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Using comprehensive literacy instructional modules for literacy instruction with students with disabilities

Abstract

This research study examined the use of comprehensive literacy instruction within a self-contained ID-mild Special Education classroom. Comprehensive literacy consists of daily instruction in word study, comprehension, and writing, with an additional period of time during each day for self-selected reading. Comprehensive literacy instruction was examined using self-study methodology on teaching practice through the analysis of lesson reflections, class schedules, and an autobiography of professional teaching experience.

Three case studies of student performance across a semester of instruction were analyzed using data on literacy tasks, literacy assessment, and classroom observations. Results support the promotion of effective comprehensive literacy instruction for students with learning disabilities. Student performance increased in word identification, in reading stamina, and in engagement in word study and writing. Two cases showed an increase in comprehension (increased performance levels), in writing complexity, and in language use. Self-study of practice revealed the importance of using a literacy program that provides guidance in developing student centered instruction, and the complexity of negotiating the teacher role in providing effective student focused planning, implementation, and assessment.

**Using Comprehensive Literacy Instructional Modules for
Literacy Instruction with Students with Disabilities**

A Graduate Paper

Submitted to the

Division of Literacy Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

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Abstract

This research study examined the use of comprehensive literacy instruction within a self-contained ID mild Special Education classroom. Comprehensive literacy consists of daily instruction in word study, comprehension, and writing, with an additional period of time during each day for self-selected reading. Comprehensive literacy instruction was examined using self-study methodology on teaching practice through the analysis of lesson reflections, class schedules, and an autobiography of professional teaching experience. Three case studies of student performance across a semester of instruction were analyzed using data on literacy tasks, literacy assessment, and classroom observations. Results support the promotion of effective comprehensive literacy instruction for students with learning disabilities. Student performance increased in word identification, in reading stamina, and in engagement in word study and writing. Two cases showed an increase in comprehension (increased performance levels), in writing complexity, and in language use. Self-study of practice revealed the importance of using a literacy program that provides guidance in developing student centered instruction, and the complexity of negotiating the teacher role in providing effective student focused planning, implementation, and assessment.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Comprehensive literacy is a framework that can be implemented for teaching literacy within a classroom. A comprehensive literacy program gives teachers opportunities to teach and focus on each foundation of literacy throughout the day. A comprehensive literacy program can be used in whole group, small groups, and individualized instruction with instructional time balanced across the areas of comprehension, word study, writing, and self-selected reading (Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni, 2011). I learned about comprehensive literacy when I was given information about the Iowa Literacy Comprehensive Modules developed by the Iowa Department of Education. After receiving the information and reading the details of comprehensive literacy, I became interested in the framework and the modules. I wanted to learn more about how to use to comprehensive literacy with a classroom of students with special needs.

The Iowa Online Professional Development website (2014) stated that during a five year collaboration between the University of Northern Iowa, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and interdisciplinary educator teams from across Iowa, the Iowa Department of Education had funded the development of online professional development materials for educators of students' with disabilities. Nine Comprehensive Literacy Modules were created. The Modules include five foundational modules and four instructional modules. The foundational modules are the Overview of Comprehensive Literacy, Getting Started, Creating a Collaborative Professional Development, Assessment, and Communication while the four instructional modules

include Comprehension, Word Study, Writing, and Self-Selected Reading. Videos, interviews, and lesson plans were included within the modules to assist teachers in implementing the framework. Many sample lessons were given in different settings involving grade levels from kindergarten to high school.

I decided to focus on using instructional modules for Comprehension, Word Study, Writing, and Self-Selected Reading for my self-contained classroom of Special Education students. I used these modules, the lesson examples, and my school district's standards to build a comprehensive literacy program in my Intellectual Disabled Mild K-2 Special Education classroom. The videos and sample lessons I viewed were implemented in elementary settings. The Comprehension module emphasized deepening a reader's understanding of a text's meaning. According to the module, Word Study instruction helps move students from early literacy skills to skills such as decoding texts. The Writing module gave direction on connecting writing with reading. Finally, Self-Selected Reading allows students to enjoy reading while learning to independently read. The Self-Selected Reading modules gave ways to get students motivated to read. I wanted to apply this comprehensive structure in my class as I needed a framework in which students received maximum literacy instruction in all areas. Instruction in all four areas was given daily in order for these children with special needs to grow into readers.

While using these modules in a comprehensive framework, a self-study in which I examined my own teaching instruction was conducted. Teaching practices were analyzed to look at the effectiveness of using a comprehensive literacy framework and the modules from the Iowa Department of Education's Iowa Literacy Project. I did not

use a comprehensive literacy framework in the previous 2014-2015 school year in my Intellectual Disabled Mild K-2 classroom. Each aspect of literacy was not focused on every day. I felt there were many areas in which students could have made more progress, and writing was one of these areas. There would be some days students would not even have a chance to write. My previous instruction design needed improvement. After studying comprehensive literacy, I predicted using a comprehensive literacy program with the Comprehensive Modules would assist my teaching and student learning. Through these four modules, students were given the opportunity to work on comprehension, word study, and writing each day. Students were also provided with a time to read what they would like through Self-Selected Reading. To determine if these modules affected the students, student reactions to instruction were documented as part of my daily instruction observations. The intent of this study is to examine the impact a comprehensive literacy approach has on my teaching and the affect this teaching appears to have on my students as they engaged in regular classroom instruction. To this end, the research questions driving this research include: How do the comprehensive literacy modules affect my own teaching practices? and, how does the comprehensive literacy instruction implemented in a self-contained Intellectual Disabled Mild classroom impact my students' learning?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

It was proposed by Teale and Sulzby (1989) in their model of emergent literacy development that listening, speaking, reading, and writing develop concurrently rather than in a previously argued sequential fashion. Teale and Yokota (2000) further the argument in their discussion of literacy development that reading, writing, and oral language begins at an early age through engaging, “real-life activities” (p. 5). Strickland (1990) also discussed how “learning to read and writing starts early in life”, is “ongoing”, and “involves interactions “with others (p. 19-20). Young children become “skilled at processing written language” by becoming familiar with its “syntactic patterns, vocabulary, and talking about the information from a text through read aloud experiences” (Teale & Yokota, p. 18). In order to build a young child’s reading process through an “early literacy program, components such as word knowledge, decoding strategies and fluency, comprehension, and writing are necessary” (Teale & Yokota, p. 23).

The Reading Process

The reading process seems to be a complex system of decoding letters and words in order to interpret meaning (Burkins & Croft, 2010). One model of the reading process is the Interactive Activation Model of Reading. McClelland and Rumelhart (1981) developed the Interactive Activation Model of Reading which describes the role of context within the reading process. In this interactive model, readers use their

background knowledge of word structure, letter-sound patterns, and sentence structure to develop an “assumption of what will be read through visual input” (p. 377). The model discusses how the perception of letters is applied in different contexts. The knowledge of the interaction between letters, words, phrases, and sentences plays a role in the perception of letters in other contexts (McClelland and Rumelhart, 1981). The “perceptual processing” is a “system” of levels in each “level forms a representation of visual input” (p.377). For each visual word there is a visual feature level, a letter level, and a word level (Figure 1). Each level communicates with each other, and communication interacts through these neighboring levels through an “activation mechanism.”

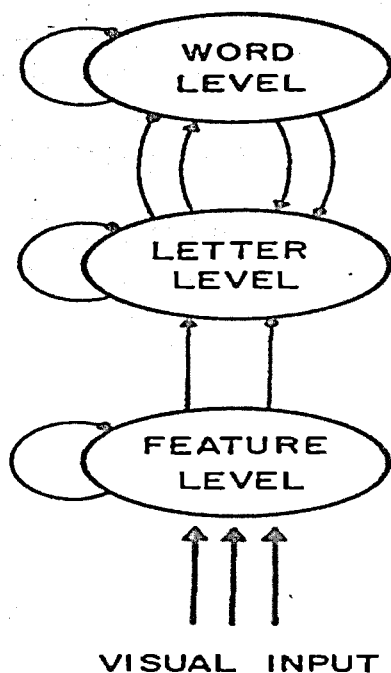


Figure 1. Processing system where each known unit is a node. Nodes are organized into levels, which consist of word level and letter level. (McClelland and Rumelhart 1981, p. 379).

“Communication consists of both excitatory and inhibitory messages. Excitatory messages increase activation level while inhibitory messages decrease activation” (p.378). In other words, excitatory messages stimulate a response whereas inhibitory messages withholds a response. A diagram of excitatory messages and inhibitory messages can be seen in Figure 2. The arrows demonstrate excitatory messages moving through each level and the dots show the inhibitory messages. The arrows and dots represent message connections through visual and auditory word levels. Each letter known is considered a “node” and there are “word levels and letter levels” (p.378). Each node has a connection with other nodes through the “excitatory and inhibitory interactions.” Connections could be excitatory or inhibitory depending whether the letter is part of a word and in an appropriate letter position (p.379). Connections could be stimulated or suppressed. The connections between nodes and excitatory neighbors and inhibitory neighbors can be seen in Figure 3. These different interactions between the sets of levels play a part in reading and comprehension (McClelland & Rumelhart, 1981).

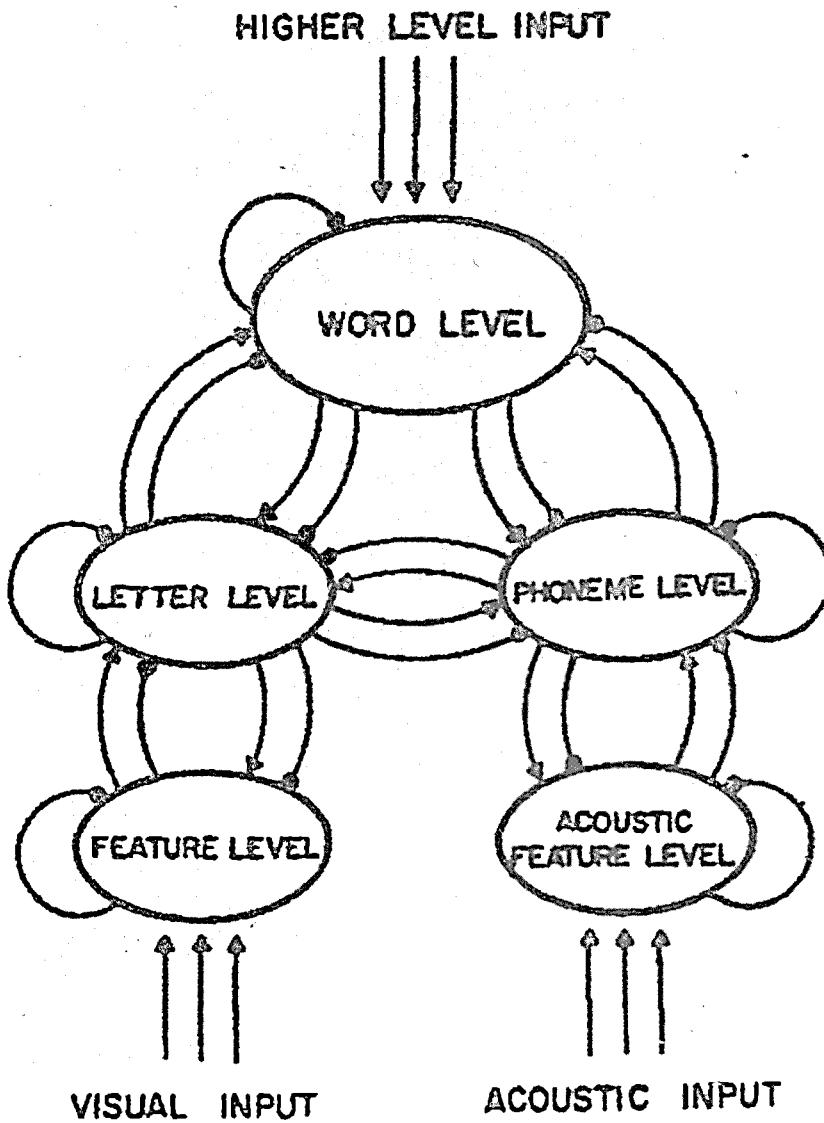


Figure 2. Some processing levels between visual and auditory perceptions as well as the interconnections (McClelland and Rumelhart 1981, p. 378)

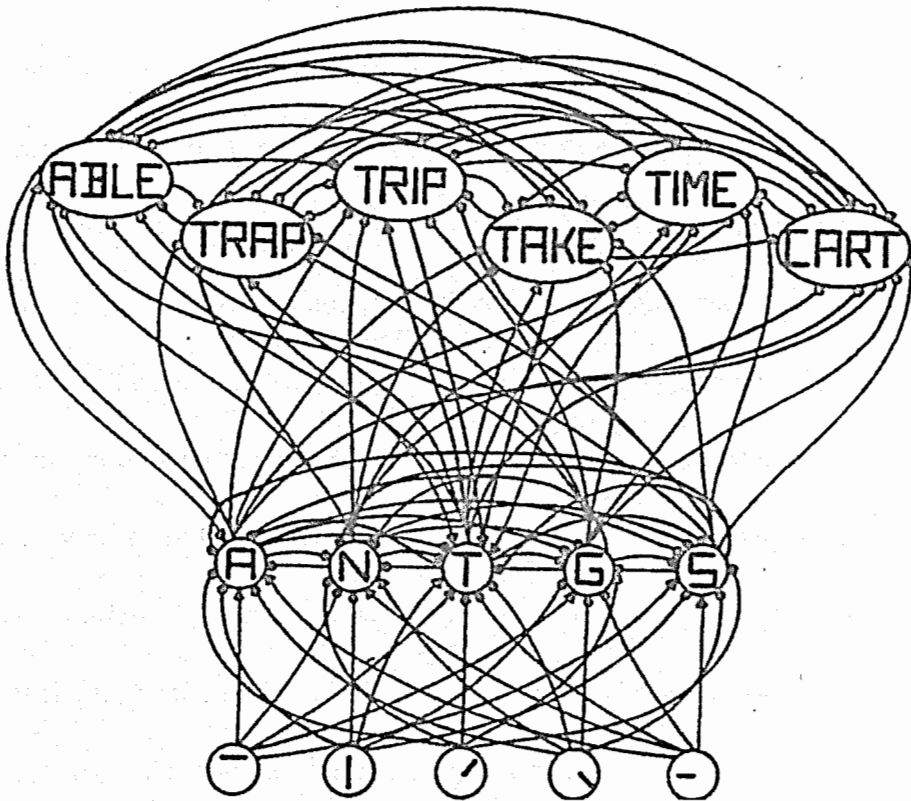


Figure 3. An example of the node for the letter “T” and the interactions/connections. Arrows represent excitatory connections and dots represent inhibitory connections. (McClelland and Rumelhart 1981, p. 380).

A great deal goes into the process of reading. The National Reading Panel (NRP)(2000) describes the major components of the reading process as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. A reader’s effective use of these components help them to make sense of a text (NRP, 2000). Readers use the reading process to “access and integrate information from multiple cues to gain understanding of a text” (Burkins & Groft, 2010, p. 2). To understand how reading works, Clay (1979, 1991) states there are three types of cues used as sources of information. These three sources of information are meaning, visual, and structure (as

cited in Burkins & Croft, 2010, p.3). Meaning refers to the context of what is being read. Meaning can also include the pictures of a text. Visual information is the print of what is being read while structure describes the language of a text. Each source of information supports each other during the reading process. Readers access visual information by reading the “print”, understanding the “language “of what the print is representing, and making meaning from the text (Burkins & Croft, 2010, p.3). Being able to read is to be “balanced” and being “balanced” describes how a reader is proficiently and equally decoding words in a text as well as accessing the information being read and attaining meaning (Burkins & Croft, 2010, p. 4). When reading independently, the reader is using the key elements of phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension effectively. Writing is important as well in the development of literacy.

Phonics and Vocabulary

The National Reading Panel (2000) stated that phonemic awareness is a “critical foundation” to reading (p. 2-7). The panel described phonemic awareness as the manipulation of phonemes (sounds in language). This includes rhyming, segmenting phonemes, and blending sounds to create words (NRP, 2000). Juel (1988) found that children who ended up as what she defined as “poor readers” started first grade with “little phonemic awareness” (p. 136). Developing phonemic awareness skills such as phoneme segmentation with letters can help decoding and spelling skills (NRP, 2000). Decoding is a part of reading and writing. While learning to decode students learn letters, letter sounds, letter and sound patterns, and word meanings. Readers use patterns in familiar words to assist in decoding unfamiliar words (Cunningham, 2003).

Discovering letter and sound patterns also allows students to learn to read bigger multisyllabic words. Multisyllabic words refer to words with more than one syllable and contain patterns beyond the initial onset and rime.

Cunningham (2003) suggests that knowing morpheme patterns can help increase vocabulary. Her research found that students are able to read and make meaning of unfamiliar words by using the context as well as “morphological clues” (p. 70). These clues can include root words, suffixes, and prefixes. Cunningham contends that decoding and vocabulary are involved in overall reading by readers using these skills to develop word meaning. Phonics and vocabulary development can be addressed during word study instruction within the classroom.

Word study instruction. Juel (1988) argues that decoding issues could impede readers from improving their reading skills. Many readers can be focused on figuring out the words, and they are unable to develop meaning. Through a comprehensive literacy program, students are able work with words daily in order to develop decoding skills while at the same time having opportunities to focus on reading for meaning as well.

Students also are able to learn skills such as sight word memorization. Sight word knowledge is essential, as are decoding skills, but reading words such as sight words and decoding letter and sound patterns need to be applied while reading texts. Word study includes the integration of phonics skills instruction along with the instruction of “phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and comprehension” (Donat, 2006, p. 309).

Using word walls is one activity in which readers can be involved in during word study. A word wall is an assortment of high frequency words or vocabulary words that are organized into groups. The word wall is displayed in a visual place in the room where all students have access to the words. Jasmine and Schiesel (2009) suggest that “word walls and word wall activities might be one strategy to increase reading fluency” (p. 311). Through word study instruction readers learn letters and sounds, letter and sounds patterns such as syllables and onset-rime, and word meaning (Cunningham, 2003). To practice patterns in words, Cunningham (2003) suggests students be involved in activities such as “singing rhymes” and “Making Words” (p. 72 & 74). Students participate in rhyme chants as part of their daily routine (p. 72). Making Words is when students are able to manipulate letters in order to change words (p. 74). Students work on decoding, spelling, and vocabulary within Word Study which are necessary components in understanding texts. The Iowa Learning Online Professional Development website (2014) states that word study supports students working with the structure of language as well as the structure within words.

Language structure instruction. Chomsky (1969) explains how readers use surface and deep structure to read and find meaning in sentences. Chomsky defines language grammar as “a system of rules in which there is a relationship between the sound and meaning in the language. There is a phonetic system for the specification of sounds and a semantic system for the specification of meaning.” (p.63) Chomsky defines grammar as containing word knowledge or a “lexicon” which includes “phonological, semantic, and syntactic” properties (p. 64). Language is then divided

between surface structure and deep structure. Surface structures represent the coding of a language's phonetics that are governed by specific rules. Deep structures goes beyond just the surface elements, into the deeper construction of the text representing meaning. In other words, "surface structure is the outer form of a sentence while deep structure is the abstract representations that identifies the way a sentence can be analyzed" (MurrySpeaks, 2013).

Language structure instruction can be addressed through read alouds. "Reading aloud introduces new words and presents a variety of forms of language, styles of written language, and sentence patterns" (Galda & Cullinan, 2000, p. 136). Teachers model fluent reading language through read alouds and can invite students' attention to word and sentence structures within the written text. Through the skills engaged in word study, "students become readers, writers, and communicators" (Boushey & Moser, 2006, p. 84).

Comprehension

Lemov (2010) argues that the "ultimate goal" of reading is comprehension which is to "gain meaning" from what is being read (p. 283). Many skills go into comprehending a text. Comprehension includes "having background knowledge," understanding "text structure," using "good reading habits," and having all the reading skills support each other (Rupley, Blair, & Nicholas, 2009, p. 155). Dorn (2005) also argues that the same problem-solving skills, such as self-monitoring, which learners use in life are also used in reading. Background knowledge is the foundation of "problem solving skills" which

includes comprehending (Dorn, p. 7-8). Dorn (2005) continues to express that students need to be taught deep comprehension which involves “making inferences, asking questions, and building connections between related sources and knowledge” (p. 12). Students should be using comprehension skills whenever they read and applying that text understanding to other situations (Donat, 2006). In classrooms, teachers strive for students to use comprehension skills in situations of reading silently and independently (Iowa Learning Online Professional Development, 2014). Readers can develop comprehension skill knowledge through comprehension instruction.

Comprehension instruction. Cunningham and Allington (2003) argue that some children do not have the necessary component of comprehension (p.69). Students could be able to decode words, but struggle with comprehending a text and understanding what they have read. Burkins and Croft (2010) state that a student’s reading process could be “unbalanced” (p.5) For example, a student who is strong in print, but does not comprehend content would be considered by Burkins and Croft to be “unbalanced.” In other words, this is a student who is focused on the words, but not the meaning (p. 5). In fact, there is much more to comprehending than just understanding the text. The complexity of text type plays a role in that comprehension. Acquiring the different levels of text structure should be a part of good comprehension instruction. “Text comprehension instruction includes both academic and functional areas” (Chiang & Lin, 2007, p. 260). Academic comprehension refers to a student’s understanding of a text at the written level while functional comprehension is displaying behaviors outside of the print. Academic comprehension is often measured by answering comprehension

questions. Functional comprehension can be measured by a student “carrying out” (p. 260) or applying behaviors stated in written directions.

Students with disabilities, such as Autism, have difficulty with comprehension (Chiang & Lin, 2007, p.259). Many students have difficulty answering higher-order thinking questions because they have failed to understand what they have read. Many with Autism struggle with “abstract and figurative language which can make it hard to comprehend texts beyond literal and recall questions” (Flores & Ganz, 2009, p. 40). Part of this difficulty is that there are many skills involved with comprehension which is more than only retelling events. Comprehension also involves “inferencing and building connections” (Dorn, 2005, p.12). Mirenda (2003) suggests that students benefit from “multiple instructional strategies” (p. 275).

Some strategies to develop comprehension skills can be through graphic organizers and Think Alouds. Dye (2000) describes graphic organizers as visual ways to present and organize information from a text. Some examples of graphic organizers are Venn diagrams and Semantic webs. “Graphic organizers provide students with a road map to follow as they expand their schemas by linking them to existing knowledge” (Dye, 2000, p. 5). Thinking aloud while reading a text is another strategy to “enhancing comprehension monitoring abilities” (Baumann, Seifert-Kessell, & Jones, 1992, p. 144). Students are given a variety of chances through different strategies to practice and continue to improve their skills. Readers can also be given opportunities to develop comprehension and decoding skills while writing.

Writing and the Connection to Reading

Writing supports “reading development” and is equally as important in being literate (Boushey, & Moser, 2006, p. 80). Writing involves the development of decoding, comprehension, and communication (Iowa Learning Online Professional Development, 2014). Juel (1988) states that writing consists of “spelling and ideation,” and just as “reading words requires a degree of phonemic awareness, so does spelling” (p.438). Juel also argues that children’s “spellings are created from letter name knowledge” which involves the “development of phonemic awareness” (p. 438). In order to be effective in writing, students need to identify sounds, put together letters and sounds to complete words, and create words that represent their expressive thoughts. The ability to write is important especially in this day of “digital communication” where students do not only write in the “traditional way”, but also with “electronic devices” (White, Houchins, Viel-Ruma, Dever, 2014, p. 568). Writing is a needed skill because it has become the main mode of communication within and across groups of people, whether using phone texting, emails, twitter comments, or other electronic forms of communication. Writing can be a “social process such as writing a note or email to a friend, a paper to teacher or a newsletter to a parent” (Bromley, 2003, p. 144). Bromley highlights the importance of writing as a personal process as well, where a writer creates text for personal purposes such as making a grocery list or writing a to-do list. She suggests that while writing provides communication, it is more than just transcribing words. Helping students understand the roles and power of writing becomes a critical focus for instruction.

Writing instruction. Many factors go into writing. These factors include “conceptual knowledge, vocabulary, knowledge of standard form; grammar, spelling, and punctuation; handwriting, fine motor muscle development; and eye-hand coordination” (Bromley, 2003, p. 144). These writing factors affect how writing instruction consists of integrating “motor activities” as well as idea “composition” (Iowa Learning Online Professional Development, 2014). Students with disabilities can struggle greatly with writing. Bromley (2003) explains how the physical aspect of writing and putting thoughts onto paper can be “complex” (p. 144). The acts of writing involve the creation of shapes, lines, and letters as well as the development of ideas. Students need many opportunities to be supported and be engaged in writing. Teachers should provide “engaging” writing activities that motivate students to write and a “positive attitude” toward writing (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, & Ambrosio, 2000, p. 15). Students are involved in writing activities that work toward the goals of writing. The goals of a writing component are to develop “fluent writing,” teach students to apply correct “grammar and mechanics,” teach different writing forms, and allow student to “learn to read through writing” (Cunningham & Allington, 2003, p. 137). Cunningham (1979) originally developed predictable charts as an instruction strategy that can be applied to support early readers and writers. Predictable charts build sentences and stories providing writing opportunities for children to use their own language. Phonics, comprehension, and writing skills help develop independent readers and writers.

Being an Independent Reader

Students need opportunities to be able to apply their literacy skills independently. When students become independent readers, they are encouraged to read to their “interests” by choosing what they want to read and “respond to” (Cunningham & Allington, 2003, p. 136). Self-selected reading can support decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Iowa Learning Online Professional Development, 2014). It gives students the opportunity to be independent and use the skills developed through instruction.

Students also need the opportunity to build their stamina. Children need to increase their ability to stay on task working independently. “Students are actively engaged in the reading process when they have the stamina to read on their own” (Bousher & Moser, 2006, p. 25). Block and Pressley (2003) state that being a good reader involves being active and strategic. Readers “look ahead and back for clarifying information,” make predictions “based on their prior knowledge,” “self-monitor,” and “reflect on what they have read” (p. 114). Self-monitoring can include looking at important parts and trying to make meaning of confusing parts. Self-monitoring allows readers to make decisions while reading. Rupley, Blair and Nichols (2009) argue it is important for students to be provided with “opportunities to apply their skills and strategies” (p. 129). Opportunities can be provided during a self-selected reading period.

Self-selected reading. During self-selected reading, students are provided with opportunities to independently read at their own pace without being interrupted (Iowa

Learning Online Professional Development, 2014). Self-selected reading gives students opportunities to apply their decoding and comprehension “skills” (Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni, 2011, p. 24). In addition, throughout the year students should be taught how to pick “good fit books” (Bousher & Moser, 2006, p. 29) for their independent reading. Bousher and Moser use the method of “I-PICK” (p. 30) for selecting books for self-selected reading. Students should be able to pick texts that have a purpose for them, texts that are interesting, texts they are able to comprehend, and ones where they know most of the words. Students should have books in which they will be able to practice their literacy strategies and will be able to read for enjoyment.

Cunningham and Allington (2003) suggest that during self-selected reading, *conferences* between teachers and students take place. Discussions are held about what a student is reading, and teachers can guide if students are going toward self-selected reading goals (p.136). Goals of self-selected reading include “encouraging reading interests”, “providing students with instructional level reading”, and developing student “motivation for reading” (Cunningham & Allington, 2003, p. 136). It is argued by Cunningham and Allington that self-selected reading is “multileveled” (p. 136) as students choose what they want to read and choose from a variety of genres and levels. A comprehensive literacy program can be effective in reaching the goal of a reader who is capable of reading a text, understanding meaning, writing to communicate, and becoming independent.

Comprehensive Literacy

Comprehensive literacy is a framework that allows teachers to teach each foundation of literacy which includes decoding, comprehension, and writing. “The goal of comprehensive literacy is for all students to read their literacy potential” (Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzone, 2011, p. 18). According to Dorn (2005), reading instruction should be a blend of whole-group, small-group, individualized, and opportunities to read independently” (p.66). These types of instruction can be done with a comprehensive literacy program. Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzone, (2011) describe comprehensive literacy as an approach that is based on the reading process. Comprehensive literacy builds on students’ “prior knowledge”, embeds the connection between reading and writing”, reflects that “comprehension is the end goal to reading”, highlights “critical thinking”, gives “real world” literacy opportunities, and provides for “differentiated instruction” (p. 18-19).

A comprehensive literacy program balances the instructional time into the areas of comprehension, word study, writing, and self-selected reading. Comprehension instruction is facilitating students to be able to read as well as gain knowledge and understanding from what they have been reading. Comprehension can “include background knowledge,” “text structure,” “reader habits,” and fluency (Rupley, et al, 2009, p. 133). Writing instruction is having students be able to communicate their thoughts in written form. Writing consists of “spelling and ideation” and involves phonemic awareness and decoding strategies (Juel, 1988, p. 133). Word study helps reading and writing (Iowa Learning Online Professional Development, 2014). Students

are able to use language and written words with word study. Word study is important as students learn words in order to connect and read texts. Lastly, self-selected reading is independent reading. Students are given opportunities to independently apply reading strategies through a self-selected reading time. Comprehensive literacy instruction is combining these elements of literacy equally in order to develop a student's literacy achievement. Instruction in these four areas are given daily and equally in order for children to grow into independent and successful learners.

Using Comprehensive Literacy for Students with Disabilities

Those with disabilities who struggle with communication could have difficulty with literacy development. Juel (1988) found that the "probability that a child would remain a poor reader at the end of fourth grade, if the child was a poor reader at the end of first grade was .88" (p. 440). However, it has been exhibited that students with disabilities have the potential to learn to read and write. Students with cognitive impairments have learned to read words in a variety of contexts in a variety of conditions (Erickson, Clendon, Abraham, Roy, Van de Carr., 2005, p. 45).

More and more research is being conducted on how students with disabilities develop reading and writing skills and how to teach these students. Erickson et al. (2005) state that research suggests that students with disabilities learn to read and write through a comprehensive instructional program. Students can develop "word identification, reading comprehension, and phonemic awareness strategies" (p. 46). In order to teach students to read and write, all aspects of literacy should be addressed. In

order to do this a balanced, reading plan is needed to reach all the needs of the students (Cunningham, 2003). Ercikson et al. (2005) and Cunningham (2003) provide the impetus to support the proposition that educators should make all elements of literacy instruction present in a child's experience; this can be done through a comprehensive literacy program.

Comprehensive Literacy in the Classroom

In order to incorporate a comprehensive literacy program, teachers need to reflect on the atmosphere of their classroom. The atmosphere includes the classroom schedule, the room arrangement and materials used for instruction as well as assessment.

Literacy instruction should be about 120 minutes of the total daily instruction. Each area of comprehensive literacy should be allotted 30-40 minutes of instruction (Cunningham & Allington, 2007 as cited in Iowa Learning Online Professional Development, 2014).

When developing a classroom schedule, teachers need to think about each targeted area and ensure there is a sufficient amount of time. In addition, teachers need to also consider how their room is arranged. Is there sufficient space for quality comprehensive literacy instruction? Where will students be able to write or self-select read?

Teachers need to plan lessons to incorporate comprehensive literacy. Each daily plan should include shared or guided reading for comprehension, word study, writing, and self-selected reading. When planning lessons, teachers should keep in mind the student dynamic of the classroom. How will the needs of each student be reached? How will students with differences reach their potential? Teachers need to differentiate if

needed. Visuals and other forms of adaptive instruction could be needed (Learning Online Professional Development, 2014). Different types of technology could be included. Finally, what assessments will be used to monitor student progress? How will it be known whether students understand or if they continue to struggle?

Four blocks framework example. “Comprehension with prior knowledge development, vocabulary, and oral language instruction are components that are needed within a balanced reading program in order to produce thoughtful readers” (Cunningham, 2003, p. 71). Literacy instruction includes each aspect of reading and writing. Phonics instruction along with “phonemic awareness, reading fluency, comprehension”, and writing instruction are also an included components in a “balanced, complete” literacy program (Donat, 2006, 309). Cunningham (2003) argues that students need to practice their phonics development through reading and writing opportunities in order to “become fluent readers and writers” (p.71). The Four Blocks Framework was developed in order to provide students with a variety of opportunities for students to learn to read and write (Cunningham & Allington, 2003, p.224). The blocks included in a Four Blocks Framework are Guided Reading, Self-Selected Reading, Writing, and Working with Words. “In the Four Blocks framework” about “one fourth of” literacy instruction “time focuses on phonics activities” and about “three fourths” literacy time to the “other components” (Cunningham, 2003, p. 71).

Comprehensive literacy is a framework teachers can use in their classroom in order to address all areas of literacy. Comprehension, writing, word study, and self-selected reading are equally focused on each day. Students with disabilities have the

potential to reach literacy achievement. A comprehensive literacy program can allow students to learn to be independent and successful.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study involved both a self-study research about my own practice using modules for comprehensive literacy, and an action research on students' responses to instruction using comprehensive literacy. The self-study addressed the research question, how do the comprehensive literacy modules affect my own teaching practices? The action research addressed a secondary research question, how does the comprehensive literacy instruction implemented in a self-contained Intellectual Disabled Mild classroom impact my students' learning? This chapter provides an explanation of the purpose of my self-study, a discussion of the data collection for the self-study research and for the action research, and the data analysis process for the self-study and for the action research.

Purpose

A comprehensive literacy or balance program needs to involve all components of comprehension, writing, word study, and self-selected reading. This research is a self-study in which I looked deeply into my own teaching instruction using a comprehensive literacy program. Modules from the Iowa Literacy Project conducted by faculty from the University of Northern Iowa for the Iowa Department of Education were reviewed and used as examples of how to incorporate all the areas of comprehensive literacy. Lessons plans, interviews, resources, and videos were created for these modules. These lessons, interviews, resources, and videos were viewed on the Comprehensive Literacy Modules

website. I used these modules with my school district's standards to form a comprehensive literacy classroom.

The purpose of my self-study was to examine the changes in my practice using the modules addressing the comprehensive literacy program. To examine the change in my practice, I needed to look back at my practice before I began using a comprehensive literacy model. I did not use a comprehensive literacy program in my previous years of teaching. I did address some forms of literacy instruction in my classroom prior to working with comprehensive literacy. In my teaching during the previous 2014-2015 self-contained Special Education classroom, I included comprehension and phonics lessons that were alternated throughout the week, and writing instruction took place every other day. All literacy elements were not integrated daily as they are in a comprehensive literacy program. The implementation of a comprehensive literacy model required some change in the way in which I organized my teaching and planned my lessons. As part of my self-study, I also examined the data from my students' performances during regular classroom activities to provide insights into the impact my change in practice may have had on my students' learning.

Context

The context of this study included the students and classroom involved as well as the modules used from the Iowa Literacy Project. The classroom was a Special Education self-contained classroom which consisted of first and seconders with low cognitive abilities. This 2015-2016 school year, students were being taught literacy on their

cognitive levels with a comprehensive framework while also being exposed to Common Core standards. Modules from the Iowa Literacy Project were reviewed, and some practices from the modules were used along with Common Core and state standards. Lessons and resources from the modules were used to teach word study, comprehension, and writing. Some resources used from the modules included word walls, graphic organizers, and writing charts. Approaches to check on self-selected reading from the modules were utilized as well.

Classroom and students. The group of children who participated in the comprehensive literacy program were from my K-2 Intellectual Disability Mild Special Education self-contained classroom. The group included 3 second graders and 4 first graders. One student was retained before being placed into the Intellectually Disabled classroom. These students were cognitively disabled and had a documented IQ between 55 and 70. They were very low academically and at times, behaviorally. The classroom was made up of 5 girls and 2 boys. The class consisted of 5 African American students and 2 Hispanic students. Most of the students were eligible for special education under Intellectually Disabled Mild (ID Mild), but some of the students were considered eligible under Developmentally Delayed (DD) due to age and grade level. Five students also received Occupational Therapy as a related service and all 7 students received Speech and Language Therapy as a related service. Two students had an Augmentative Device to assist with any speech barriers. These students were functional children as they were capable of learning general education Common Core standards, but were unable to be mainstreamed into the regular education classroom.

Comprehensive literacy modules. Through the Iowa Department of Education (2014), comprehensive literacy modules were provided in order to incorporate a comprehensive literacy program for students with disabilities. I used these modules and some of the lesson examples along with my school district's standards to frame my own comprehensive literacy program in my ID Mild I K-2 Special Education self-contained classroom. Lesson examples for comprehension, word study, writing, and self-selected reading were reviewed for personal lesson planning.

To teach comprehension, I used lessons such as graphic organizers and Think Alouds. I used graphic organizers including Venn diagrams to compare and contrast, story maps to retell a text, and main idea maps. While reading or having the students listen to a text aloud, I often paused and talked through the book. I would model how to ask ourselves questions while reading and to break the text apart. We would identify story parts aloud during reading or discussed what the text was about after reading. Throughout a week, I also used fiction and nonfiction texts that were connected to each other, depending on the text topic.

Some lesson examples from the Modules from the Iowa Literacy Project I used for word study included a word wall, making words, and rhymes. The word wall in my classroom consisted of mostly high frequency words (such as *at, because, have, the*). The words were organized alphabetically in order to help students find the words they needed during writing. In order to conduct Making Words activities, the students worked with CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words and words with short vowels and digraphs. Digraphs are two letters that are together and make one sound such as *th, ch,*

sh. Students sorted letter cards (usually cards from the *Letterland™* program with the *Letterland™* characters) or wrote words on whiteboards. Students also used the smartboard to manipulate and practice words. Students played games to practice their phonemic awareness, including rhymes. Students learned word families and rime endings.

A writing lesson used from the Modules was the Predictable Chart. Before writing assignments, I sat the students on the carpet and modeled writing. Together we would think of a topic. We used simple predictable sentences such as “I see” and “I like.” Each student would complete the sentences orally and I would write them on chart paper. We practiced how to sound out words in order to spell them. Students then began writing their own sentences or completing the writing of a sentence. If a word was misspelled by a student, I wrote the correct spelling under the incorrect word. I often added drawing activities as part of the writing activities. Students drew pictures on a topic in order to assist with writing complete thoughts.

To check on self-selected reading, I conducted reading conferences with students. When students were independently reading, I sat down with them and we talked about their books. They told me what they were reading, what they liked and disliked, and would read the text or at least tell me what was happening from the pictures. I kept a log of what happened during these conferences to see how self-selected reading was progressing for each student.

Data Sources

Throughout the study, I examined myself and my teaching. I kept a personal journal of lessons using the comprehensive literacy framework. I recorded my reflections of lessons. I documented how effective my lessons were. Comprehension and word study instruction were included in small groups as well as in large group lessons. Students also had writing instruction daily as well as received opportunities for self-selected reading. Time was always a factor throughout the school day. Through comprehensive literacy instruction, comprehension, word study, writing, and self-selected reading were built into the everyday schedule. All aspects of literacy were instructed every day.

How students reacted to being engaged in all elements of comprehensive literacy daily was also observed. These students had not been exposed to a comprehensive literacy framework until this 2015-2016 school year. I predicted using a comprehensive literacy program with the Comprehensive Modules would assist student learning. To determine if comprehensive literacy affected the students, student reactions to instruction was documented as part of my daily instruction observations. The intent of this study was to examine the impact on my teaching and the affect this teaching appeared to have on the students as they engaged in regular classroom instruction using the modules and comprehensive literacy framework.

Data Collection - Self-Study

In order to conduct a self-study and look at how my teaching has evolved, data were collected using a journal of my current teaching, an autobiography stating my previous

teaching, and my schedule from the 2014-2015 ID Mild I classroom and the schedule from this current 2015-2016 ID Mild I class.

Journal. Throughout this study, a journal was kept documenting my teaching using the comprehensive literacy framework (see Appendix A for an example of a page from the journal). Recorded in the journal were literacy lessons and my professional and personal reflections to those lessons. Included in these reflections were comments and feedback to myself regarding the running of the classroom as a whole, addressing how the instructional changes were affecting the flow of instruction and planning. This was my 6th year teaching and my 2nd year in the ID Mild I Special Education classroom. My teaching has changed from year to year. But in this particular context, the way I taught this year was very different from last year. The lessons were different as well as the schedule. The journal was designed to document the changes of my teaching.

Autobiography. An autobiography was written detailing my personal teaching throughout the previous years (see Appendix B for the autobiography). I have taught in a regular education 3rd grade, Special education resource, and more recently in the Special education ID Mild I classroom. I have been involved in different literacy programs and frameworks. My different teaching strategies throughout the years were noted in my autobiography. The intent of this data was to provide an historical framework for my teaching and my thinking about teaching.

Schedules. The 2014-2015 classroom schedule for the ID Mild I classroom was different than this current 2015-2016 classroom schedule (see appendix C for the 2014-

15 and 2015-16 class schedules). Last year was my first year teaching the ID Mild I classroom. After researching comprehensive literacy, I changed my schedule. I structured my current schedule to incorporate consistent daily opportunities to focus on the four major aspects of literacy (word work, comprehension, self-selected reading, and writing).

Data Collection – Action Research

Data collected documented students' literacy progress using already gathered data as part of the regular instruction within the classroom. Data included assessments that tested decoding, word recognition, comprehension, and writing skills. The data collected included student writing samples, their Text Reading and Comprehension levels, sight word assessments, and Nonsense Word Fluency assessments. Assessments given at the Beginning of the Year, End of the First Quarter, and End of the First Semester were analyzed.

Writing samples. Students were involved in unassisted writing activities.

Students were asked to compose sentences in order to describe a picture. During this part of my instruction, students were given the prompt to write at least two sentences.

Text reading and comprehension (TRC) level. This assessment was also known as Running Records. TRC is an assessment that is part of the mClass foundational literacy assessment program. Students read an unfamiliar book aloud to the administrator of the assessment. After reading, students were asked comprehension questions. Comprehension could include oral comprehension, written comprehension, retelling the

events, or recalling details of the text. Errors, reading behaviors, and comprehension answers were recorded. Students were assessed on their reading accuracy as well as their level of comprehension. This assessment was used to find a student's instructional reading level.

Sight word assessment. The sight word assessment included a list of 200 sight words students should know by the end of 2nd grade. Words were read in isolation. The list of words was presented to the student and the student read the words aloud to the administrator. The administrator recorded misread words on the student record list. Words were to be read with automaticity (correctly and within 3 seconds). If they were unable to identify the word automatically, the word was told to the student, and the student was directed to move on to the next word. The test ended once the student reached frustration or read more than 3 words incorrectly in a sequence.

Nonsense word fluency. The Nonsense Word Fluency is another mClass assessment. This assessment tests basic phonics. Students were presented with VC or CVC nonsense words (i.e. *mip, sog*). Students had one minute to read as many nonsense words as possible. If students could not read the whole word, they were to identify as many sounds as they could. Students were assessed on their understanding of letter-sound knowledge and blending the sounds into words. The Nonsense Word Fluency assessment was measured by Correct Letter Sounds (CLS) and Whole Words Read (WWR).

Figure 4 is a table representing how data were organized in order to be analyzed. This table will document progress between the Beginning of the Year, End of First Quarter, and End of the First Semester. These data were taken through a part of the regular instruction within the classroom. Assessments included writing samples, Text Reading and Comprehension level, Sight words, and CVC pattern assessment.

	Beginning of the Year	End of First Quarter	End of First Semester (Middle of Year)
Writing sample			
Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) level			
Sight word assessment			
Nonsense Word Fluency (CVC pattern) Assessment			

Figure 4. Chart used to record the data from the assessments across the semester.

Data Analysis - Self-Study

Data collected from classroom schedule changes, my teaching autobiography, and my journal records documented my personal teaching growth. My autobiography of previous teaching years and my journal records from this current 2015-2016 school year were analyzed using a constant comparative method to elicit key themes, categories and content addressed in the discourse (Dye, Schatz, Rosenber, & Coleman, 2000).

Within the journal I examined my use of teaching strategies and through my reflections I

examined how my teaching had changed through my use of comprehensive literacy. The data from my schedules, autobiography, and journal were examined to determine how my organization, lesson planning, and capability to include all aspects of literacy had been impacted. Data collected were examined to glean information about the process of my teaching using comprehensive literacy to support students with disabilities in a Special Education self-contained classroom in order to gain literacy progress.

Schedules. Schedules were analyzed in order to examine what each schedule represented. Schedules between 2014-2015 school year and 2015-2016 school year in the Intellectual Disabled Special Education self-contained classroom were compared. Schedules were compared and analyzed to determine what literacy aspects were valued between the two school years.

Autobiography. My autobiography text was coded for meaning units. This was done using a constant comparative method (Dye et al., 2000) in which a set of codes were developed to show representations for meanings in my autobiography. First, I highlighted the bigger observations within my autobiography. I highlighted the sentences I noticed that were similar to comprehensive literacy concepts. I then highlighted sentences that were major differences to comprehensive literacy. After finding the bigger ideas in my autobiography, I analyzed each sentence of my data collection. I labeled each sentence to describe the content of the sentence. Some sentences had more than one label. Categories across my autobiography were determined and connected to each other to determine similarities, categories that could be collapsed, and categories that could be combined to create a broader category.

These categories were coded into themes in order to form conclusions about my instruction throughout my teaching career.

Journal. My journal documented how I used each module of literacy. By using the lens of the four modules' foci, my journal was analyzed by looking at how I discussed each area of literacy during instruction. The journal was coded for meaning units. First, I highlighted the bigger ideas in my journal. I highlighted the sentences that represented comprehensive literacy aspects. I also highlighted common trends I noticed throughout the journal. I was looking for reoccurring events or observations. Just like my autobiography, I analyzed each sentence of my data collection in my journal. I labeled each sentence to describe the content of the sentence. Categories throughout my journal were connected and coded into themes in order to find conclusions about my instruction using a comprehensive literacy framework. The coded themes between my autobiography and journal were then compared for similarities and connections. The overarching themes across the data were then developed from these connections.

Chapter 4

Results

My self-study data analysis consisted of examining my autobiography of teaching experiences leading up to this current teaching year. I also examined my personal journal of my current Intellectual Disabled Mild I (ID Mild) classroom using a comprehensive literacy framework. I also incorporated comparing my class schedule from last school year, 2014-2015, in the ID Mild I classroom and this current 2015-2016 school year. First I highlighted specific sentences throughout my autobiography and journal. Within my autobiography I highlighted in blue sentences I noticed that were similar to comprehensive literacy concepts. I then highlighted sentences in red that were major differences to comprehensive literacy. I was looking to see if I had conducted elements of comprehensive literacy during my teaching career and what teaching aspects were different through the years. Within my journal, I highlighted in blue the sentences that represented comprehensive literacy aspects. In red, I highlighted common trends I noticed throughout the journal. I was looking for continuing events or observations that occurred. The sentences I highlighted were the bigger observations I noticed in my journal and autobiography.

I also used a constant comparative method to analyze my autobiography and journal. I analyzed each sentence of both data collections. I labeled each sentence to describe the content of the sentence. Some sentences had more than one label. Various labels in my personal journal included time, book selection, instruction, teacher and

student needs, struggles, student involvement, activities, supplements, and student progression. Within my autobiography different labels included Special Education, programs and frameworks, instruction, time, difficulties and struggles, quality instruction, and student needs.

Once I labeled each individual sentence, I was able to find larger categories in both my personal journal and autobiography. I combined and collapsed the sentences into these categories. The categories for my autobiography included time/schedule, struggles/tensions, instruction, frameworks, and student needs. Journal categories contained time, instruction, book selection, struggles/tensions, and student involvement.

My journal and autobiography had some similar categories in which I was able to combine and collapse together. I found major themes between my journal and autobiography. I was able to compare and contrast the aspects of my journal, aspects of my autobiography, and the connections between the two. The major theme connections included: *instruction*, *needs*, *student content*, *tensions*, and *time*. Within these major themes, I was able to break some of the themes into sub codes. These sub codes allowed me to reflect on specific aspects of each big idea. *Instruction* was divided into sub codes that displayed the parts of comprehensive literacy: decoding, comprehension, writing, and self-selected reading. *Needs* was sub coded into student needs and teacher needs. To examine *student content*, I divided the content into sentences that described the unit themes I taught and sentences that explained the Common Core standards that needed to be taught. *Tensions* was sub coded into my

own teacher tensions as well as student tensions. Finally *time* was broken down between periods of time and schedules. Through these themes and connections I was able to answer the research question: how did the comprehensive literacy modules affect my own teaching practices? Through this analyzing method, other areas of consideration also emerged.

Instruction

When looking at sentences I coded instruction throughout my journal and autobiography, I found that I was able to divide the overall theme of instruction into separate categories. I was able to reflect on how I taught the different areas of literacy. I examined the original coded labels and text through the lens of the four areas of comprehensive literacy: decoding, comprehension, writing, and self-selected reading instruction. While reflecting on my autobiography, I was able to find elements of comprehensive throughout my teaching experiences. However, I was unaware of this and was unable to teach the elements consistently. I did not realize this until I learned about and used comprehensive literacy this year. I have always taught phonics, comprehension, and writing lessons throughout my teaching career. My schedule, though, did not always allow me to involve each component daily and with quality. When I was a Cross-Categorical Resource (CCR) teacher, there could be a few groups happening at once which could hinder instruction. Last year within the self-contained Intellectual Disabled Mild I (ID Mild) classroom, I would alternate teaching different skills on different days which also hindered instruction. Independent reading periods would occur, but instruction on self-selected reading had not taken place in previous

years. The following sections provide a summary of my instruction through the four specific areas of comprehensive literacy: decoding, comprehension, writing, and self-selected reading.

Decoding. Decoding and comprehension instruction was conducted during small groups during this research study as well as during my overall teaching experiences. Each teaching setting required small group instruction. This year I was also able to conduct phonics lessons through whole group instruction, and this was different than previous years. To teach decoding, I have used programs such as *Recipe for Reading* and *Letterland™*. *Recipe for Reading* is a phonics-based program to teach and reinforce phonics concepts. *Recipe for Reading* involves visual and auditory procedures. *Letterland™* is another research-based phonics programs for primary grades. *Letterland™* consists of characters and stories to teach phonics concepts. These are programs that I used during my previous position as a Cross Categorical Resource (CCR) teacher as well as currently in as the Intellectually Disabled I (ID Mild) K-2 teacher. This year I also used lessons from the Iowa Literacy Project modules such as using a word wall, making words, and rhymes. For word study within small groups during this first semester, students were working on CVC words. The decoding skills I focused on remained similar between the two positions of CCR and ID Mild. Many word work activities consisted of starting with CVC words. This year, the students would practice decoding words using the rollercoaster method which consisted of dissecting each part of the word. I then was able to move toward working with words with digraphs and contractions.

The main issue I noticed between the two documents of my journal and autobiography is that I did not feel students were always receiving quality instruction. As a CCR teacher, there could be more than one group happening and decoding instruction did not always take place as it was supposed to. Within the ID Mild I classroom, students rotated between listening to reading/computer, small group instruction with myself, and then small group instruction with my Teacher Assistant. Last school year as the ID Mild I teacher, I would alternate phonics lessons with comprehension lessons. Students did not always receive the instruction they needed. This year the small group rotation was the same, but I was also able to include whole group instruction with students. Whole group instruction allowed students to receive more decoding and comprehension instruction. I was also able to incorporate Science and Social Studies skills. Using a comprehensive literacy framework allowed me to have phonics instruction daily. During this current school year I have felt that students have receive better quality and more effective decoding instruction. I felt more involved with teaching phonics lessons. I observed the students making growth and being more comfortable during decoding activities. I felt I was able to meet their needs more. Students were engaged in phonics instruction every day in small group and in whole group. I was able to touch on each of their specific decoding goals.

Comprehension. Comprehension lessons have usually been conducted during small group instruction. However when I have had my own classroom such as when I was a regular education 3rd grade teacher and as the ID Mild I self-contained classroom teacher, I have been able to teach comprehension in whole group lessons. While I was a

resource teacher, I used programs such as *Making Connections™* to teach comprehension skills. *Making Connections™* is a comprehension program that is linked to Common Core standards. This program gave me specific skills and texts to in order to guide my lessons. Last year in the ID Mild classroom and this current year, I taught many comprehension skills through guided reading ability groups. This year to incorporate comprehension, I used lessons such as graphic organizers and Think Alouds.

This school year our school started using thematic units. Each grade level created their own themes in order to integrate all subjects. I found these themes very useful. I was able to collaborate with the regular education teachers and taught my students similar conduct as the regular education classes. In the ID Mild I classroom, I am required to expose these students to Common Core standards as well as teach toward their IEP goals. Using these themes this year gave me an opportunity to do this. I found that it was easier to create comprehension lessons when I had a theme to center around on. Due to my schedule being different this year, I was able to have a time period with each grade level. When 2nd grade went to Specials, I had time with my 1st graders and vice versa. During this time period was when I would conduct whole group phonics and comprehension lessons. This schedule allowed me to include comprehension daily. This did not happen in previous years. Comprehension lessons would be alternated throughout the week. I felt the students did not receive the quality comprehension instruction they required to make progress. This school year, I was able to focus on specific skills and using the themes helped. With my students I focused a lot on main idea for nonfiction texts and retelling the beginning, middle, and end of fiction texts. I

was more comfortable teaching comprehension this school year compared to other years. Students received comprehension instruction daily either through whole group lessons, small group lessons, or both.

Writing. Writing instruction has usually been a struggle for me. Whether I was teaching regular education, resource, or last year as the ID Mild I self-contained teacher. I seemed to not find the time or the appropriate writing content. Students did not always receive writing instruction in my previous teaching experiences. Last year I alternated writing instruction every other day so I could include Science and Social Studies instruction. It was noticed that students' writing skills made little progress. This year by using themes I was able to integrate Science and Social Studies skills during literacy instruction. This gave me the opportunity to have daily time for writing instruction.

I have never really had a focus when it came to writing instruction. This year I decided students needed to focus on high frequency words and writing complete sentences. These skills are also tied into their reading. During this school year, many writing lessons were centered on a "sight word of the day." Students would learn a sight word, the spelling of the word, and how to put the word into a sentence. Students also practiced sentences with using simple predictable sentences. While teaching this self-contained Special Education classroom, I discovered I love finding songs to help the students learn. If I can find a song to help students with sight words, I used the song for a wiggle break. I found that the students also love songs and it helped them remember the word.

This year I also started using writing activities such as shared writing. I am so glad I learned about this activity. I observed my students improving their writing skills while writing shared sentences. The sentences were content based on what we are learning during our thematic unit. The students shared the sentence or sentences by each writing a word. The activity gave the students ownership of their writing and they are able to expand on their skills. I feel that students were engaged in quality, authentic work that they have not been involved with before.

Self-selected reading. Other than this during this current school year, the only time I have tried a period of time for self-selected reading was when I taught a regular education 3rd grade classroom. I have found through my experiences that a self-selected reading time is difficult. It was especially difficult this year. While going through my journal, I found that I often used the words “struggle” and “can’t.” The students had a difficult time reading in general and trying to independently read was not an easy task. I conducted lessons to teach students how to pick a book and how to “read” the book. We practiced looking at pictures if the words were too difficult. After weeks of self-selected reading not being successful, I decided something had to change. If I continued saying “they can’t”, I needed to find something they “can” do. I added listening to reading during the self-selected reading time. Students would listen to books on the computer. I had to alternate students between computer and their books baskets. This way students were continuing to be exposed to read to self. While self-selected reading went smoother, it continued to be a challenge throughout the semester.

Classroom Needs

While reviewing my journal and autobiography, I discovered I discussed often about the needs of the classroom. I discussed my own personal teacher needs as well as what I saw were the needs of the students. I particularly talked about the needs of the students within my journal during the study in the ID Mild I classroom.

Teacher needs. Throughout my teaching, I found that I needed to be in the position that I wanted. I taught a regular education classroom, but a Special Education teaching position is what I wanted. I am able to work with struggling students and see the small successes. I used to being in a resource teaching position. Students were pulled out of class for small group instruction. However at times, there would be too many groups at once. I decided to move into a self-contained ID Mild I classroom. This year I was able to use a comprehensive literacy framework, the thematic units, and collaborating with regular education teachers in order to feel that I gave the students the quality instruction they deserve.

Student needs. Throughout my teaching career, the students I have worked with are students that have needed literacy instruction. While teaching Special Education, students have needed literacy instruction such as phonics, comprehension, and writing. Student needs are often guided by their Individual Educational Plans (IEP) goals. Students also need to be exposed to and taught grade level Common Core standards. This can be difficult due to the students being low readers and writers.

This year my students in the ID Mild I classroom needed small group instruction to work on IEP goals and literacy at their levels. I changed my schedule this year and was able to find a period of time for whole group instruction on Common Core standards. My students had many needs in the area of literacy. During word study activities, I found my students needed to start at CVC words. Comprehension skills that the students needed were retelling a text and identifying the main idea. I focused a large amount of comprehension lessons on retelling the beginning, middle, and end of a fiction text and finding the big idea of nonfiction texts. I would include songs during instruction to reinforce these skills. During writing instruction, students needed to focus on writing skills such as identifying and spelling sight words, starting a sentence with a capital, ending with punctuation, and the spacing of words. At the beginning of the year, students needed to start with copying sentences. Some students needed to trace words and sentences.

At the end of the first and second quarter, Text and Reading Comprehension assessments (TRC/reading levels), showed me what students needed for independent reading. Self-selected conferences also presented that students needed more independent reading instruction. Students needed more practice with print concepts, understanding a text pattern, decoding strategies, and retelling skills. Conferences with students demonstrated the need for instruction on how to pick “good fit books.” Students were not picking appropriate books and struggled with independent reading. Due to students continuing to struggle with independent reading, the time period for self-selected reading needed a different approach. Students needed to learn how to sit

and look at a text. I added listening to a text to self-selected reading. Students were able to either independently read or listen to a book on the computer. The self-selected period of time began to go smoother since I included this aspect. Students were able to build their reading stamina.

Student Content

During this 2015-2016 school year in the ID Mild I self-contained classroom, I focused on student content. I examined the student content between what students needed to learn with Common Core standards and what I taught using thematic units. While I had to teach toward my students' IEP goals, I also needed to teach grade level Common Core standards. I taught Common Core standards through small group and whole group lessons. In small groups I was able to apply standards at the students' instructional level. This included decoding and comprehension skills. During whole group instruction, I was able to address grade level standards through themed units. During these units I centered lessons with literacy, but I was able to integrate Science and Social Studies concepts. To incorporate these themes I collaborated with the regular education teachers. I did have to modify many lessons, but each grade level was exposed to the same content as their peers in regular education. Through these thematic units, I was able to meet student needs more than I have been able to do in the past. I was able to integrate other subjects which allowed the schedule to have a period of time dedicated to writing. Content taught was through quality, authentic instruction.

Tensions

While analyzing my autobiography and journal, I noticed there was a difference between teacher tensions and student tensions. My autobiography displayed my teaching struggles throughout the years. The personal journal presented many student tensions.

Teacher tensions. My first year teaching was difficult for me. I taught a regular education 3rd grade classroom. I was just learning the ropes of teaching and struggled with teaching students whose abilities ranged from high to low. My struggles with instruction impeded student learning. I had difficulty finding ways to challenge students while providing interventions for lower performing students. I implemented Literacy Stations this year which provided independent work for students while I was able to have guided reading groups. Even with Literacy Stations in place, I have trouble providing full literacy instruction daily.

The rest of my teaching career consisted of teaching Special Education. A major tension I found while teaching was scheduling and finding the time for instruction. I was a resource teacher in which I would have caseloads of 20-30 students. It could be a little difficult to get everything accomplished. Sometimes there would be a few groups during a period of time. It was hard to provide quality instruction with so many groups. I observed this by the amount of time I had to put into managing the groups. At times, instruction was completing a worksheet in order for students to at least practice skills.

My schedule last year in the ID Mild I classroom hindered my literacy instruction as well. Last year, students went to Specials with one grade level despite it being a different grade level than what the student was in. This mean the students were all at Specials at once. While this gave me a planning period, I had to find time in the schedule to teaching writing and Science/Social Studies. I alternated each day with teaching writing and then teaching Science/Social Studies. I felt like I would be leaving something out. This year I set the schedule in which the students went with their designated grade level. While I did not have a planning period, I did not have the struggle of finding a time in the class schedule to teach writing. I was also able to find a time to teach and integrate Science or Social Studies.

Student tensions. Throughout my autobiography, student needs were very similar to my teacher teachers. The students suffered due to my lack of experience and to not being able to engage in all aspects of literacy each day. I am able to reflect on this now after conducting a classroom using a comprehensive framework. I can see the gains now, and my students in previous years were not able to be instructed with using a comprehensive framework.

While analyzing my journal, I discovered that students this year in the ID Mild I classroom had a lot of difficulty with self-selected reading. I examined I continued to state that students “do not have” or “can’t.” The students did not have the stamina and attention span for self-selected reading. They have never been asked to sit and independently read for a period of time. The students are also have very low decoding and comprehension skills which hinders their independent reading skills. I had conduct

self-selected reading lessons which was new to me as well as new to my students. Due to their decoding and comprehension difficulties, I conducted lessons that focused on picking book. I emphasized picking books with some know words and books that were interesting. This way they would want to read the books. I also had to conduct lessons on how to read books. Some students were holding the books upside and rushing through the books. They were not concentrating on reading. Through the semester, students continue to struggle with self-selected reading. Many were having trouble with sitting and reading a simple text. I found that I had to change what the students were doing during self-selected reading. My students have a much better time listening to books than independently reading. I decided to let students listen to books on the computer as well as practice independent reading. Half the class would read while the other half listened. The students would then alternate days. Students would practice their listening comprehension skills as well as are exposed to independent reading. Self-selected reading time started going considerably smoother. Another tension for students was writing. I have seen that writing skills are often difficult for students. Students had difficulty creating complete sentences.

Time

While coding my document I sub coded time into specific periods of time and my schedules. When reviewing the sub codes, I found that periods of time and schedules actually were similar. In Special Education, scheduling can be a difficult task to figure out. When I was a CCR, I had to find the time to teach each student on my caseload. I had to ensure each student's IEP goals were worked on.

I reflected on the periods of time I had and compared my schedule in the ID Mild Classroom from 2014-2015 and from 2015-2016. Small group literacy instruction included group rotation across three contexts: myself as the teacher, my teacher assistant, and computer work. Within small groups during last year 2014-2015, I focused on decoding for a few days during the first half of the week and comprehension for the second half of the week. The focus on each skill was alternated. Students did not receive word work strategies and comprehension skills every day. Writing instruction was also alternated each day with Science and Social Studies instruction.

The 2015-2016 schedule changed in order to value each aspect of literacy equally. This year I arranged my schedule so I would have a period of time to teach writing. I also had a period of time to integrate and teach Science and Social Studies skills. The students went with their designated grade level to Specials which allowed me to have these time periods. When 2nd grade was out of the classroom I was able to work with 1st grade and vice versa. This way I did not have to alternate which days I taught certain skills. Small group rotation continued to include myself, my teacher assistant, and computer. My instruction changed as word study and comprehension were taught every day in each group. Students also received equal periods of word study and comprehension during whole group instruction in which Science and Social Studies were integrated instead of alternated with writing instruction. Students were able to receive writing instruction daily. While writing was integrated into other areas throughout the day, the students were able to have 20-30 minutes to focus on writing skills. This time

period did not happen last year. The different aspects of literacy are not alternated and were focused on each day.

Student Data

Student progress was measured using Text Comprehension Reading levels (TRC), Sight word identification, Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF), and writing samples. TRC was used to find a student's instructional reading level. Students were assessed on their reading accuracy as well as their level of comprehension. The sight word assessment included a list of 200 sight words. Words were read in isolation. The list of words was presented to the student and the student read the words aloud to the administrator. The test ended once the student reached frustration or read more than 3 words incorrectly. The Nonsense Word Fluency assessment was measured by Correct Letter Sounds (CLS) and Whole Words Read (WWR). Students were presented with VC or CVC nonsense words (i.e. *mip, sog*). Students had one minute to read as many nonsense words as possible. If students could not read the whole word, they were to identify as many sounds as they could. Students were also involved in unassisted writing activities. Students were asked to compose sentences in order to describe a picture. These assessments supported the action research question, how does the comprehensive literacy instruction implemented in a self-contained Intellectual Disabled Mild classroom impact my students' learning?

Student 1 - 2nd grader: 2nd year in ID Mild I classroom. Student 1 made the most growth with identifying sight words. Table 1 and Figure 5 show the growth the student

made. The student progressed from the Beginning of the Year (BOY) of identifying 5 sight words to identifying 74 sights by the Middle of the Year (MOY). Student 1's reading level also made growth. At the Beginning of the Year, the student read below Print Concepts. Print Concepts refers to identify parts of the book and how to read (i.e. front of the book, title, reading direction, lowercase and uppercase letters, etc). At the end of First Quarter, Student 1 progressed one level. Her reading level was at Reading Behaviors. Reading Behaviors mean being able to follow a simple repeating pattern, read words in a 1:1 correspondence, and using pictures for support. By the Middle of the Year, the student was able to progress one more level, a reading level B. This indicates the student is able to read a simple text as well as retell the beginning, middle, and end of the text.

Student 1 made inconsistent progress with Nonsense Word Fluency. Student 1 started at 15 CLS and was able to increase to 24 CLS at the end of First Quarter. However at the Middle of the Year, Student 1 decreased to 12 CLS. Many factors could have contributed to this, but the data shows inconsistency. Student 1 was unable to read any whole nonsense words.

Writing samples show little inconsistent progress. However, Student 1 was able to progress from writing only 1 sentence to 2 sentences. The last writing sample displays some written expression ideas with growth in spelling. The writing sample is also not the best representation of the student's development as Student 1 rushed during this writing assignment.

Table 1

Student 1: Assessment Scores

Writing sample	Beginning of the Year	End of First Quarter	End of First Semester (Middle of Year)
	<p><i>I waf a ssas (I love my shapes.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 sentence ● sentence describes picture ● starts with a capital ("I") ● words are not spelled phonetically ● incomplete sentence ● no punctuation ● very simple/difficult to decipher sentence 	<p><i>I like t Ball (I like the ball.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 sentence ● Simple sentence ● Complete sentence ● Starts with capital ● No punctuation ● Phonetically spelling ● Does not describe picture 	<p><i>Is my hsyse (Is my house.) my mum tis e hctse (My mom is in my house).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 sentences ● sentences describes picture ● does not start with a capital or punctuation ● incomplete sentences ● This sample was rushed with sloppy handwriting, little effort due to not knowing how to spell words.

Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) level	Below Print Concepts (1)	Reading Behaviors (2)	Level B (4)
Sight word assessment	5	25	74
Nonsense Word Fluency (CVC pattern) Assessment	15 CLS 0 WWR	24 CLS 0WWR	12 CLS 0WWR

Notes: CVC = Consonant Vowel Consonant; WWR = Whole Words Read

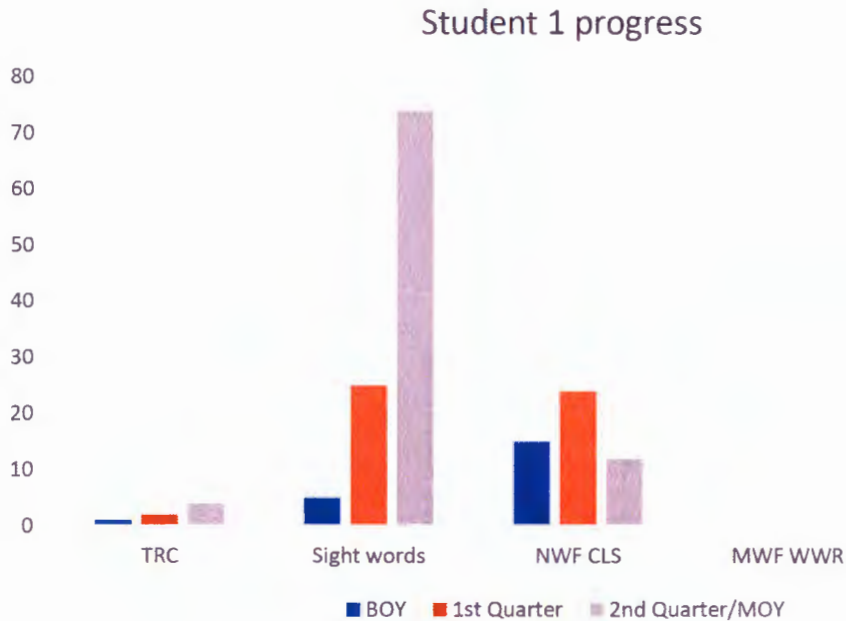


Figure 5. Graph of Assessment Scores for Student 1

BOY: Beginning of Year

CLS: Correct Letter Sounds

MOY: Middle of Year

TRC: Text Reading & Comprehension

WWR: Whole Words Read

Student 2 - Repeating 2nd grade: First year in ID Mild I classroom. Student 2

made growth in all the areas. Table 2 and Figure 6 show the growth the student made.

Student 2 demonstrated the most growth beginning the beginning of the year and the end of first quarter. Student 2 identified 53 sight words at the beginning of the year and increased by 22 words to 74 sight words by the end of first quarter. The student continued to increase the sight word identification, but only by 9 more words. Student 2 also grew one reading level between the beginning of the year and the end of first

Table 2
Student 2: Assessment Scores

	Beginning of the Year	End of First Quarter	End of First Semester (Middle of Year)
Writing sample	<i>I lok to gow to the pok (I like to go to the park)</i>	<i>I like the bat</i>	<i>I have a fres (I have a friends.) mom me cin up the hos (Mom and me clean the house.)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 sentence • complete, simple sentence • capital • no punctuation • describes picture -spelling early phonetically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 sentence • complete, simple sentence • capital • no punctuation • correct spelling of sight words • no picture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 sentences • simple, somewhat complete sentences • 1 out of 2 start w/ capital • correct spelling of sight words • early phonetic spelling • no punctuation
Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) level	Reading Behaviors (2)	Level B (4)	Level B (4)

Sight word assessment	53	75	84
Nonsense Word Fluency (CVC pattern) Assessment	15 CLS 1WWR	30 CLS 1WWR	35 CLS 1WWR

Notes: CVC = Consonant Vowel Consonant; WWR = Whole Words Read

quarter. However, the student stayed at the same level at the middle of the year. NWF correct letter sounds also made the biggest jump between beginning of the year and end of first quarter. NWF whole word reads remained at 1 throughout the semester.

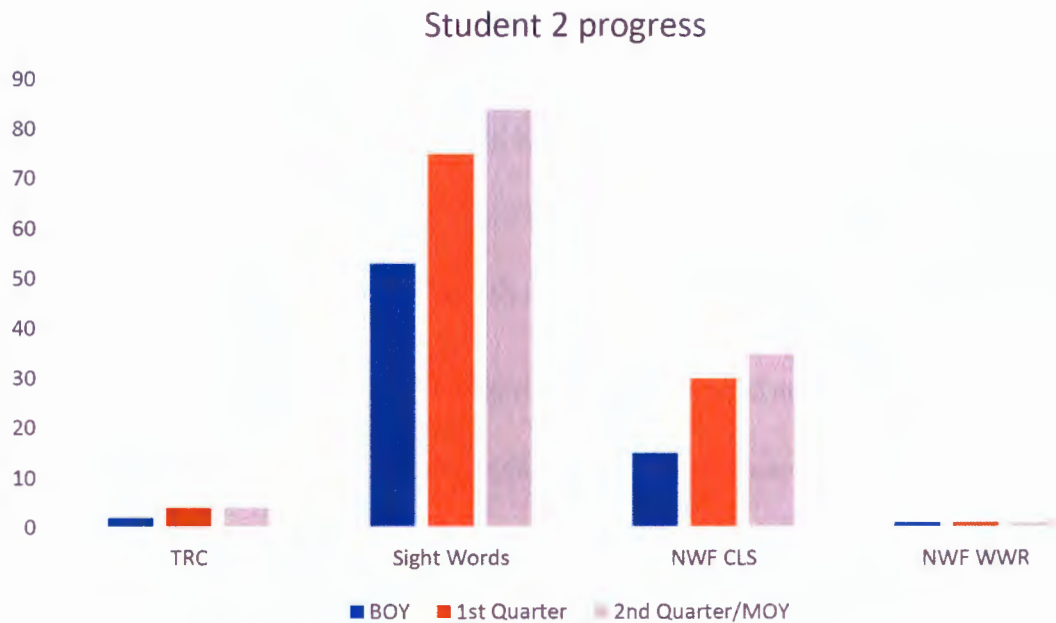


Figure 6. Graph of Assessment Scores for Student 2

- BOY: Beginning of Year
- CLS: Correct Letter Sounds
- MOY: Middle of Year
- NWF: Nonsense Word Fluency
- TRC: Text Reading & Comprehension
- WWR: Whole Words Read

Student 2 developed in writing skills within the first semester. Student 2 was able to spell familiar sight words such as “the” and “have.” Student 2 also slight developed more written expression ideas since the beginning of the year. Student 2’s

beginning of the year sentence was a simple “I like” idea. Student 2 was able to do develop to writing about something the student has and does.

Student 3 - 1st grader: First year in ID Mild I classroom. Student 3 made little to no growth on the Text Reading and Comprehension as well as on Nonsense Word Fluency. Student 3 continued to read at below Print Concepts. Student 3 was able to increase by 2 Correct Letter Sounds and by 1 Whole word read from the beginning of the year to the middle of the year. There is no NWF data for the end of first quarter. Table 3 and Figure 7 show the growth the student made.

Student 3 did make growth with the identification of sight words and with writing skills. Student 3 was unable to read any sight words at the beginning of the year. By the end of first quarter, the student was able to read 5 sight words. Then at the end of 2nd quarter/middle of the year, Student 3 was able identify 32 sight words. Student 3’s writing skills also developed. At the start of the year, Student was not able to write any sort of sentence. She only wrote a few letters she knew. By the end of the first quarter, Student 3 attempted to write a sentence. The student had an idea and attempted a simple sentence. By the middle of the year, Student 3 was able to write two simple sentences. The student wrote words with which she was familiar and knew how to spell. The sentences were simple but complete, containing both a subject and predicate.

Table 3

Student 3: Assessment Scores

	Beginning of the Year	End of First Quarter	End of First Semester (Middle of Year)
Writing sample	ABC	A BAT CANEY (I eat candy.)	I like fish. I like my ABC.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote known letters no sentence/words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple sentence Early words/phrases Does not describe picture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 simple, complete sentences did not try to write unfamiliar words wrote sentences using known words correct spelling of sight words capitals and punctuation
Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) level	< PC (1)	<PC (1)	<PC (1)
Sight word assessment	0	5	32
Nonsense Word Fluency (CVC pattern) Assessment	9 CLS 0 WWR	N/A	11 CLS 1 WWR

Notes: CVC = Consonant Vowel Consonant; WWR = Whole Words Read

Figure 7 provides an overview of the progress made in sight word identification.

There was minimal growth for Student 3 in text reading and comprehension scores.

There was minimal data collected regarding nonsense word fluency.

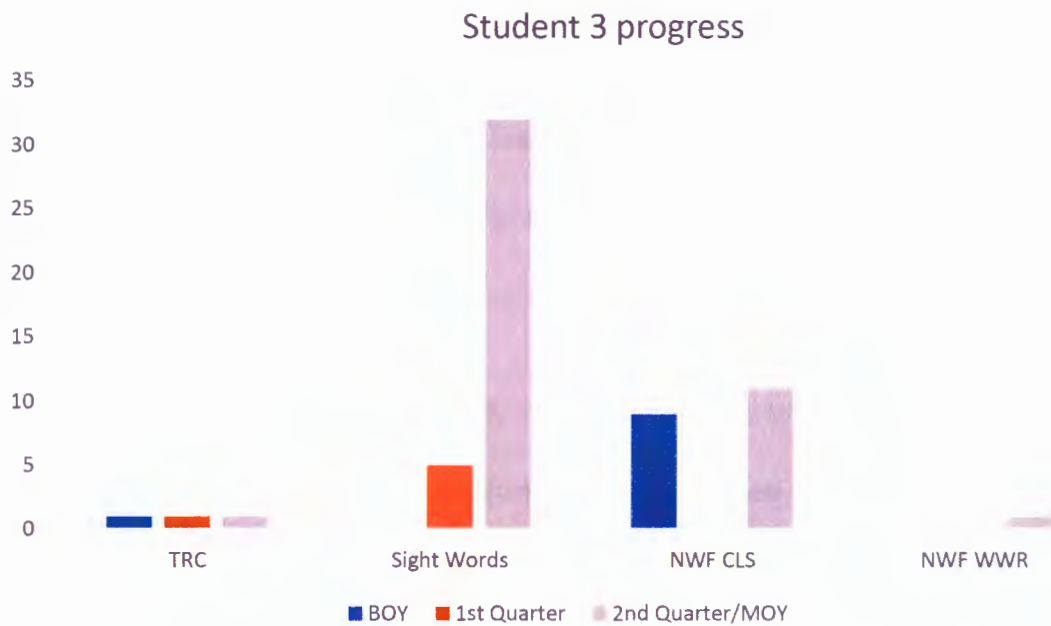


Figure 7. Graph of Assessment Results of Student

BOY: Beginning of Year

CLS: Correct Letter Sounds

MOY: Middle of Year

NWF: Nonsense Word Fluency

TRC: Text Reading & Comprehension

WWR: Whole Words Read

Limitations

There were a few limitations during this small study. A limitation for this study is that

the research study was only completed for the first semester of the school year. While

this gave me good data, there could be more and deeper data if the research was through a longer period of time.

Another limitation was that the Iowa Literacy Project website was not fully complete with all the instruction modules. The website provided literacy modules that I used in my research, but some modules were limited. It would have been helpful if all parts of all the modules were available. This would have given me more resources to use in my classroom using comprehensive literacy. The website could also be beneficial for other teachers using comprehensive literacy with students with disabilities.

Conclusions and Implications

Comprehensive literacy consists of daily instruction in word study, comprehension, and writing. There is also a period of time during each day for self-selected reading where students independently choose books and read. Using comprehensive literacy gave me a framework in which I could structure my classroom for maximum instruction. Last year was my first year teaching the ID Mild self-contained classroom and I did not use a framework such as comprehensive literacy. The students did not always receive phonics, comprehension, or writing instruction every day. They also did not have a time to independently read. Using a comprehensive literacy program allowed me to have a time to teach phonics skills as well as comprehension every day. Students also were able to have writing instruction each day. While self-selected reading did not go as well as planned, students were able to have a chance to gain reading stamina and choose books they wanted to read. With comprehensive literacy, I was able to have a framework in

which I had the time to teach each aspect of literacy. I found that I was more comfortable teaching literacy since I had the guidelines provided through the comprehensive literacy modules. My students also became more comfortable with literacy. All students made progress, though some showed greater progress than others, and all students continued to want to learn. A noticeable outcome of the comprehensive literacy instruction for my students was their change from passive participants in the classroom to engaged listeners, readers, and writers.

I think a comprehensive literacy program would be great to be implemented in many Special Education classrooms. It gives a framework in which students receive equal instruction in all the areas of literacy daily. It gives the classroom a schedule for instruction in word study, comprehension, and writing. Even if students have difficulty reading independently, they need a time where they can choose a book for enjoyment. The students can read without being assessed on their reading skills. In order for self-selected reading to be successful, students need instruction on how to pick good books to read. A comprehensive literacy program would be a good framework for regular education classroom as well, especially the younger grades. From my experience with comprehensive literacy in my Special Education self-contained classroom, it seems evident that students (all students) should have comprehensive instruction in these critical literacy foundations in order to become effective readers.

Future Research

My research study using comprehensive literacy in a self-contained Special Education classroom is a small sample of the effects of how a comprehensive literacy framework has on teaching and on students. I would like to see more research in the future using a comprehensive literacy framework with students with disabilities. Perhaps if the students would receive all areas of literacy daily and equally, they would be able to eventually become independent readers. I would like to see how my students this year continue to react and progress with a comprehensive literacy framework in the classroom. I was able to observe some additional effects of our comprehensive literacy as we continued the instruction beyond the timeframe of this study, across the second semester of the school year. Although my research study only displays data for the beginning of the year, end of first quarter, and end of the first semester, I continued to implement the comprehensive literacy schedule throughout the spring semester, including all aspects of reading, writing, word work, and self-selected reading.

I observed continued progress in my students. Sight word identification and reading levels increased. During self-selected reading while listening to stories on the computer, I observed students bringing paper and pencils to their listening station in order to write down words from the books they were reading. This desire to write words from their readings reflected their shift toward being readers and writers engaged in learning about words and using words for their own writing interests and purposes. Students were realizing they could read and write, and they wanted to do so much more. These observations show me the importance of providing students with

more time in a comprehensive literacy program, where the benefits of reading, writing, and word work become more evident and are realized. I would like to research the impact of the use of this comprehensive literacy framework on my students over time, documenting their reading and writing growth over a three year span of continued comprehensive literacy instruction.

Another area of future research that interests me is in examining how much teacher control I am able to give up to my students. Throughout my journal I noticed that my language consisted often of phrases such as "I let my students-" and "I needed them to-." This language suggested a more teacher-dominate control of the classroom environment, and the need for me to control what and how students engaged. With a comprehensive literacy framework, there should be more student influence on instruction. As students are learning to be independent readers and writers through their engagement in comprehensive literacy, I would like to examine how I negotiate the change in my role as the teacher. As I continue to use comprehensive literacy, I would like to examine more closely the relationship between providing a less restrictive learning environment for my students and my language and engagement in such a teaching role.

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Appendix A

Example of a Journal Entry

8/24/15-8/28/15: First Week of School

I introduced self-selected reading/read to self. I wasn't sure when I was going to put this aspect into my schedule. There is a small period of time when the 2nd graders are returning from Specials and before the 1st graders leave for Specials. On the first day of school, I needed students to pick books for their book baskets. Each student went to the classroom library to select books. Other students were conducting busy works since it was the first day of school and students were just learning the routine for the year. After student selected books, I realized many of them did not pick good fit book. Most of the students just randomly selected books. I decided I would have to provide lessons on picking books.

12/7/15-12/11/15

Self-selected reading/read to self has not been going that well. Students are so below in reading that independent reading is hard for them. They can't sit and read to themselves for more than one simple text. I added listening to reading to self-selected reading on the computer to our self-selected reading time. Students are able to pick books that they will enjoy and listen to them. The word are displayed to students and it becomes a read aloud. I only have four computers so students alternate days between independent reading from their book baskets and reading a book online. This way they are still building reading stamina and practicing independent reading. Since I put this into place, self-selected reading has gone a lot smoother. Students are more engaged and for a longer period of time.

1/4/16-1/8/16

If we are not working on spelling words during writing, students work on developing sentences. My students have difficulty with creating complete sentences. Right now, students are completing predictable sentences such as "I see" and "I like" sentences. Students also draw a picture and complete sentence starters to form a thought and stay on topic. Right now students are asked to only independently write (and spell) the rest of the sentence from the sentence starter. Writing samples are going "okay." Students rush and many do not give a lot of effort. Writing is difficult for them. They often ask for a lot of help and need a lot of prompting to try.

Appendix B
My Professional Autobiography

This is my 6th year teaching elementary education. I graduated with a degree in Elementary Education and Special Education. My first half year after graduation, I worked as a Cross-Categorical Resource Teacher. I mainly worked with Special Education kindergarten students who were pulled out of class anywhere from 1 to 3 hours to receive intensive support instruction. Throughout this year, I was just learning the ropes of teaching. During my second year of teaching (2010-2011), I taught a regular education 3rd grade classroom. I struggled this year. It was difficult for me to teach students that ranged from low abilities to high abilities. I had to find ways to challenge students and give interventions to other students. I implemented literacy programs such as Daily 5 and Literacy Stations. Daily 5 consists of the centers that include Word Work, Read to Self, Read to a Partner, Listen to Reading, and Work on Writing. During the Daily 5 time, students would work in their centers while I conducted Guided Reading groups. This is a researched literacy framework, but it has to be done correctly and with authenticity. I was struggling to find a time to have small reading groups that Daily 5 time become busy work. Students were not learning when I implemented this framework. Many parts of the Daily 5 are good to have in the classroom as it can be comprehensive and implement all parts of literacy. However, there needed to be more authentic teaching. I then learned about Literacy Stations. Through Literacy Stations, I was able to develop more authentic independent work in order for me to work with reading groups. Stations was similar to Daily 5, but for the older grades. Stations were a little more than just writing or listening to a book. While Literacy Stations were good, I continued to struggle with students receiving all parts of literacy every day. Scheduling

was difficult for me. Students did not always engage in working with words instruction, comprehension instruction, writing activities, and independent reading every day. Some days students would only partake in some elements of literacy. My teaching instruction was not enough and some of my students suffered.

Special Education is the position I wanted. Before my 3rd year of teaching (2011-2014), I was offered the Cross-Categorical Resource job. I was a Special Education resource teacher. Students were pulled out of the regular education classroom for a certain amount of time for specialized instruction. All students had an Individual Educational Plans (IEP). IEPs are individualized, but small groups were developed based on academic levels for small group instruction. For the next three years I focused on teaching caseloads of 20-30 students toward their IEP goals. I saw some students for only comprehension, math, and writing. Other students I saw for all literacy aspects as well as math. I used some specific programs geared for Special Education. There are decoding programs such as *Recipe for Reading™* or *Letterland™* and comprehension programs such as *Making Connections™*. I also tried to work on student independence by creating some stations for students to work at when they completed the tasks I assigned. At times it was hard to get everything accomplished in the resource classroom. There could be times where I had a few different groups at a time. I did have a teacher assistant, but the TA was shared and not in the classroom all day. With so many groups, it could be hard to get in quality instruction. However, this is the way the resource program was and I did my best to give my students the instruction they needed.

Last school year, 2014-2015, I decided I needed a change. I found a new position as an Intellectually Disabled (ID) Mild I classroom teacher at a different school. This is a Special Education self-contained classroom that could consist of up to 12 kindergarten through 2nd graders. The students in this classroom are required to receive Common Core instruction as well as IEP goal instruction. Within the ID Mild I classroom, I am these students' teacher of record. I have a full time teacher assistant in the classroom all day who assists with clerical duties, management, and especially with small group instruction. Instruction in the ID Mild I classroom involves whole group and small group. Small group instruction is for reading and math. Small group instruction involves group rotating between myself, my teacher assistant, and the computer. During reading instruction with myself, students are taught new decoding concepts and guided reading. My teacher assistant then will remediate skills. While teaching literacy, I would focus on decoding for a few days during the first half of the week and comprehension for the second half of the week. The program *Letterland* is used for phonics instruction and level readers were used for guided reading instruction. Students did not receive word work strategies and comprehension skills every day. Whole group literacy instruction would involve a 15 minute lesson on a decoding or comprehension skill. Literacy skills were alternated. All students would attend Specials with a regular education first grade class even though some of the students were considered second graders. This did give me a planning period, but I had to find a time in the schedule to teach writing or Science/Social Studies. This time was after small group math instruction. Writing

instruction was alternated every other day with Science and Social Studies. It was difficult to feel that I fully taught students all the skills they needed.

I decided to remain the ID Mild I classroom teacher for this current 2015-2016 school year. However after learning about comprehensive literacy, I rearranged how I ran the classroom. Reading and Math instruction still include small group rotations between myself, my teacher assistant, and the computer. This year though, I make an effort to teach decoding skills as well as comprehension during each small group reading instruction. Students receive word study and comprehension each day. Students also go to Specials with their grade level. First graders go with a first grade classroom and second graders go with a second grade classroom. While I am unable to have a planning period, this schedule allows me to have a time to expose students to grade level standards. This schedule also allows me to have a time to provide Science and Social Studies. This year my school started using Thematic Units. I collaborate with the regular education teachers and use these units for each grade level. I do modify many lessons. These units give me an opportunity to integrate Science and Social Studies instruction with literacy. During this time period, students receive more decoding and comprehension instruction along with Science or Social Studies skills. This schedule provides a time every day for writing. Students receive writing instruction daily instead of alternating with other subjects. While this schedule can be tiring for myself, I enjoy it more because the students are receiving all the instruction needed. Students have quality lessons in all areas. Students also get a chance to be involved in similar instruction as the regular education classroom while also being taught on their level.

Appendix C

Class Schedules for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016

Original ID Mild I Schedule 2014-2015

8:45-9:15	Morning Work
9:20-9:40	Morning Meeting/Calendar
9:40-10:00	Mini Reading Lesson (Decoding or Comprehension)
10:00-11:00	Reading Small Groups
11:00-11:10	Bathroom Break
11:10-11:40	Recess
11:45-12:25	Specials
12:35-1:05	Lunch
1:10-1:25	Mini Math Lesson
1:25-2:35	Math Small Groups
2:35-3:00	Writing or Science or Social Studies
3:00-3:30	Snack/Independent Centers
3:30	Pack Up/Dismissal

*Could be a 5 minute delay per transitions

Current ID Mild I Schedule 2015-2016

	1st Grade	2nd Grade
8:45-9:15	Morning Work	Morning Work
9:20-9:40	Sharing Time/Calendar	Sharing Time/Calendar
9:40-10:40	Reading Small Groups	Reading Small Groups
10:45-11:25	Grade Level Common Core Whole Group Reading Lessons integrated with Science/S.S.	Specials with grade level
11:25-11:45	Self-Selected Reading	Self-Selected Reading
11:45-12:25	Specials with grade level	Grade Level Common Core Whole Group Reading Lessons integrated with Science/S.S.
12:35-1:05	Lunch	Lunch
1:05-1:35	Recess	Recess
1:40-2:50	Math Lesson/Small Groups	Math Lesson/ Small Groups
2:50-3:15	Writing	Writing
3:15-3:35	Snack/Centers/Pack Up	Snack/Centers/Pack Up

- Could have 5 minute delay for transitions