a need for educating my students on their weaknesses so they can become intregral in their own learning experience.

It is also important for the educator(s) to set up a learning environment that is accommodating and supportive of all learners no matter what their learning needs may be. All types of students need to be taught that everyone learns in a different way. It is critical to be accepting of those differences. If students don't see the differences in a positive light then they may treat them with a poor attitude. Middle school students are exceptionally impressionable and need correct social modeling and instruction immediately.

<div align="center">Questions for Further Study and Variables</div>

One problem with this study is that some of the data could be different based on previous student experiences. For example, it is very important that Read 180 be set up and implemented according to the model. Students' feelings may be different if they were involved in Read 180 in other schools or districts where the program was not implemented with integrity. Having a positive Read 180 experience with a qualified teacher in a program run according to guidelines might change a students' perspective on Read 180. An interesting future study might be to track the students' progress in high school language arts classes or reading classes. I would be interested to see if their perspectives on Read 180 change. It might also be interesting to compare students' perspectives on Read 180 with students' perspectives on other reading intervention

<div align="center">49</div>

programs. Also, it is important to remember that this study only included the perspectives of four students in one Read 180 class in one building. The results of this study may be completely different if conducted somewhere else with different students.

During this research endeavor many other questions came up about future research that could be conducted. If these students had different Read 180 teachers would their experience still have been so positive? Would they enjoy the class? How can Read 180 educators make Read 180 seem like a positive experience and not a punishment? What things can Read 180 teachers do to make sure that they are covering similar content as Language Arts classes, so there are no gaps in students' knowledge. After all, it is imperative that they are fully prepared for high school and the future. What kind of training can be done to ensure that Read 180 teachers and all teachers alike are individualizing their instruction so that students understand and are aware of their knowledge gaps? Would students' experiences vary based on differences in ethnicity and gender?

With the new Read 180 Next Generation package coming out in time for the 2011/2012 school year it would be interesting to implement further study on this new program. Are any of the previous kinks worked out? Have new books about teens been added? Is pop culture still included in the text book? Will they still include the Software zone? Most importantly will this "new and improved" program be just as effective as the old one?

Last of all, if other studies were done on other popular reading interventions what would be the result? Would more students be satisfied? Would other programs be less expensive? Would there be more variety for students?

This study leaves many critical questions needing further examination. Again, this was a small sample of students and the opinions of these students may not match the opinions of other Read 180 students, but there was consistency across these four students. Students' opinions are crucial to examine when deciding on implementation of a reading intervention program, however a larger sample size across districts would give a better picture of Read 180 as a whole. In conclusion, students in this study had an overall positive response to Read 180. They found good and bad aspects of the class, but certainly more good was discussed. For the four students involved in my research, Read 180 is an engaging, motivating, and critical component to their reading success.

Chapter 6: Self-Reflection

As a teacher who has taught Read 180 and other reading intervention programs my preference would be Read 180, simply because, it works and it keeps the students engaged. My first year of Read 180 I wondered how I would possibly keep students engaged for a nearly two hour block. I quickly realized that the fast pace of the class and the small group rotations make two hours seem like one hour. The software and video introductions, the stories, and the independent reading books are entertaining and engaging. The highly structured lessons are exactly what a struggling reader needs to become a proficient reader. I was sold on Read 180, however I did not know if my students were.

After interviewing my eighth grade Read 180 students I have found that they most enjoy the books that are about teenagers like them, they love the classroom read-alouds I've chosen, the computer rotation promotes active engagement and motivation, and the students like learning about popular topics in the R books that relate to real-life current events. All of these themes point to engaged and motivated students. Read 180, in my classroom, is a success in many ways as proven through my interviews.

Through this process I have learned about my students. I have learned that it is easier for them to disregard their disabilities and focus more on the teacher and how the teacher can help them. I have learned that I need to be extremely candid with my students when discussing their weak points in reading. This is the only way they can work on their weaknesses and become stronger, more proficient readers. They need to own their disability and turn their struggles into success through self-acceptance of their

weaknesses. Only once they accept their weaknesses can I then teach them how to overcome them.

Another important self discovery from this study is that it is so crucial to look at each individual student and their learning needs in order to find the educational programming that is right for them. Each student is different and has their own unique needs. Some of my students love non-fiction while others want science fiction or poetry. Really the best I can do is provide them with a wide array of choices, so eventually they can become self-sufficient enough to make their own reading choices.

References

Alvermann, D.E., Hagood, M.C., Heron-Hruby, A., Hughes, P., Williams, K.B., Yoon, J. (2007). Telling themselves who they are: what one out-of-school time study revealed about underachieving readers. *Reading Psychology, 28 (1),* 31-50.

Anderman, L. H. (1999). Classroom goal orientation, school belonging and social goals as predictors of students' positive and negative affect following the transition to middle school. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 32,* 89-103.

Atkinson, T.S., Wilhite, K.L., Frey, L.M., Williams, S.C. (2002). Reading instruction for the struggling reader: Implications for teachers of students with learning disabilities or emotional/behavioral disorders. *Preventing School Failure, 46 (4),* 158-162.

Barden, O. (2010). From "Acting Reading" to reading for acting: A case study of the transformational power of reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53(4),* 293-302.

Blessing, C. (2005). Reading to kids who are old enough to shave. *School Library Journal, 51(4),* 1-2.

Cantrell, S.C., Almasi, J.F., Carter, J.C., Rintamaa, M., Madden, A. (2010). The impact of a strategy-based intervention on the comprehension and strategy use of struggling adolescent readers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102(2),* 257-280.

Coleman, M. & Vaughn, S. (2000). Reading interventions for students with emotional/behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 25 (2),* 93-104.

Demko, M. (2010). Teachers become zombies: The ugly side of scripted reading curriculum. *Voices from the Middle, 17(3),* 62-64.

Dick, Bob (2005). "Grounded theory: A Thumbnail Sketch." 1 March 2011 http://www.scu.edu/au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html.

Erickson, E. (2008). A reading program to narrow the achievement gap. *Reading Improvement, 45(4),* 170-180.

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research. New York: Aldine Publishing Company.

Grigg, W. S., Daane, M. C., Jin, Y., & Campbell, J.R. (2003). *The nation's report card: Reading 2002* (NCES Publication No. 2003-521). Washington, DC: U.S. department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved October 5, 2010, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2003521

Guthrie, J.T. & Davis, M.H. (2003). Motivating struggling readers in middle school through an engagement model of classroom practice. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 19,* 59-85.

Hall, L.A. (2010). The negative consequences of becoming a good reader: identity theory as a lens for understanding struggling readers, teachers, and reading instruction. *Teachers College Record, 112(7),* 1792-1829.

Hall, L.A. (2007). Understanding the silence: Struggling readers discuss decisions about reading expository text. *The Journal of Educational Research, 100 (3),* 132-141.

Lusk, Brooke (2010). Digital natives and social media behaviors: An Overview. *Prevention Research, 17(5),* 3-6.

Midgley, C., & Urban, T. (1995). Predictors of middle school students' use of self-handicapping strategies. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 15,* 389-411.

Mills, G.E. (2007) *Action Research: A guide for the teacher researcher.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merril/Prentice Hall.

Moje, E. B., Young, J. P., Readence, J. E., & Moore, D. W. (2000). Reinventing adolescent literacy for new times: Perennial and millennial issues. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 43,* 400-410.

Oldfather, P. (2002). Students' experiences when not initially motivated for literacy learning. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 18 (3),* 231-256.

Papalewis, R. (2004). Struggling middle school readers: Successful, accelerating intervention. *Reading Improvement, 41(1),* 24-37.

Rosenshine, B. & Meister, C. (1992). The use of scaffolds for teaching higher-level cognitive strategies. *Educational Leadership, 49(7),* 26-33.

Ruddell, M. & Shearer, B. A. (2002). Extraordinary, tremendous, exhilarating, magnificent: Middle school students at-risk students become avid word learners with the vocabulary self-collection strategy (VSS). *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 45,* 352-363.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25,* 54-67.

Scholastic Inc. (2011). *Scholastic Read 180 proven reading intervention software program for grades 3-12.* Retrieved May 3, 2011, from http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/read180/

Shippen, M.E., Houchins, D.E., Stenenton, C., & Sartor, D. (2005). A comparison of two

direct instuction reading programs for urban middle school students. *Remedial and Special Education, 26(3),* 175-182.

Slavin, R.E., Cheung, A., Groff, C., & Lake, C. (2008). Effective reading programs for middle and high schools: A best evidence synthesis. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43(3),* 290-322.

Taylor, S.J, & Bogdan, R. (1984). Introduction to qualitative research methods: A search for meaning. NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Torgesen, J.K. (2000). Individual differences in response to early interventions in reading: The lingering problem of treatment resisters. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 15,* 55-64.

Trelease, J. (2006). The Read-Aloud Handbook: Sixth Edition. New York: Penguin Publisher.

Triplett, C.F. (2004). Looking for a struggle: Exploring the emotions of a middle school reader. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 48(3),* 214-222.

U.S. Department of Education (2009). *National Assessment of Educational Progress.* Retrieved June 19, 2011, from http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard

Wanzek, J., Wexler J., Vaughn S., & Ciullo, S. (2010). Reading interventions for Struggling readers in the upper elementary grades: a synthesis of 20 years of research. *Reading & Writing, 23(8),* 889-912.

WETA (2010). *LD OnLine.* Retrieved March 25, 2011 from http://www.ldonline.org/index.php

Zehr (2010). Reading aloud to teens gains favor among teachers. *Education Digest, 76 (1),* 4-7.

Appendix A

Program Ratings
Listed below are currently available programs and their descriptions, grouped by strength of effectiveness. The type for each program corresponds to the categories below.

Curr- Reading curricula (not listed, no effectiveness or not enough studies)
MMM- Mixed Methods Models
CAI- Computer Assisted Instruction
IP- Instructional Process Programs

It is important to note that out of 121 programs, these 11 programs were the only programs to show any sort of effectiveness.

Strong Evidence of Effectiveness= ++++
Moderate= +++
Limited= ++
Insufficient/no effective= +
None

Evidence of Effectiveness

Rating	Program	Type	Description
+++	Jostens	CAI	Provides an extensive set of assessments which place students in an individualized instructional sequence. Students then work individually on exercises designed to fill in gaps in their skills.
+++	The Reading Edge	IP	Uses a cooperative learning structure that groups students for reading instruction according to their reading level across grades and classes.
+++	Read 180	MMM	An intervention program that addresses individual needs of students through differentiated instruction, adaptive and instructional software, high interest literature, and direct instruction in reading, writing, and vocabulary skills.
+++	Student Team Reading	IP, Cooperative Learning	A cooperative learning program in which students work in four or five member teams to help one another build reading skills.
++	Accelerated Reader	CAI	A supplemental program that assesses students' reading levels using a computer, which then prints out suggestions for reading materials at students' level.

++	Benchmark Detectives	IP, Strategy	A form of strategy instruction that teaches students to use known words to decode unknown words, use context as a check for making sense, chunk words into meaningful units, and learn to be flexible in applying known word parts.
++	PALS	IP, Cooperative Learning	A cooperative learning program in which students work in pairs, taking turns reading aloud to one another and engaging in summarization and prediction activities.
++	RISE	Curr + IP	An intervention guided by the philosophy that teachers, given time, resources, and strong professional development support, can create effective curriculum that is engaging and provides remediation for struggling adolescent readers.
++	Strategy Intervention Model	IP, Strategy	A method in which low achieving secondary students are taught metacognitive reading strategies, especially paraphrasing, to help them comprehend text.
++	Talent Development Middle School	IP	A program which focuses on classic books, more high level questions, and additional background information for students.
++	Voyager Passport	MMM	A program with whole-group instruction, flexible small group activities, and partner practice that engages students with DVDs, online learning activities, and other instructional strategies focused on comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and writing.