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Readers theater : effect of fluency, comprehension, and attitudes toward reading in middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities

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EFFECT ON FLUENCY, COMPREHENSION, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD READING

IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH MILD-TO-MODERATE DISABILITIES

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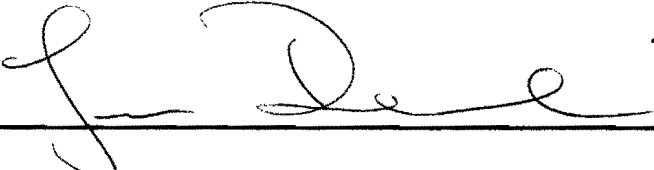
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of Readers Theater on reading fluency, reading comprehension, and attitude toward reading in middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities. All fourteen participants in this research were students in one special day classroom who read below grade level. Quantitative measures for this pre-experimental research were obtained by comparing pre-test and post-test scores from three nationally-normed assessment instruments. The independent variable in each case was Readers Theater. The dependent variables of reading fluency and reading comprehension yielded interval data and were analyzed using paired samples t-tests. The dependent variable of attitude toward reading was further broken down into three separate categories: attitude toward recreational reading, attitude toward academic reading, and overall attitude toward reading. The design of the attitude survey incorporated a 4-point Likert scale yielding nonparametric data that was analyzed using the Wilcoxon matched-pairs test. Results revealed statistically significant growth in reading fluency and in one aspect of attitude toward reading over the six-week intervention period. Specifically, the research revealed increases in the number of correct words read per minute and in attitude toward recreational reading among the participants. Although increases were seen across all measures, a statistical difference was not seen in scores for reading comprehension, attitude toward academic reading, and overall attitude toward reading over the course of the study. Results from this investigation imply that Readers Theater has the potential to increase both reading fluency scores and enjoyment of reading in struggling middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The interest behind this research grew naturally out of years of work with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students with mild-to-moderate disabilities who struggle on a daily basis to navigate an education system that relies on strong reading skills for the delivery of instruction. Because of their learning challenges it is not uncommon for these student to enter middle school with poorly developed literacy skills, even when they have had focused reading instruction throughout their elementary school years. Without having attained sufficient levels of reading accuracy and fluency, these students expend so much energy on deciphering individual words that the meaning of the text they are reading is lost in the process. With little comprehension of the material, disconnection with the content is frequently the result. Some of these students may have become so disengaged and disenchanted with reading after years of frustration that they have developed negative attitudes toward reading and sometimes disinterest in school altogether. Without having attained a functional level of reading proficiency, using written text as the primary means for delivering information to these students is inefficient, ineffective, and may even be counterproductive. Nonetheless by the time they are in middle school, most students have been expected to learn new information by taking meaning from text for several years.

Poor readers' lack of reading achievement is a barrier to their being able to access information in the same ways as their grade-level peers, and quickly puts them behind academically. And, not only do poor reading skills impact students' abilities to succeed in general education classrooms, but they impact them on both social and cultural levels as well (Jennings, Caldwell, & Lerner, 2009). As society becomes more technologically developed, communication through reading and writing has increased, and email, texting, and social media

have become predominant modes of personal connection. Without fluent access to these forms of communication, students with poor reading skills may be excluded from certain common social and cultural experiences in which their peers engage on a regular basis. For students in special day classes (SDCs), who are already physically separated from their general education peers for much of their academic day, further social and cultural isolation may compound preexisting feelings of being separate and different. There are clearly innumerable situations in which good reading skills are critical, and it is imperative that successful interventions be in place to help students with special needs who struggle with reading.

Children with disabilities are distinguished as such because of some physical or mental impairment that adversely affects their educational performance. Determination of disabilities is made by professionals, such as educational psychologists and health-care providers, who through various assessments determine that a child has one or more of the thirteen disabilities listed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA These disabilities are: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment, including blindness (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities [NICHCY], 2012).

Within each disability category there is a range of severity and each student places somewhere along that continuum. The level of severity helps determine the best placement and services for each child. Many students with mild learning disabilities, for example, may be able to receive minor assistance within the general education classroom that sufficiently meets their needs, or may be pulled out to a resource specialist program (RSP) or to a self-contained special

day class (SDC) for part of the day. Other students with mild, or more moderate and severe, disabilities are better served in long-term special education classes where their Individualized Education Plans, or IEPs, can be attended to more successfully. The students in these programs spend most, if not all, of their school days there, where they may receive a variety of special services. The goal with all special education students is to place them in the environment that is least restrictive yet serves their learning needs (NICHCY, 2013).

Most students in mild-to-moderate special day classes have specific learning disabilities, communication disorders, or emotional or behavioral disorders. Additionally, some may have intellectual disabilities or autism (Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CTC], 2012). Students in SDC spend at least 51% of their day within the self-contained classroom with other students who have special needs. They are usually taught the same subjects as students in regular classrooms, but the material is modified or adapted to meet the individual needs of the students in the class. Because reading is a subject that is pervasive across all content areas and so needed throughout life, it is common for there to be a particular emphasis on reading instruction in SDC programs, and most students have reading goals in their IEPs (Jennings, Caldwell, & Lerner, 2009).

There are many good programs to target reading problems, though most are designed for students in elementary grades. In investigating possible interventions to best address the critical needs of middle school students with disabilities, it became clear that for a particular method to succeed it would need to not only utilize research-based instructional strategies, but be engaging to this age group as well. Readers Theater came to the forefront as it appeared to be one such program that incorporated both of these factors.

Though Readers Theater can be traced as far back as 2500 years to the Greeks, its value in helping to improve reading skills wasn't realized until the 1960s when it had become popular among college drama departments. As the graduates of that era went on to use it in their own high school English classrooms, they began to recognize that Readers Theater was not only giving students its intended immersion into quality literary works, but was improving their reading skills as well. In retrospect, their discovery may not be surprising. Readers Theater makes wide use of strategies that are now known to have significant impact in improving reading (Coger & White, 1973).

Readers Theater's unique combination of components and integral use of the research-based strategies of modeled reading, guided reading, and repeated reading, along with the social nature of its design which is developmentally appropriate for adolescents, seemed well-suited to the specific needs of this particular group. In Readers Theater a written story text that has been converted into scripts is modeled by a teacher, rehearsed by students until it can be read fluently and with meaningful expression, and then performed for an audience. The Readers Theater method of performance does not require memorization of lines or the use of props or physical actions, but rather emphasizes the delivery of meaning through interpretive reading ("Reader's theatre," 2013; Coger & White, 1973). Readers Theater is relatively easy to implement in the classroom. Readers Theater scripts are available and adaptable to address a variety of reading levels, genres, content areas, or themes, and can be chosen to target the particular needs and interests of the group (Coger & White, 1973; Evan-Moor, 2003; Jennett, 2004; Martin, 2002). This technique therefore can be engaging while allowing struggling readers the experience of reading with proficiency.

During practices, teachers have the opportunity to individually guide the reading of their students, providing corrective feedback with regards to accuracy and expression. Students have the chance to work collaboratively, helping each other practice their lines. This natural context within which the strategies of modeled reading, guided reading, and repeated reading are being carried out, allows students to perfect their reading skills in a natural structure while moving toward perfecting their parts for the performance (Coger & White, 1973). For adolescents who may be uninspired by other focused reading instruction, Readers Theater has often been shown to motivate them to be involved. The unique aspects of this program support the idea that Readers Theater may well be an effective means for addressing the reading needs of middle-school-aged students with learning challenges.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of reading competence to the academic success of students in middle school cannot be overemphasized. According to the California Department of Education's Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools (CDE, 2007), the transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" takes place between the third and fourth grades. From that point on, teaching reading for its own sake begins to fade, and content area learning becomes the target of daily lessons (Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, Decker, Roberts, Vaughn & Lesaux, 2007). By the time students reach middle school, literacy instruction in general education classrooms is primarily directed toward active engagement with text through analysis, critique, and problem solving (CDE, 2007). Middle school students who did not develop sufficient reading skills in elementary school are at a distinct disadvantage (Harmon, 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Those with special needs may have even greater difficulties as they often are forced to contend with compounded issues resulting from their disabilities (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities [NJCLD], 2008).

As these struggling readers must focus their efforts to decode and make sense of the words on the page, they become removed from the content, meaning, and ensuing critical analysis of the material and fall behind their peers (Donahue, Daane, & Jin, 2005; Rasinski, 2000). Many times their frustration increases, as do their negative associations with reading (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). As text becomes increasingly complex (Rasinski, 2000), its meaning becomes less accessible to them, and their engagement with the material and interest in reading may begin to diminish (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988).

Lack of access to the curriculum content combined with the adolescent student's increasing frustration, negative associations with reading, and declining interest toward reading, present a critical situation that calls for timely intervention (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development [CCAD], 1989). Instructional methods used with struggling middle school readers must therefore not only improve reading development, but serve to re-engage the students' interests and motivation as well (Ivey, 1999). Readers Theater is one such program.

Readers Theater is a reading intervention method that has been used with a variety of ages and populations of students, including some adolescents and students with special needs. It utilizes research-based strategies and has been shown in numerous studies to be effective in increasing overall reading performance, engaging reluctant readers, and improving students' attitudes toward reading (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Keehn, 2003; Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Young & Rasinski, 2009). Though there have been some studies that have targeted students with special needs, there have been relatively few, and though results have generally been positive with other groups, further research with this population has been recommended (Corcoran & Davis, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The ultimate goal of this research was to improve the reading achievement of students who have been diagnosed with mild-to-moderate disabilities. Specifically, this study evaluated whether Readers Theater was an effective intervention program for increasing the reading fluency and comprehension skills of middle school students in a mild-to-moderate special day class, and investigated what impact this program has on these students' attitudes toward reading.

Reading competence is comprised of reading accuracy, reading speed, and the ultimate purpose for reading, comprehension. Based on her seminal research in 1967 which studied the effectiveness of various reading instruction models, Chall determined that reading development progresses through six essential stages (Chall, 1987). It is not until the child has mastered the foundational skills of the first few stages that word recognition starts to be automatic and reading speed can increase. Only at this point of fluency does the focus begin to shift from the deciphering of words toward the meaning of the text (Bashir & Hook, 2009; Tyler & Chard, 2000). Once having achieved this level of reading proficiency, the student can begin to use reading itself as a means for receiving instruction through text (Briggs & Forbes, 2002).

Although not all literacy experts agree that reading skill is acquired in a linear fashion, (Briggs & Forbes, 2002; Pikulski & Chard, 2005), there is significant evidence to suggest that reading comprehension is dependent on an adequate level of reading fluency (Allington, 1983; Bashir & Hook, 2009; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Recognizing reading fluency as an essential component of reading achievement, it has been determined that it should be considered a primary goal in elementary education (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). For students with exceptional learning needs who have not progressed past the early stages of reading development into fluency by middle school, the goal of acquiring reading fluency becomes even more pressing (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development [CCAD], 1989).

Research supports several specific strategies for improving reading fluency (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Dowhower, 1987: Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Two commonly used methods are guided reading and repeated reading (NRP, 2000). Guided reading is a strategy in which the reader is provided with modeling and immediate corrective feedback. With the method of guided reading, fluent reading is initially demonstrated by a skilled reader while the student follows along in the text. This allows the student to gain immediate comprehension of the material and provides the opportunity for error correction before the student attempts to read the passage independently (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). The repeated reading strategy is based on the idea that the reader practices reading a passage over and over until it can be read with accuracy, fluidity, and correct expression. Repeated reading has been shown in multiple studies to increase word recognition, fluency, comprehension, and self-confidence (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002; Young & Rasinski, 2009).

In addressing the particular needs of middle-school-aged students with mild-to-moderate disabilities, not only is it necessary for interventions to be successful in addressing fluency needs, but they must be acceptable and motivating to students who may be resistant, discouraged, and apathetic toward reading after years of difficulty (Tunmer & Chapman, 2002). Readers Theater is an intervention program that employs the methods of guided reading and repeated reading, and additionally has been shown to be acceptable and motivating to struggling adolescent readers. The structure of the Readers Theater program provides an opportunity for students to work cooperatively toward a common goal in a controlled situation as they practice reading and performing their scripts.

Although numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Readers Theater with various populations, many of which included some special education students, there are

relatively few studies targeting its impact with special education students specifically, particularly those of middle school age. The lack of research with special education students was addressed and recommended by Corcoran & Davis (2005) after their analysis of the effectiveness of Readers Theater with second and third grade special education students.

Given the gap in research with students with special needs, combined with the reported effectiveness of Readers Theater in improving the reading skills and attitudes toward reading of students in a variety of population groups, including adolescents with special education needs, Readers Theater was chosen as the intervention method for this investigation. The ultimate goal in carrying out this research is to improve the reading skills and attitudes toward reading of the middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in the special day class being evaluated in this study.

Research Questions

This research investigated the following questions to determine the effectiveness of Readers Theater in targeting and improving the reading skills and attitudes of the participants in the study.

1. What effect does participation in Readers Theater have on reading fluency among students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in a middle school special day class program?

2. What effect does participation in Readers Theater have on reading comprehension among students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in a middle school special day class program?

3. What is the impact of Readers Theater on the attitudes toward reading in students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in a middle school special day class program?

Definition of Terms

- Accuracy: for the purpose of this study: The ability to read words correctly.

- Attitude toward reading: the emotional response to reading that leads students toward wanting to read more or wanting to read less (Smith, 1988).

- Autism: a brain development disorder characterized by impaired social interaction, communication, and by restricted and repetitive behavior. Signs usually begin before a child is 3 years old (http://www.understandingspecialeducation.com).

- Automaticity: automatic word recognition which allows for smooth and spontaneous reading of text. To be able to recognize and comprehend written words reflexively, without having to decode or pause to consider their definition (http://www.education.com).

- Content Areas: academic subjects like math, science, English/language arts, reading, and social sciences (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Decoding: the ability to translate a word from print to speech, usually by employing knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences. The deciphering of a new word by sounding it out (http://www.ldonline.org).

- English Language Learners (ELLs): students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Grade Equivalent Scores: in a norm-referenced assessment, individual student's scores are reported relative to those of the norming population. This can be done in a variety of ways, but one way is to report the average grade of students who received the same score as the individual child. Thus, an individual child's score is described as being the same as students that are in higher, the same, or lower grades than that

student (e.g. a student in 2nd grade my earn the same score that an average fourth grade student does, suggesting that this student is quite advanced) (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Individualized Education Plan (IEP): a plan outlining special education and related services specifically designed to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Learning Disability (LD): a disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. It may also be referred to as a learning disorder or a learning difference (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Norm-Referenced Assessment: a type of assessment that compares an individual child's score against the scores of other children who have previously taken the same assessment. With a norm-referenced assessment, the child's raw score can be converted into a comparative score such as a percentile rank or a stanine (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Other Health Impairments (OHI): a category of special education services for students with limited strength, vitality or alertness, due to chronic or acute health problems (such as asthma, ADHD, diabetes, or a heart condition) (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Phonics: a form of instruction to cultivate the understanding and use of the alphabetic principle. It emphasizes the predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds in spoken language) and graphemes (the letters that represent those sounds in written

language) and shows how this information can be used to read or decode words
(http://www.ldonline.org).

- Prosody: the use of expression in reading, as evidenced through correct pausing, appropriateness of phrasing, intonation, and stress. The study of rhythm, intonation, and related attributes in speech (http://www.education.com).

- Reading comprehension: the reason for reading: understanding what is read by reading actively (making sense from text) and with purpose (for learning, understanding, or enjoyment) (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Reading fluency: the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, with proper expression. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding words, they can focus their attention on what the text means (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Sight Words: words that a reader recognizes without having to sound them out. Some sight words are "irregular," or have letter-sound relationships that are uncommon. Some examples of sight words are you, are, have and said (http://www.ldonline.org).

- Specific Learning Disability: special education term used to define a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language spoken or written that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical equations. (http://www.understandingspecialeducation.com).

- Speech and Language Impairments: communication disorders such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or voice impairment (http://www.understandingspecialeducation.com).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter gives an overview of the literature as it relates to reading development, reading improvement, and the use of Readers Theater in addressing poor reading skills and attitudes toward reading in adolescents. As was emphasized in the previous chapter, in order for middle school students to be able to access the curriculum across content areas and maintain pace with their peers, it is essential that they be accurate and fluent readers. Yet, for those students with special needs who struggle with poor reading skills this is often not the case. The older challenged readers get, the more imperative it becomes that successful and motivating reading interventions be put in place for them. Though there is a lack of research that specifically evaluates its use with students with exceptionalities, the literature shows that Readers Theater is a reading program that has been demonstrated to improve reading skills among a range of populations of students, including adolescents and some students with special needs. This evidence supports the foundation of this research as it lends credence to the use of Readers Theater as a means for addressing the reading needs of the middle-school-aged participants with mild-to-moderate disabilities in the study.

The arrangement of this chapter is as follows. First, the acquisition of reading skills related to reading fluency is deliberated in order to foreground the overall discussion. Specific strategies that have been determined to be successful in increasing fluency are presented. Second, the importance of comprehension as the main purpose for reading is examined, both as an independent aspect of reading, and in relation to the other components involved in reading. Strategies that are demonstrated to improve reading comprehension are discussed. Third,

challenges with regards to adolescents who struggle with reading are addressed with a particular concentration on motivation and attitudes toward reading. Finally, the chapter is summarized as it relates to this study and the use of Readers Theater in addressing the reading needs of middle school students with exceptionalities.

<div align="center">Reading Fluency</div>

Reading competence requires the integration of multiple skills that are interdependent and take years to develop. In order for reading to be a useful means for delivering information, a reader must have acquired an adequate level of reading fluency, the bridge to reading comprehension (Allington, 2009). Reading fluency is comprised of three major skills: accuracy, speed, and prosody. Each of these major skills is dependent on the foundation of a variety of sub-skills (Rasinski, 2003).

Based on her seminal research in 1967 that studied the effectiveness of various reading instruction models, Chall determined that reading development progresses through a series of essential stages (Chall, 1983; Chall, 1987). In the first two stages, the child develops pre-reading and decoding skills. With awareness of the manipulation of sound in spoken words and an understanding that print has a correspondence to meaning, the early reader uses phonemic awareness and phonics instruction to begin the process of learning to read individual sounds and words. These two stages are followed by the third stage in which the child integrates the knowledge acquired in the first two stages and begins reading words in connection to one another, relying on context and meaning rather than strictly phonics.

Once the child is able to string words together and use context to help uncover the meaning in the text, reading can begin to become more automatic and reading speed increases. At this point as the focus begins to shift from the deciphering of words to the meaning of the

text, reading fluency begins to develop (Bashir & Hook, 2009; Tyler & Chard, 2000). A student at this stage is finally able to comprehend well enough to use reading for learning. As the student continues on as a reader, fluency and comprehension continue to work together in a complementary manner, further improving the reading competence of the student (Briggs & Forbes, 2002).

Although many literacy experts agree that the complex components of reading are interdependent, and reading skill is not acquired as a solely linear process (Briggs & Forbes, 2002; Pikulski & Chard, 2005), there is significant evidence to suggest that reading comprehension is dependent on an adequate level of reading fluency (Allington, 1983; Bashir & Hook, 2009; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Conversely it has been found that those children who do not reach a state of fluency in their reading will continue to struggle to read (Allington, 1983). Recognizing fluency as an essential component of reading achievement, the National Reading Panel [NRP] (2000) determined that reading fluency should be considered a primary goal in elementary education. In addressing inadequate reading skills in struggling middle school students, fluency and effective strategies that contribute to its development must be examined.

When reading is fluent, connected text is read quickly and smoothly with little effort or awareness of the mechanics of reading (Meyer & Felton, 1999). For students to read fluently they must be accurate in decoding, automatic in word recognition, and expressive in oral reading, appropriately using the prosodic features of stress, pitch, and appropriate phrasing (Dowhower, 1987; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003;). Research supports several specific strategies for improving these aspects of reading fluency (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Dowhower, 1987; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Two of these methods are repeated reading and guided reading (NRP, 2000).

Strategies to Improve Fluency

It is generally agreed that one of the most successful strategies for improving reading fluency, and therefore word recognition, accuracy, speed, and comprehension is the method of repeated reading (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NRP, 2000; Samuels, 1979; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002). This tactic is based in the idea that the reader practices reading a passage aloud over and over in order to increase reading speed and decrease the number of reading errors. In the process, the reader not only reaches a level of automatic recognition of the words, but begins to chunk words into meaningful phrases, thereby enhancing reading expression (Dowhower, 1989). Repeated reading aids in not only word recognition and fluency, but in self-confidence as well (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Young & Rasinski, 2009). In addition to the strategy of repeated reading, guided reading can be a highly successful method for improving reading skills.

Guided reading is shown to increase reading fluency and prevent reading error by providing the reader with modeling and immediate corrective feedback (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002). Guided reading is often used in conjunction with the repeated reading strategy. With guided reading a teacher initially models fluent reading as the student follows along in the text. The demonstration of the prosodic effects of chunking and phrasing allows students to not only gain the correct meaning of the passage, but provides them with an example to mimic in subsequent readings when they endeavor to read the text independently.

Guided reading can be used in various ways. When it is applied in echo reading, the teacher models the correct reading of a sentence or phrase and the student immediately repeats what the teacher has said allowing them to effectively read with the accuracy and expression of the teacher. Guided reading can also be used in preparation for choral reading, small group

reading, and partner reading, allowing for a number of different situations in which the student may experience reading success. With struggling readers guided reading aids in their success as it allows the student to already have some understanding of the material they encounter as they read the text autonomously for the first time. This sequential method helps students prevent errors by allowing them to correct their own mistakes before they ever attempt to read the passage on their own promoting reading fluency (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003).

Readers Theater is a reading intervention program that makes use of the strategies of repeated reading and guided reading. In Readers Theater, readers take on the roles of either the narrator or a character in short dramas that have been created by converting text to scripts. When students are first introduced to a play, the teacher gives an overview of the story and the characters in it. Next, correct reading of the script is modeled for students by a teacher. The play is then rehearsed by students until it can be read fluently and with meaningful expression. Finally the play is performed for an audience (Coger & White, 1973).

Unlike with other performance-based strategies, the "actors" in Readers Theater bring life to their characters through reading their lines with oral expression, rather than memorizing them or acting out the parts they play (Corcoran & Davis, 2005). Rereading and guidance by the teacher are viewed as rehearsal in the Readers Theater program (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999). Readers Theater, therefore, gives an authentic purpose for participating in the fluency enhancing strategy of repeated reading (Tyler & Chard, 2000). The design of Readers Theater provides a natural structure within which repeated readings and active coaching in accuracy, phrasing and expression are integral, as students work to perfect their parts for the performance (Coger & White, 1973).

Although there has been research that found no significant impact on reading fluency using Readers Theater (Clark, Morrison, & Wilcox, 2009), a number of other studies have demonstrated substantial increases in students' reading fluency scores with its use (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998/1999). The research-based strategies of repeated reading and guided reading embedded in the particular construct of the Readers Theater program may help to explain the positive findings. The methods of providing timely feedback combined with the use of repeated oral readings have been shown in multiple studies to improve students' reading fluency and overall reading skills (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NRP, 2000). With the direct relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension researchers have evaluated Readers Theater as a means for improving reading comprehension as well (Allington, 1983; Bashir & Hook, 2009; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). This will be examined in the next section.

Reading Comprehension

Though people read for a variety of reasons, the ultimate purpose for reading is to take meaning and understanding from print. For students to be successful in school they must early on develop adequate reading skills that will allow them to read fluently and comprehend written text in multiple subject areas. The entire educational system is designed around the idea that students will become competent readers by the third or fourth grade, and from that point forward will be able to use reading as a means for obtaining the information they need to learn. Reading instruction for its own sake begins to fade at that time, and by middle school students have been expected to read and learn from text for several years (CDE, 2007).

Students who do not comprehend what they are reading can easily fall behind, may disengage with the material being taught, and often become frustrated. When a lack of reading

comprehension continues over time, as it can with students with disabilities and other struggling readers, it is common for frustration levels to increase, for negative associations with reading to develop, and sometimes for the students to lose interest in school altogether (Harmon, 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NJCLD, 2008). Reading skills and in particular, comprehension, are therefore absolutely critical skills for students to have in order to succeed in school.

Though most researchers would agree that reading comprehension is difficult and without an adequate level of reading fluency, a number of different factors impact a reader's ability to comprehend written material. Besides fluency, a student's background knowledge, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, comprehension skills, and motivation all contribute to one's successful comprehension of what has been read (Tompkins, 2010). As with fluency, comprehension is a multi-dimensional process.

Comprehension has been defined as a process in which readers apply their prior knowledge to an author's message in order to construct meaning that they can extract and use for a specific purpose (Irwin, 1991). Background world and literary knowledge can provide the necessary connection to new text, and give the reader a framework within which to place and understand new information (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Research shows that the more background experience and understanding readers have, the more likely it is that they will be able to successfully comprehend what they read (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Conversely, without adequate prior knowledge and fluent reading skills, unfamiliar vocabulary and text may provide a great deal of challenge to the reader. By activating prior knowledge and teaching vocabulary to their students, teachers can impact a student's success in reading new material.

There are different levels of thinking involved in comprehension. The most basic type of comprehension is literal comprehension. At this level, readers are able to determine the main

ideas in a passage and are aware of sequence and important details. At the next levels, readers use their knowledge of the explicit information in the text, combined with their own prior knowledge to infer a broader meaning. As comprehension develops and students are exposed to new ideas and concepts, they become able to evaluate, predict, summarize, and question what they're reading (Tompkins, 2010). For students who struggle with reading fluency, it can be a challenge to comprehend even at the lowest levels of comprehension.

Fluent readers are able to recognize most words automatically and are therefore not slowed down by having to pause to decode words. Because they can read quickly and efficiently, their cognitive resources are free to attend to comprehending the material being read. Struggling readers on the other hand, must focus their efforts to decipher and make sense of the individual words on the page and in so doing become removed from the content, meaning, and ensuing critical analysis of the material. This reading challenge reinforces the discrepancy between fluent readers and struggling readers, and contributes to poor readers falling behind their peers academically (Donahue, Daane, & Jin, 2005; Rasinski, 2000).

Clearly, when interventions are successful in improving reading comprehension in struggling readers they have significant value. It is generally agreed that fluency as a foundational skill for developing comprehension is essential. Furthermore, it is evident through research, that strategies that increase fluency will indirectly if not directly impact reading comprehension also (Allington, 2009; Bashir & Hook, 2009; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Therefore, fluency strategies discussed earlier will be revisited in the context of reading comprehension along with several other strategies considered to be effective in its promotion.

Strategies to Improve Comprehension

Tompkins (2010) suggests that in addition to fluency, different elements can have a bearing on how well a person comprehends what is being read. Two of these are adequate background knowledge and familiarity with the vocabulary. Certain instructional strategies are beneficial in addressing these components.

Well established as a tactic for easing the comprehension of new material is to front-load academic vocabulary and other unfamiliar words, as well as to activate prior knowledge in students before reading. By pre-teaching vocabulary and ensuring that students have the general and specific background knowledge they need to integrate the new information presented in the text, teachers can help their students establish the necessary information base prior to reading (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Textbook publishers commonly place photographs, key words, vocabulary, and definitions at the beginning of chapters for the same purpose (Globe Fearon & Pearson Learning Group, 2007; Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 2004). This strategy can assist not only in students' comprehension of what is being read, but can also encourage students' fluent reading of the text as it helps to prevent the obstruction of unfamiliar concepts and words.

Repeated reading benefits reading fluency but is also a method that has been demonstrated to increase reading comprehension (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NRP, 2000; Samuels, 1979; Worthy & Broaddus, 2002). When students reread, they think again about what they've already read. With each new reading they move to a deeper level of comprehension as they move beyond their initial conception to more integrated levels of understanding (Yaden, 1988). For students at the earlier stages of reading development, repeated reading provides opportunities to increase accuracy and phrasing. As their accuracy increases, so does their automaticity, and eventually this can allow them to free their attention from

decoding and word recognition to focus on meaning and comprehension (Bashir & Hook, 2009; Tyler & Chard, 2000).

Guided reading also supports reading comprehension in a couple of different ways. When a teacher initially models reading a text for students as they follow along, it allows students to hear the prosodic effects of how words being chunked together into phrases establish correct meaning. This practice gives students immediate corrective feedback and allows them to simultaneously concentrate on seeing the words while comprehending the material, something struggling readers may have little experience with in their independent reading (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002). Furthermore, this initial overview of the passage aids a struggling reader when in subsequent independent readings they are aware of the context and overall meaning of the passage and can use that knowledge to help them make sense of unknown words. This type of scaffolding can aid comprehension in subsequent readings by reducing decoding and word recognition delays which can impede fluency and comprehension (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003).

Depending on the delivery method of the individual teacher, Readers Theater has the potential to use all of the strategies discussed. In fact, commercially available scripts may recommend these approaches in their directions for implementing the program (Evan-Moor, 2003; Jennett, 2004; Martin, 2002). To begin, teachers can put into practice the activation of prior knowledge and the introduction of unfamiliar vocabulary.

When a new play is being introduced, the teacher can start by evaluating the students' prior knowledge of the main topic or theme of the story. By asking questions and encouraging the discussion of key points with the students, the teacher can activate the students' prior knowledge and determine whether additional information needs to be supplied to the group to allow for a greater understanding of the story. Commercial scripts may include an explanation of

the context of the story or some basic historical information to aid in the students' overall understanding (Evan-Moor, 2003; Jennett, 2004; Martin, 2002). Besides ensuring that students have a general grasp of the context of the story, potentially unfamiliar words and character names and roles can be introduced beforehand to students to fill out their knowledge base even further. By activating prior knowledge and frontloading the information necessary for a general understanding of the story, the teacher ensures that students will be better able to comprehend the text and attend to accurate reading and correct phrasing when it comes time to read the script (Braunger & Lewis, 2006).

Readers Theater's broad use of the fluency and comprehension promoting strategies of repeated reading, guided reading and modeled reading, combined with ensuring adequate background and vocabulary knowledge, add more support for its use as a potentially successful reading intervention program. Although research results have been varied, some studies have demonstrated that Readers Theater can have a significant impact on reading comprehension (Allington, 2009; Caudill-Hansen, 2009; Kariuki & Rhymer, 2012). For example, in a year-long study using Readers Theater as an intervention method with fourth grade students, researchers saw an average of 3.2 years' improvement in the silent reading comprehension in the participants (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Another study found that, although words per minute did not increase when using Reader Theater, notable improvements were seen in students' pace, volume, and oral expression, factors typically associated with accurate reading comprehension, when using Reader Theater (Clark, Morrison, & Wilcox, 2009).

Numerous studies have determined that Readers Theater shows promise for increasing both reading fluency and reading comprehension (Allington, 2009; Bashir & Hook, 2009; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). However, as successful as Readers Theater may

be in improving both of these important aspects of reading in each of these studies, intervention methods used with struggling and potentially resistant adolescent readers need to address their particular needs and engage them as well. The following section will look at Readers Theater with regards to its use with struggling middle school readers.

Attitude Toward Reading

Middle school students who struggle with reading must navigate through the necessary stages of reading development that students at younger ages would. However, teaching reading to adolescent students additionally requires that instructional strategies be ones that target the particular interests of this age group and address their developmental needs. Although children at younger ages may become discouraged with reading difficulties and develop negative attitudes and apathy toward reading, the risk is greater with adolescents (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988). Potentially having had a long history of struggling with reading, and in many cases believing that they will fail in their academic attempts, these students may have little motivation to learn and participate in school (Tunmer & Chapman, 2002).

Lacking the requisite literacy skills, instructional materials in middle school curriculums are often inaccessible to them, and the further behind their peers they fall (Harmon, 2002). Without their engagement in the education process, these students run a significant risk of dropping out of school. Middle school may be the last chance to reach these students and it is essential that educators have instructional tools for increasing reading skills that will motivate and engage students at this age (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989).

Reading Strategies for Adolescents

Though there are some reading intervention programs designed for struggling adolescent readers, most instructional reading programs are designed for younger children and are written at

a level that will interest them. Readers Theater is a reading intervention program that can be used with readers of any age and shows promise for use with middle school students. Not only does it employ research-based methods for increasing fluency and comprehension, but it gives students the opportunity to interact with one another in a controlled situation. As a means for improving reading performance in adolescents who are reading below grade level, it has been shown to be an efficient and effective strategy (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). Furthermore, Readers Theater has been demonstrated to increase the motivation of students with regards to reading (Worthy & Prater, 2002). Given the need for reading interventions used with middle school students to be both effective and engaging, Readers Theater appears to meet the requirements.

Numerous studies have shown Readers Theater to be helpful in engaging unmotivated readers because the program is carried out through cooperative interactions among peers, something many students, including adolescents, enjoy. While having the social component, it is also a suitable strategy for motivating students with a range of abilities. Because teachers can adapt and create scripts that are tailored to the specific needs of their students, Readers Theater allows students to read high interest material at their own reading levels (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999). This adaptability in the program is particularly important for engaging middle school students who are reading several years below grade level.

The impact of Readers Theater on reading skills and its acceptability to adolescents was demonstrated in a comparative study between two groups of struggling eighth grade students who were reading below grade level. The researchers compared Readers Theater with more traditional methods of reading instruction. 56% of the students in the experimental group were identified as special education students, and the control group contained no students identified with special education needs. Statistically significant increases were found in both reading skills

and engagement in the program of the students in the experimental group compared with the control group using Readers Theater (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008).

Findings in other studies have also indicated positive affective aspects of Readers Theater. Griffith and Rasinski (2004) reported that as a result of the implementation of Readers Theater in the classroom, the fourth grade students in their study developed increased enjoyment in reading and began to choose reading over other activities both at home and at school. Other research found that Readers Theater increased student motivation with regards to reading (Worthy & Prater, 2002) as well as students' attitudes toward reading (Corcoran & Davis, 2005). Furthermore, the Readers Theater program was shown to retain students' interest throughout implementation periods that varied from six weeks to one school year (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Worthy & Prater, 2002)

Other positive associations with Readers Theater have been seen as well. Besides "dramatic" increases in student engagement and participation, elevated levels of confidence among readers have been seen through the use of Readers Theater (Clark, Morrison, & Wilcox, 2009). Amplified feelings of success, along with increases in their perceptions of themselves as readers, have been reported among eighth grade students who participated in the program (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). Additionally, in one year-long study, it was found that students continued to look forward to performances, and Readers Theater sustained their interests, over the entire school year (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Readers Theater has been demonstrated through numerous studies to be an engaging and motivating reading intervention program that is often acceptable, even enjoyed by students of all ages. Research results indicate that Readers Theater may well be a successful strategy to use with adolescents.

Summary

The implementation of Readers Theater shows promise in not only increasing overall reading performance, but also in engaging disinterested and reluctant middle school students. Through the use of the research-based strategies of repeated reading and guided reading, students' fluency and comprehension skills have been shown to improve using Readers Theater. When students are provided with sufficient modeling, ample feedback, and opportunities to repeatedly practice a script beforehand, their reading performance and motivation can both increase. As they experience success in reading, students' confidence improves and their enjoyment in reading can grow. For middle school students who have developed frustration and apathy as a result of years of academic struggle, Readers Theater has the potential to provide them with an avenue within which to increase their reading competence, improve their attitude toward reading, and potentially re-engage in their education.

With these potential benefits in mind, the program of Readers Theater was chosen for this study as a means for improving the reading skills of middle school students with exceptional learning needs in a mild-to-moderate special day class setting. The methods with which Readers Theater was measured and evaluated are identified and explained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to improve the reading achievement of students who have been diagnosed with mild-to-moderate disabilities. As described in the previous chapters, this research specifically evaluated whether Readers Theater is an effective intervention program for increasing the reading fluency and comprehension skills of middle school students in a mild-to-moderate special day class, and investigated what impact this program has on these students' attitudes toward reading. Although there are numerous studies demonstrating the effectiveness of Readers Theater among populations, there is a lack of research directly targeting its use with middle school students with exceptionalities, despite the critical need of this population for successful and motivating strategies. This study was carried out in the hopes that Readers Theater would improve the reading skills and attitudes toward reading of the participants, while increasing the teacher/researcher's repertoire of successful reading intervention methods.

Setting

This investigation was conducted at a small public middle school in a mountain community in northern California. The school serves approximately 500 students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The ethnic composition of the school is 80% Caucasian, 13% Hispanic, 2% African American, 2% Asian, and 1% Native American. 22% of the families in the school are classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. The study was carried out in the teacher/researcher's own mild-to-moderate special day class during the 2012-2013 school year. The classroom was typically set up to include individual student desks in the center of the room, and three separate tables around the perimeter that served as small group stations each seating between four and seven students. For the intervention, fourteen chairs were placed in a semi-

circle at the front of the room facing the students' desks for the readers to sit in during rehearsals and performances. The performances were carried out before small audiences who were seated in the students' desks.

Participants

Fourteen students participated in this program. Subjects were all members of a pre-selected group based on their enrollment in the special day class program where the teacher/researcher taught. There were five sixth-graders, five seventh-graders, and four eighth-graders. The group consisted of six girls and eight boys. All of the participants had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with goals in reading. The numbers and types of disabilities represented within the group were: six specific learning disability, four speech or language impairment, three autism, and one other health impairment. Two of the students with autism had one-to-one special circumstances paraprofessionals. There was one English Language Learner (ELL) in the group. The specific reading levels within the group varied, but all students were reading at least one year below grade level and within the range of third to sixth grade prior to the intervention. The ethnic composition of the class was eight White, three Hispanic, two Native American, and one African American. (Table 1 below displays the above listed participant information.)

The week prior to the implementation of Readers Theater the researcher/teacher contacted parents individually by email to notify them of the study and it also explained it to the potential student participants. Students were given letters of explanation and consent forms to take home to their parents (see Appendix A). They were told that the consent forms must be signed and returned in order to be considered a participant in the study.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Information													
	Gender		Grade Level			Disability Category				Ethnicity			
Student #	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	SLD	SLI	Autism	OHI	White	Hispanic	Nat Am.	Afr Am.
1	X			X				X		X			
2	X			X					X			X	
3		X		X		X							X
4		X		X			X				X*		
5	X				X			X		X			
6		X	X				X				X		
7	X		X			X				X			
8		X			X	X				X			
9	X				X		X					X	
10	X		X					X		X			
11	X		X			X				X			
12		X			X		X			X			
13		X	X			X				X			
14	X			X		X					X		
Totals	8	6	5	5	4	6	4	3	1	8	3	2	1
%	57.1	42.8571	36	36	29	43	29	21.429	7.1	57.14	21.42857	14.2857	7.1429

*ELL

The teacher/researcher met with the classroom staff and explained and demonstrated the specific methods, procedures, and timeline to be used in carrying out the Readers Theater program. Once the staff understood the strict confidentiality requirements and administration procedures for the intervention, the adult consent forms were distributed to them for signing (see Appendix B).

Once parents had received the consent forms, the teacher/researcher read and explained the child assent forms to the potential student participants. The students were told that in addition to their parents giving permission for them to participate in the research, they too needed to give their assent by signing the forms (see Appendix C). Procedures for the intervention and the purpose of the study were discussed with the students and their questions regarding the study were answered. For the distribution and signing of the assent forms the researcher/teacher left the room. Two classroom paraprofessionals distributed the assent forms to the students and oversaw their signing, reiterating to students their right to not have their information be included in the

study, even if their parents gave their permission for them to participate. Most students chose to give their assent that day, and all fourteen students decided to be participants in the study by the next day.

Procedures

The research for this investigation was carried out during the second semester of the school year. In the week prior to beginning the intervention, the teacher/researcher administered pre-tests including individual and group assessments to determine the pre-intervention levels of the dependent variables, i.e., reading fluency and comprehension levels of each student, as well as attitudes toward reading. These measures were administered again following the intervention period to assess post-treatment levels of the dependent variables.

The intervention itself was carried out for six weeks over a seven week period, during which students were not in school one week due to Spring Break. There were three Readers Theater sessions, each being two weeks long. Within each two week session the students rehearsed individual parts independently, with a partner, one-on-one with an adult, in small groups, and with the entire cast. The instructional strategies of modeled reading, guided reading, and repeated reading were employed.

During the first session the Readers Theater program was introduced and students were shown the unique characteristics of a script as compared to a short story. At least one student who the staff deemed to be a positive classroom leader was placed in each repertory group to help set a positive tone for the project. With each new play group configurations changed. Student preference was considered when assigning plays and parts. Group size varied depending upon the number of parts in each of the plays, ranging between seven and all fourteen of the students.

Typically three adults including the teacher/researcher and two paraprofessionals led the repertory groups. The staff rotated among the groups to allow the researcher firsthand observation of the performances of each student as well as to ensure consistency in implementation. Each student worked directly with each of the adult leaders several different times over the course of the project. To further assist in the continuity of implementation, regular follow-up meetings were established among the three leaders after each day's rehearsal to communicate observations and suggestions, to check that methods were consistent, and to address any concerns that come up.

The scripts were all pre-read aloud by the teacher/researcher while the adult leaders and student participants followed along. Students then took turns reading lines aloud. Aside from assisting students with decoding and word accuracy, adults coached the students with phrases similar to the following:

- "Listen to how I would probably read this so it sounds like I'm talking." (Teacher would model the lines.) "Do you hear the difference? Now try that again, and this time read it like you are talking."

- "Imagine you are the character. How would you be feeling? Now read like this is actually happening to you."

- "You read the words correctly that time. Good job. This time, remember you are that character and you feel strongly and passionately about what you're saying."

Although one leader was primarily responsible for each play each day, the teacher/researcher worked with each repertory group each day at some point, swapping with the leader for that group, so as to observe firsthand the performances of each student in practice.

In order to coordinate with the block schedule of the school, the intervention sessions took place on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays during the first period of the day. Periods on Mondays were 50 minutes long and on the other weekdays 1 hour and 50 minutes long. The time devoted to Readers Theater varied from 30 minutes to an hour or more on final rehearsal and performance days. Students were introduced to plays on the first Monday of the session and performed them on the second Thursday. The very first Monday only, the Readers Theater program was explained to the group and instruction in how to read a script was visually demonstrated by the teacher using a document camera. The typical sequence of the sessions was as follows.

Monday #1. The teacher/researcher began by giving a synopsis of the story in the script, elaborating on and explaining any vocabulary or content she thought might be misunderstood or unfamiliar to the students. A short classroom discussion regarding the story usually followed. Next, a copy of the script was distributed to each student and staff member. Participants were asked to follow along with the reading while the teacher/researcher read aloud the entire script, modeling correct pronunciation, expression, and tone.

Students were then divided into repertory groups and sent to three different work areas with adult leaders. In their groups, students went around in a circle taking turns reading the next line in the script, not yet taking on any one particular role. At this point reading accuracy was emphasized over prosody. During the first week only, two plays were introduced this way on Monday.

At the end of the period, the participants were instructed to write down their top three choices of characters they would like to portray in (each) play. They were told that their parts

would be given to them in the following reading class, and if they did not get one of their top choices the first time around, they would at some point over the three sessions.

After the class, adults met to determine the best role for each participant. The students' written preferences were considered. The strengths and needs of each individual student were deliberated, keeping in mind that the stronger oral readers should be distributed in a way that would serve to best maintain the storyline and tone of the play. Careful thought was given particularly to students who expressed concern over reading aloud in front of others. In the first session these participants were assigned small parts with very few lines or parts that were read chorally with other readers. Students usually had parts in more than one play, balancing larger parts with small ones in another play. Over the course of the three sessions, every student was given a prominent role in at least one of the plays.

Tuesday #1. The teacher/researcher began the class by asking students to retell the storyline of each play and describe the different characters. She then announced and assigned the participants their particular roles in the plays. Students were given highlighters and instructed to highlight all of their lines in the scripts. Next, the participants were divided into two groups according to which play they were in. Students with roles in both plays would alternate between groups, usually spending the bulk of their time with the pay in which they had the bigger role.

Once in their groups the participants read through the entire plays, for the first time reading only their own lines. Depending on the needs of the individuals, the whole group continued to rehearse or broke into smaller groups or pairs of students and read their lines with or without an adult leader. The adults guided the students in the readings, helping with accuracy and beginning to emphasize the prosodic elements of intonation, expression, and vocal alterations for the different characters.

Thursday #1. Student participants again were divided into groups according to which play they were in. Again, students who had parts in both plays moved between the two groups spending the most time with the play in which they had the most lines. Students also rotated being grouped with the different adult leaders and working one-on-one with an adult who assisted them with corrective feedback. The adults guided the students in the readings, helping with accuracy and emphasizing the prosodic elements of intonation, expression, and vocal alterations for the different characters and encouraging students to speak loudly and clearly as they would need to for an audience.

Monday #2. Students were sent to their repertory groups where they practiced reading their lines, going through the entire play once or twice in order. Prosody began to take on greater emphasis. The leader coached the readers to read as though they were speaking, with meaning and appropriate feeling and expression. Participants were then divided into pairs or groups of three to practice reading and rereading their parts to each other. The adults oversaw the participants and modeled and encouraged as needed. Toward the end of the period, participants made invitations to distribute to their parents, administrators and other staff members, and for the elementary special day class nearby.

Tuesday #2: Students were sent to their repertory groups for final rehearsals. The group practiced reading their lines, going through the entire play several times in order. The leader in each group continued to coach the readers. For the last run-through, the adult leaders pretended to be audience members and allowed the students to read through the entire scripts without interruption as much as possible. The leaders followed this mock performance by pointing out all that the students did well.

Toward the second half of the period, the entire group reconvened, and all the participants were brought to the front of the class and seated in a large semi-circle as they would be for the performance. Beginning and ending with the Master of Ceremonies' (MC's) welcome and thank you for coming speeches, and the chosen students reading the synopses of each of the plays, the entire production was carried out, one play after another, with only minor, if any, interruptions by the teacher/researcher. Applause and specific positive feedback by the students and staff followed.

Thursday #2. Students were divided into their performance groups for the final time. Last minute questions and details were addressed. A warm-up reading was carried out, sometimes running through a play to be performed, and other times reading a past play. Each leader encouraged and praised the students for their hard work and accomplishments. Just before the audience members were to arrive, the participants took their places up in the front of the classroom in preparation for their performances.

Audiences were comprised of the adult staff members in the class as well as parents, siblings, grandparents, service providers, administrators, custodians, and the students and staff from the special day class at the nearby elementary school. Once the audience members arrived and were seated in the students' desks, the MC welcomed the guests, the synopses of the plays were read, the cast members were introduced, and the plays began. Each play was performed one after another before the audience. At the end of each performance, the MC thanked the audience members for coming and invited them to join the cast at the back of the room for refreshments and a small celebration. During the first performance two plays were performed. During the second performance three plays were performed. During the third performance four of the six plays were performed. After each of the first two performances, once the audience members had

left, the teacher/researcher gave a "sneak preview" of the next play, introducing the storyline, pertinent vocabulary, and character roles, followed by a read-through of the script while students and staff followed along. Participants were told to think about the possible roles they would like to play and to be prepared to turn in their top three choices on the following Monday.

Six published Readers Theater scripts were chosen for this inquiry based upon students' interests and reading levels. In order for the readings to be manageable for the range of reading levels in the class, scripts were pulled from materials designed for grades two through six, with individual character levels ranging from grade level 2.2 to 6.6. Table 2 displays the specific scripts, with their corresponding grade levels, used in the intervention. See Appendix D for a sample script.

Table 2
Readers Theater Scripts

Readers Theater Scripts	
Script	Grade Range
"An Underwater Web of Life," *Readers' Theater*, Grade 4 (Evan-Moor, 2003)	Grade 4
"Rafunzel," *12 Fabulously Funny Fairy Tale Plays* (Martin, 2002)	Grade 2-4
"Slurping Beauty," *12 Fabulously Funny Fairy Tale Plays* (Martin, 2002)	Grades 2-4
"Sojourner Truth: A Life Devoted to Justice," *Readers' Theater, Grade 4* (Evan-Moor, 2003)	Grade 4
"The Cheetah and the Sloth," *12 Fabulously Funny Fairy Tale Plays* (Martin, 2002)	Grades 2-4
"Things Are Looking Up! Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)," *Discoverers and Inventors Reader's Theater* (Jennett, 2004).	Grades 5-6

An action research design with quantitative data analysis was chosen for this investigation because it fit well with the purpose of the study. Action research can be carried out within the learning environment and directed toward examining questions that deal with educational matters specific to that setting. According to Mills (2007) and others, the process of

this type of research involves an ordered inquiry done by a teacher with the intent of using research findings to inform and guide his or her future teaching practices.

The exact type of action research in this study is designated as "practical classroom action research." Practical classroom action research addresses specific and generally narrow problems within a classroom or school for the purpose of solving them, and yields a plan of action for educational improvement. In addition to addressing issues directly related to student learning, practical classroom action research also focuses on an ongoing cycle of teacher development by empowering teachers to design, conduct, and interpret their own research within a commitment to professional development focused on student learning (Creswell, 2012).

The primary intention of this research study was to employ an engaging reading intervention method that would potentially improve the reading skills of the current students in the special day class being studied. The secondary purpose of this research was to expand the skills and repertoire of successful reading strategies available to the teacher/researcher in order to strengthen her curriculum for future students. This type of research design allowed these objectives to be addressed.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Readers Theater intervention, the teacher/researcher administered individual and group assessments to determine the pre-intervention fluency and comprehension levels of each student, as well as attitudes toward reading. Several instruments were employed in the process of data collection. Each of the assessments chosen for this analysis was a nationally-normed standardized test, however the fluency test and the attitudinal survey were intended to measure students up through sixth grade. Despite the fact that a majority of the participants were seventh and eighth graders, it was

determined that these tests would provide reasonable measures, due to the low reading levels of

the students. Assessment materials used for this study were:

- *The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) was used for measuring reading fluency (see Appendix E).
- The reading comprehension subtest of the *Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills – Revised* was used to determine reading comprehension scores (see Appendix F).
- *The Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey* was used to measure the attitudinal impact of Readers Theater on students (see Appendix G).

Fluency tests were individually administered in a separate classroom to reduce the

likelihood of distraction. The students were seated across from the researcher and told the

purpose of the assessment. They were instructed to read aloud a given passage and told that the

researcher would be timing their reading and writing notes while they read. This was not an

unfamiliar type of assessment, as all students had been tested in this manner previously for their

annual IEPs.

Each fluency assessment took approximately ten minutes. The DIBELS probes were

administered in order to obtain at least three one-minute fluency word counts. As the student

read, the researcher marked reading errors on a separate copy of the same passage and noted how

many words were read correctly each minute. A baseline was established using the first three

minute measurements. The number of words correctly read per minute (WCPM) were counted

for each of the three minutes then combined and averaged with the other two scores.

The group administration of the Brigance was conducted within the regular classroom.

Students were given the instructions that the noise level in the room was to be "zero" while

students were completing the test so each person could focus and do his or her best. All students

had silent reading books under their desks and were told ahead of time that they were to quietly

read their books when finished. Each student was given three levels of the assessment based on previous reading comprehension scores. Grade level placement was determined by the highest level at which the student scored 80% or greater. If the student did not attain 80% on any of the first three levels of the assessment given, lower levels were administered the following day until 80% comprehension was reached.

Each one-page assessment contained a reading passage and five multiple choice comprehension questions that corresponded to it. Students were instructed to take their time and carefully read each passage and set of questions and answer choices to themselves, then circle the letter for the best answer to each question. All students were familiar with the format of the assessment as it was similar to classroom tasks and IEP assessments they had completed in the past. The test was untimed, but all students were able to complete the test in under 35 minutes unless subsequent assessments were administered to achieve a score of 80% for determining correct grade placement.

Assessments were scored according to the Brigance scoring guide. Scores for each grade-leveled Brigance test were recorded in percentages, with each correct response having the value of 20%. The Brigance was administered a total of two times using the two matched versions of the test, Test A and Test B. Test B was given as the pretest and Test A was administered as a posttest upon completion of the six week intervention period.

As with the Brigance, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered to the whole group at once within the classroom. Prior to administration, students were told they were going to be asked some questions regarding their feelings about reading. So as not to influence the thoughts of other students in the class, they were asked to keep their answers to themselves during the assessment period. Unlike the other two student assessments, the Elementary Reading

Attitude Survey was unfamiliar to the participants. To help prevent the possible misinterpretation of pictures, the researcher projected each one on a large screen beforehand and identified the correlating emotional state it represented:

- Happiest Garfield

- Slightly smiling Garfield

- Mildly upset Garfield

- Very upset Garfield

Once handed the assessment, students were instructed to read each question to themselves as the teacher read it aloud, and circle the picture of Garfield that best represented their feelings in response to the question. The Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey consists of twenty brief statements about reading. Below each statement are the four pictures depicting the different emotional states of Garfield. The teacher/researcher read one question at a time, pausing for students to circle their answer choices. Questions were reread as needed. The entire assessment took just over twenty minutes.

Once all of the surveys were completed, they were scored and recorded on individual scoring sheets. Ten of the statements in the survey measure attitude toward recreational reading and the other ten measure attitude toward academic reading. The combined score is considered to be the student's overall attitude toward reading. Each type of circled response correlated to a certain point value ranging from 4 - the happiest Garfield, down to 1 - a very upset Garfield. The values taken from the participants' surveys were transferred into the appropriate column based on question type. Each column of numbers was subtotaled to obtain the separate values for attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. The subtotals were added together to obtain the overall reading attitude score. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered

twice altogether, once as a pretest, and once again as a posttest upon completion of the intervention.

Data Analysis

The design of this research is designated as pre-experimental quantitative analysis as there was no randomness in the assignment of the student participants, and all of the students were members of a pre-determined group, the researcher's own special day class. Quantitative data was obtained from the results of the three primary assessment tools used in this study: DIBELS fluency probes, Brigance reading comprehension grade placement subtests, and Elementary Reading Attitude Surveys. The three primary assessment tools used in this study yield two different types of data: DIBELS and Brigance yield interval data, and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey yields data from a 4-point Likert scale, although the results have been standardized and are presented as numerical data. The pretest / posttest design was used with each assessment. The data from each instrument was analyzed using separate tests rather than with a single test based on a single independent variable and three dependent variables.

The interval data yielded by the DIBELS reading fluency assessment as well as the results of the Brigance comprehension grade placement subtests were analyzed using paired-samples, or dependent t-tests, as this is the best fit for a pretest/posttest design for a single sample. Despite the fact that developers of the test have taken it into account in their scoring method, likert data from the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey was analyzed using a Wilcoxon matched pairs test that compares score rankings between groups rather than group means, as Likert data—especially on a 4-point scale— are generally not considered to constitute equal-interval data. That is, a four-point scale "...is unlikely to have all equidistant items since there is only one item that can receive a below average rating. This would arguably bias any

result in favor of a positive outcome. On the other hand, even if a researcher presents what he or she believes is an equidistant scale, it may not be interpreted as such by the respondent ("Likert scale," 2013). The Wilcoxon is the nonparametric equivalent of the paired samples t-test.

Pretests and posttests were administered for each assessment as described above. The independent variable for this study was the intervention of Readers Theater. The three dependent variables being evaluated were reading fluency, reading comprehension, and attitudes toward reading. The predetermined level of significance used for all measures in this study was $p < 0.05$. Outcome variables for the reading fluency and reading comprehension assessments were numerical and considered to be parametric due to equal interval data. Because students were familiar with the formats of the types of assessments used in this research, along with the fact that different versions of the tests were available and used, the pretest was not seen as a covariable that needed to be accounted for in the analysis. As a result, paired t-tests were chosen as the method for analyzing reading fluency and reading comprehension data.

Outcome variables for students' attitudes toward reading were also numerical, but considered to be non-parametric as each category of data was determined to have a different value. Numerical data from the overall results of the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey pretests and posttests were analyzed using a one-tailed Wilcoxin matched pairs test to determine the "w" value.

<center>Summary</center>

This research evaluated the effectiveness of the Readers Theater program over a six-week intervention period when used with a population of fourteen students with mild-to-moderate disabilities. The primary intention of this research study was to employ an engaging method that would potentially improve the reading skills and attitudes toward reading of the participants. The

secondary purpose was for the teacher/researcher to broaden her skills and increase her repertoire of successful reading strategies that could be used to strengthen her curriculum for future students. The design of the research was considered to be pre-experimental quantitative analysis due to the lack of randomness in the sample and the fact that all participants were taken from a pre-determined group, the members of the special day class in which the teacher/researcher taught. The dependent variables: reading fluency, reading comprehension, and attitudes toward reading, were evaluated and measured using DIBELS fluency probes, Brigance reading comprehension grade placement subtests, and the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey. Each assessment was administered twice, first as a pretest and later as a posttest. The results obtained from the data are evaluated and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussion

This study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Readers Theater in addressing reading fluency, reading comprehension, and attitudes toward reading in middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities. The six-week intervention of Readers Theater was carried out in a middle school special day class with a total of 14 participants in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The impact of the Readers Theater program was evaluated using three separate assessment tools: DIBELS reading fluency probes, Brigance reading comprehension grade placement subtests, and Elementary Reading Attitude Surveys. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered for each of the assessments and scores were compared. Gains or losses for fluency and comprehension were measured using paired t-tests, and attitude toward reading was measured using Wilcoxon matched pairs signed-rank tests. Statistical significance was determined at a p-value at or below 0.05 for all three measures. Increases were observed in post-test measures for each of the evaluations. Significant findings were revealed with regards to reading fluency and attitude toward recreational reading. Each of the three research questions is addressed individually below.

Research Question 1

What effect does participation in Readers Theater have on reading fluency among students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in a middle school special day class program?

The outcomes of the DIBELS oral reading fluency pre-tests and post-tests are presented below. Figure 1 shows the individual change in words correctly read per minute by each

participant over the course of the study. The graph illustrates that thirteen of the fourteen, or 93%, of the students in the study showed an increase in the number of words correctly read per minute (WCPM). One of the participants, Student #2, showed no change. Among those who showed improvement, the increase in number of words ranged from 3 to 29 WCPM. Translated into percentage increase, students' individual fluency scores increased between 3 and 39.7%. When averaged overall, this was an 11.75% increase for the entire group of fourteen participants.

Figure 1
Pre-test and Post-test Fluency Scores: Words Correct Per Minute
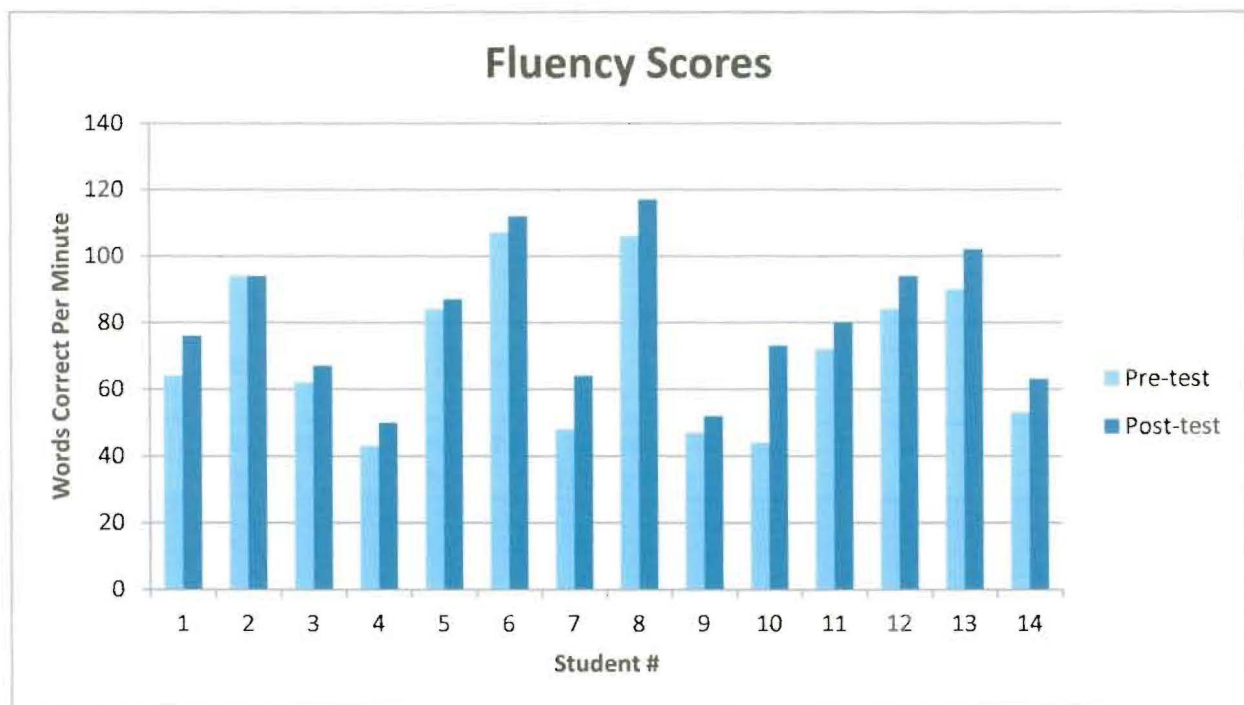
The statistical results of the paired t-tests from the fluency data are displayed in Table 3 below. There were 13 degrees of freedom. Calculations determined a t-value of 5.07 and a p-value of 0.0001075. The t-test comparisons showed a pre-test mean of 71.28 WCPM and a post-test mean of 80.78 WCPM, with an average increase in post-test over pre-test mean scores of 9.5 WCPM.

Table 3

Paired t-Test Results for Fluency Scores

n	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Difference	t	df	p
14	71.28	80.78	-9.5	5.07	13	0.0001075*

*p ≤ 0.05

At the confidence interval of 0.95, statistical significance is determined when the t-value is ±4.0489. Analyses show that participants made statistically significant gains in reading fluency as measured by words correctly read per minute over the course of the study.

Discussion

The outcomes of this research provide a strong indication that Readers Theater was effective in increasing reading fluency in the middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in the study. This is especially significant given that reading fluency is foundational to achieving higher levels of reading competence. The number of words read correctly per minute increased in the majority of participants over the course of the six-week intervention implementation. The results of this study mirror those found in a number of previous studies carried out with other populations of students (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 2002; Young & Rasinski, 2009), but contradict the findings of Clark, Morrison, & Wilcox (2009) which found no increase in fluency scores among their participants with Readers Theater.

The implications of these findings are significant given the important need for intervention methods that can increase the reading skills of middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities who continue to struggle with reading long after it has been assumed that

they would have developed reading fluency (Harmon, 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; NJCLD, 2008). With 93% of the participants exhibiting growth and averaging an increase of 11.75% WCPM, it is reasonable to suggest that teachers with similar populations of students may find increased fluency results with the implementation of Readers Theater within their own programs.

Though previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of Readers Theater in addressing the fluency needs of students of various ages and abilities, such as those in elementary general education and special education classes, and in an eighth grade general education class that contained mainstreamed students with diagnosed disabilities, there has been a relative lack of research specifically showing its impact on middle school students in a special day class with mild-to-moderate disabilities (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 2002; Young & Rasinski, 2009). This research lends support to the idea that Readers Theater may well be an efficient and effective tool for use with this population as well.

Research Question 2

What effect does participation in Readers Theater have on reading comprehension among students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in a middle school special day class program?

Comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores for the Brigance reading comprehension subtests shows several instances of individual increase and some overall increase in comprehension scores as is seen in Figure 2 below. Seven of the fourteen participants in the study showed an increase in comprehension grade level placement. Of those, one participant increased by half a grade level, three participants increased by one grade level, two participants increased by one and a half grade levels, and one participant increased by three grade levels.

Five participants showed a decrease of one grade level. Two participants showed no change and remained at pre-testing levels.

Figure 2

Pre-test and Post-test Comprehension Grade Placement Scores
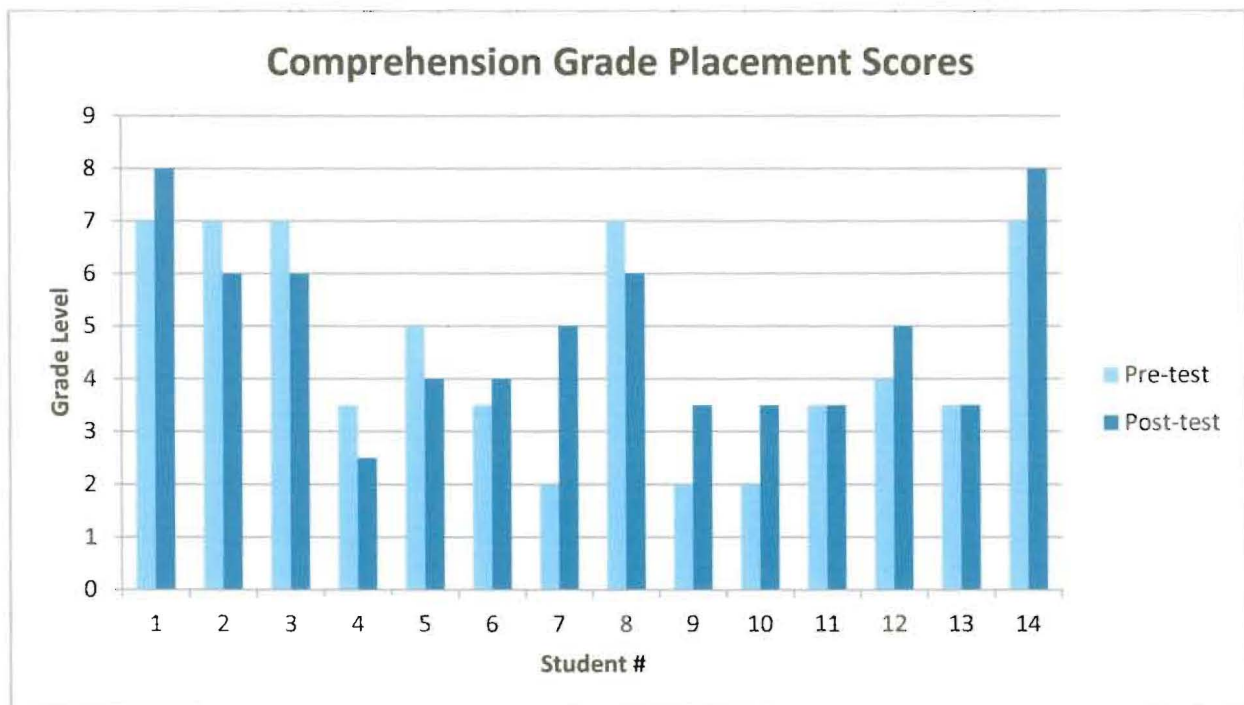
Statistical data obtained by comparing pre-test and post-test grade level placement scores determined through Brigance comprehension subtests are shown in Table 4. The post-test mean score of 4.89 showed an increase of 0.32 over the pre-test mean score of 4.57. Given 13 degrees of freedom, at the confidence interval of 0.95, statistical significance is determined when the t-value is ± 1.771. With a t-value equal to -0.96 and a p-value of 0.1772855, no statistically significant increase is indicated.

Table 4

Paired t-Test Results for Comprehension

n	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Difference	t	df	p
14	4.57	4.89	-0.32	-0.96	13	0.1772855

*p ≤ 0.05

Discussion

The outcomes of this study show that although the reading comprehension levels of a number of the participants increased, and there was a slight overall increase among the group using Readers Theater over the six week intervention period, it was not enough to be considered statistically significant. The results of this research are similar to those of Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho (2008), who carried out a similar length study. Other researchers, however, have found a significant increase in reading comprehension with the use of Readers Theater (Allington, 2009; Caudill-Hansen, 2009; Clark, Morrison, & Wilcox, 2009; Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Kariuki & Rhymer, 2012). In a year-long investigation using Readers Theater with fourth grade Title 1 students, Griffith & Rasinski (2004) saw average growth of 3.2 years in silent reading comprehension. Given the fact that multiple studies have indicated significant increases in comprehension with the use of Readers Theater, it is important to explore possible reasons for the discrepancies.

There may be various factors that could impact the difference in findings. One factor may have to do with the length of the intervention period itself. It may be that it is more difficult and takes more time to increase the comprehension skills of students in this population than in other groups. It could therefore be that longer intervention periods with similar populations could

find increased comprehension results. Since it is generally thought that comprehension occurs as a result of sufficient levels of reading fluency, an explanation may be that the overall population in this study had not yet reached fluency levels that would produce significant comprehension results (Allington, 1983; Bashir & Hook, 2009; Chall, 1983; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Furthermore, although not statistically significant overall, the increased comprehension results for the individuals who saw improvement in this study are noteworthy. It may be that the increases that were seen in this study may be a trend that with increased time would exhibit significance.

Research Question 3

What is the impact of Readers Theater on the attitudes toward reading in students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in a middle school special day class program?

Attitude toward reading was measured using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey which produces three different reading attitude scores: recreational, academic, and overall attitude toward reading. One way in which the results were evaluated was by tallying and converting each set of raw scores to percentages, in order to provide a meaningful comparison of the three categories. As is seen in Figure 3, there was an average increase in reading attitude scores for each of the three measures, however, the significance of the results varied.

Attitude toward recreational reading showed the greatest gain in average percentage scores, increasing from 63.9% to 70.5%, a growth of 6.6%. From pre-test to post-test the changes in individual student scores for attitude toward recreational reading showed 9 increases and 4 decreases. One of the participants exhibited no change. (See Appendix H for the individual pre-test and post-test percentage scores for attitude toward recreational reading.)

Figure 3

Pre-test and Post-test Comparisons of Recreational, Academic, and Overall Attitudes Toward Reading
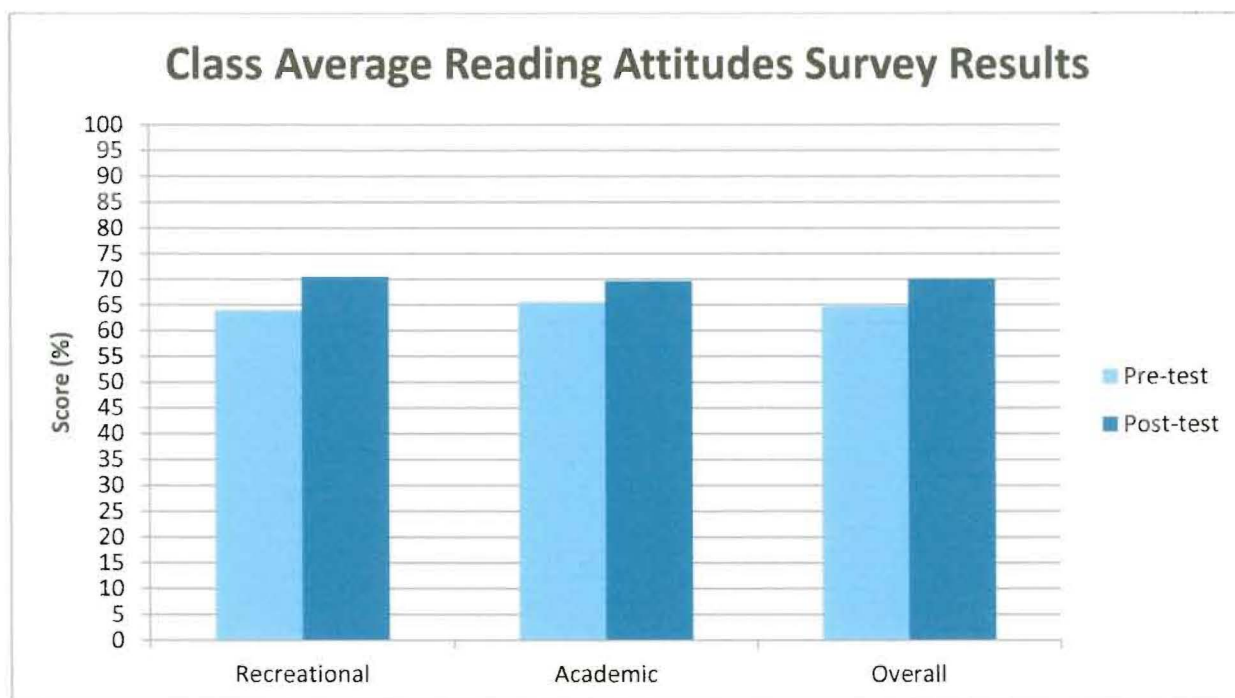
Attitude toward academic reading scores increased on average from 65.5% to 69.6%, a growth of 4.1%. From pre-test to post-test the changes in individual student scores for attitude toward academic reading showed 6 increases and 6 decreases. Two of the participants exhibited no change. (See Appendix I for the individual pre-test and post-test percentage scores for attitude toward academic reading.)

Overall reading attitude increased from 64.7% to 70%, a growth of 5.3%. From pre-test to post-test the changes in individual student scores for overall attitude toward reading showed 8 increases and 5 decreases. One participant exhibited no change. (See Appendix J for the individual pre-test and post-test scores for overall attitude toward reading.)

Statistical computations were performed with the Wilcoxon matched pairs test on each of the three sets of attitude toward reading data. Results are displayed in Table 5 below. Although

increases were observed in all categories of attitude toward reading, statistical significance was only seen in students' attitudes toward recreational reading.

The matched pairs tests compared the rankings of the scores in each sample, pre-test and post-test, for all three measures to determine if there were positive or negative differences. The sum of the signed ranks provided the W-values of -49, -3, and -33. For results to be statistically significant the z-values needed to be at least ±1.645 with p-values ≤ 0.05. Analyses show that participants made statistically significant gains in attitude toward recreational reading with a z-value of -1.69 and a p-value of 0.0455. A slight gain was seen in attitudes toward academic reading, though it was not statistically significant. A larger gain was seen in overall reading attitude, and though the increase was not great enough to be considered statistically significant, it was strong enough that it may indicate a trend.

Table 5
Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Test Results for Recreational, Academic, and Overall Attitudes Toward Reading

Reading Attitudes	$n_{s/r}$	W	z	p
Recreational	13	-49	-1.69	0.0455*
Academic	12	-3	-0.1	0.4602
Overall	13	-33	-1.14	0.1271

*$p \leq 0.05$

Discussion

The outcomes of this research are significant in that they indicate that Readers Theater was effective in increasing the attitudes toward recreational reading in the middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in the study. The results support the findings of other research

which also indicated positive affective aspects of Readers Theater. Griffith and Rasinski (2004) reported that the participants in their study began to choose reading over other activities both at home and at school, and showed an increase in enjoyment of reading with Readers Theater. Other research found that Readers Theater increased student motivation with regards to reading (Worthy & Prater, 2002) as well as students' attitudes toward reading (Corcoran & Davis, 2005).

The implications of these findings may be particularly pertinent to those working with middle-school-aged students who have reading challenges. Instructional methods used with struggling middle school readers must not only improve reading development, but must re-engage students' interests and motivation as well (Ivey, 1999). Readers Theater appears to be a method that has the potential to engage adolescents and increase their attitudes toward reading, thereby potentially helping to re-engage unmotivated students in school. The positive indications from this study are that Readers Theater can increase attitudes toward reading in middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities. This not only adds to and supports the existing knowledge base, but may also give teachers a potentially appropriate and successful strategy to add to their repertoire for similar student populations in which struggles with reading need to be addressed.

Implications for Further Research

There are several limitations in this study. The two most obvious are the lack of randomness in the sample and the small sample size of fourteen. Both of these matters occurred as a result of the participants being in a predetermined group: the researcher's own class. Additionally, over the years there have been different avenues of thought regarding the use of evaluating change scores using pre- and post-testing. Some have determined that pre- and post-

testing is not a valid and reliable gauge for evaluating change scores (Cronbach & Furby, 1970). Others have found that pre-test/post-test measures can accurately represent the group score (Rogosa & Willett, 1983, 1985). Furthermore, the reading levels of the scripts used were not optimal as they did not directly meet the reading level of each student each time. By choosing texts that would suffice for the entire group, some students' instructional reading levels were below that of the text used, while others were above. Besides these, student absences and a week-long break from school in the middle of the intervention period prevented students from receiving the full impact of the intervention and were likely to skew results to some degree. Finally, though designed to be potentially generalizable to a similar population of students with analogous diagnoses, the results of this study will not be generalizable to the broader population of students in general education because all of the participants in this study have been diagnosed with mild-to-moderate disabilities that are not typically represented in the population at large.

Readers Theater has been evaluated by many researchers since the 1960s and a lot is known about its impact among a variety of populations. However, in reviewing the literature to find studies that have specifically targeted the use of Readers Theater with students in middle school with exceptionalities, it became evident that relatively few had been done. It is therefore recommended, that additional research with similar populations of students as in this study, be conducted. Furthermore, as discovered in previous research, it may be beneficial with future research to carry out intervention periods that are longer than six weeks since there appeared to be possible trends toward increases in reading comprehension that may have continued had the study been longer (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Besides further evaluation of Readers Theater, investigations into research-based programs designed specifically for middle school aged students who struggle with reading fluency and comprehension are needed. Additional research

that supports strategies for this age group is recommended. Finally, since Readers Theater appears to be one such practice that holds promise for increasing the reading skills of middle school aged students with mild-to-moderate disabilities, it is recommended that other teachers who decide to use the program in their own practices, conduct research with their students to contribute to the overall knowledge base while potentially helping increase the skills of struggling readers.

CHAPTER V

Summary

The purpose of this study was to improve the reading achievement of students who have been diagnosed with mild-to-moderate disabilities. As described in the previous chapters, this research specifically evaluates whether Readers Theater is an effective intervention program for increasing the reading fluency and comprehension skills of middle school students in a mild-to-moderate special day class, and investigates what impact this program has on these students' attitudes toward reading. Although there are numerous studies demonstrating the effectiveness of Readers Theater among populations, there is a lack of research directly targeting its use with middle school students with exceptionalities, despite the critical need of this population for successful and motivating strategies (Corcoran & Davis, 2005). This study was carried out in the hopes that Readers Theater would improve the reading skills and attitudes toward reading of the participants, while increasing the teacher/researcher's repertoire of successful reading intervention methods.

Fourteen students participated in this program. Subjects were all members of a pre-selected group based on their enrollment in the special day class program where the teacher/researcher taught. There were five sixth-graders, five seventh-graders, and four eighth-graders. The group consisted of six girls and eight boys. All of the participants had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with goals in reading. The numbers and types of disabilities represented within the group were: six specific learning disability, four speech or language impairment, three autism, and one other health impairment. Two of the students with autism had one-to-one special circumstances paraprofessionals. There was one English Language Learner (ELL) in the group. The specific reading levels within the group varied, but all students

were reading at least one year below grade level and within the range of third to sixth grade prior to the intervention. The ethnic composition of the class was eight White, three Hispanic, two Native American, and one African American.

The intervention itself was carried out for six weeks over a seven week period, during which students were not in school one week due to Spring Break. There were three Readers Theater sessions, each being two weeks long. In order to coordinate with the block schedule of the school, the intervention sessions took place three days a week. The time devoted to Readers Theater varied from 30 minutes to an hour or more on final rehearsal and performance days. Students were introduced to plays on the first Monday of the session and performed them on the second Thursday. In-between they rehearsed individual parts independently, with a partner, one-on-one with an adult, in small groups, and with the entire cast. The instructional strategies of modeled reading, guided reading, and repeated reading were employed as needed.

Readers Theater scripts were chosen based upon students' interests and reading levels and taken from published Readers Theater materials designed for grades 2 through 6. For each of the three sessions two plays were rehearsed and performed. Scripts were all introduced by the teacher/researcher giving a description of the story and characters followed by her reading the entire play aloud while the adult leaders and student participants followed along. Students were then broken into small groups and alternated reading lines, going through the entire scripts. Adults assisted students with decoding and word accuracy as well as phrasing and expression.

Parts were assigned and groups were formed with awareness of personality combinations to enhance a positive social culture. With each new play group configurations changed. Student preference was considered when assigning character parts, and each student was given a prominent role at least once over the course of the intervention. Typically three adults including

the teacher/researcher and two paraprofessionals led the repertory groups. The staff rotated among the groups to allow the researcher firsthand observation of the performances of each student as well as to ensure consistency in implementation. To further assist in the continuity of implementation, regular follow-up meetings were established among the three leaders after each day's rehearsal to communicate observations and suggestions, to check that methods were consistent, and to address any concerns that come up.

Each play was performed before a live audience comprised of staff members as well as other invited guests that included: parents, service providers, administrators, and/or students and staff from the special day class at a nearby elementary school. Each Readers Theater performance culminated in a small celebration in which the student actors served drinks and snacks to their audience members.

Quantitative data for this research was collected by means of a single-group pre-test/post-test design. The impact of the Readers Theater program was evaluated using three separate assessment tools: DIBELS reading fluency probes, Brigance reading comprehension grade placement subtests, and Elementary Reading Attitude Surveys. These assesments yielded the following three types of data: the DIBELS assessment yielded interval data, the Brigance reading comprehension subtest yielded percentage data, and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey yielded data from a 4-point Likert scale. The data from each instrument was analyzed using a separate test.

Pre-tests and post-tests were administered for each of the assessments and scores were compared. Gains or losses for fluency and comprehension were measured using paired t-tests, and attitude toward reading was measured using Wilcoxon matched pairs signed-rank tests. Statistical significance was determined at a p-value at or below 0.05 for all three measures.

Increases were observed in all five post-test measures. Trends may have been indicated by the results in comprehension and overall attitude toward reading. Statistical significance was found with regards to reading fluency and attitude toward recreational reading.

Fluency results showed that thirteen of the fourteen students had an increase in the number of words correctly read per minute (WCPM), ranging from 3 to 29 words. Averaged over the entire group this showed an 11.75% increase in WCPM over the six weeks. The t-test comparisons showed a pre-test mean of 71.28 WCPM and a post-test mean of 80.78 WCPM, with an increase in post-test over pre-test mean scores of 9.5 WCPM. Statistical analysis determined that findings were significant, with a t-value of 5.07 and a p-value of 0.0001075. With 13 degrees of freedom, at the confidence interval of 0.95, statistical significance is determined when the t-value is ± 4.0489.

Comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores for the Brigance reading comprehension subtests showed some overall increase in comprehension scores. Seven of the fourteen students showed an increase in comprehension grade level placement. Statistical data was obtained by comparing pre-test and post-test grade level placement scores. The post-test mean score of 4.89 showed an increase of 0.32 over the pre-test mean score of 4.57. Given 13 degrees of freedom, at the confidence interval of 0.95, statistical significance is determined when the t-value is ± 1.771. With a t-value equal to -0.96 and a p-value of 0.1772855, no statistically significant increase was indicated.

Attitude toward reading was measured using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey which produces three different reading attitude scores: recreational, academic, and overall attitude toward reading. Results showed that there was an average increase in reading attitude scores for each of the three measures, however, the significance of the results varied. Attitude

toward recreational reading showed the greatest gain in average percentage scores, increasing from 63.9% to 70.5%, a growth of 6.6%. Attitude toward academic reading scores increased on average from 65.5% to 69.6%, a growth of 4.1%. Overall reading attitude increased from 64.7% to 70%, a growth of 5.3%. The matched pairs tests compared the rankings of the raw scores in each sample, pre-test and post-test, for all three measures to determine if there were positive or negative differences. The sum of the signed ranks provided the W-values of -49, -3, and -33. For results to be statistically significant the z-values needed to be at least ± 1.645 with p-values ≤ 0.05. Analyses showed that participants made statistically significant gains in attitude toward recreational reading with a z-value of -1.69 and a p-value of 0.0455. A slight gain was seen in attitudes toward academic reading, though it was not statistically significant. A larger gain was seen in overall reading attitude, and though the increase was not great enough to be considered statistically significant, it was strong enough that it may indicate a trend.

The importance of reading competence to the academic success of students in middle school cannot be overemphasized. By the time students reach middle school, literacy instruction is primarily directed toward active engagement with text through analysis, critique, and problem solving (CDE, 2007). Middle school students who did not develop sufficient reading skills in elementary school are at a distinct disadvantage (Harmon, 2002; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Those with diagnosed reading disabilities will have even greater difficulties (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities [NJCLD], 2008). Struggling readers at this age have a special need for instructional methods that will not only improve reading development but re-engage the students' interests and motivation as well (Ivey, 1999). The fact that Readers Theater scripts can be written for any reading level and directly address a wide range of interests make the Readers Theater program adaptable to this age group. The results of many studies across a variety of

populations indicate that Readers Theater is an effective method for increasing reading competence and attitudes (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Keehn, 2003; Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008; Young & Rasinski, 2009). The indications from this study are that Readers Theater may well be an appropriate, efficient, and effective method for specifically supporting middle school students with mild-to-moderate disabilities in addressing their reading challenges, as well.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN
HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

APPROVED PROJECT: Readers Theater: Effect on Adolescents with Learning Disabilities

We would like you to participate in a research study conducted by Nancy Swan, candidate for Masters in Education, to be used for her master's thesis at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB).

The purpose of this research is to determine the effectiveness of Readers Theater with regards to reading fluency, reading comprehension, and attitudes toward reading with middle-school-aged students with learning disabilities.

You are considered a participant in this study because you are a Paraprofessional who will be working with the students in the classroom where the research will be taking place.

The benefits of participating in this project include exposure to and practice with a reading intervention program that utilizes strategies that are known to be successful in teaching reading: modeled reading and repeated reading. Additionally, Readers Theater has been shown to improve the attitudes toward reading of students in various groups.

If you decide to participate in this research, in conjunction with your regular duties as a Paraprofessional in Special Education, you will be asked to assist in preparing students for bi-weekly reading performances before small audiences that may include parents, staff, and other students. You will work with small groups of students and individual students to help them practice reading play scripts and to assist by modeling reading with expression for students to imitate. The research will be carried out during the reading period in the SDC program at San Lorenzo Valley Middle School over the course of eight weeks in the spring semester. Twenty minutes to about one hour of each class period during that time frame will be devoted to participation with the Readers Theater program.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your written or witnessed verbal permission or as required by law. All consent forms and materials will remain locked up when not in use. The names of the school and the names of individual participants will not be used in reporting results.

Taking part in this project is entirely up to you. You can choose whether or not to be in the study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you choose to not participate, you will be given alternative assignments within the special day class program.

If you want to know more about this research project or have questions or concerns, please call me at (831) 338-7309; email: nswan@csumb.edu, or you may call my advisor, Dr. Irene Nares-Guzicki at (831) 582-5081; email: inares-guzicki@csumb.edu.

The project has been reviewed and accepted by the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) California State University Monterey Bay's review board for research involving humans as subjects. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

If you have questions about CSUMB's guidelines and policies for human subject research, they're posted online at: http://grants.csumb.edu/human-subjects-research. To speak with someone about human subjects, please contact the CPHS Chair, Dr. Chip Lenno, at (831) 582-4799, or in person at CSUMB, 100 Campus Center, Media Learning Center (Building 18) , Seaside CA 93955.

You will get a copy of this consent form. Thank you for considering participation.

Sincerely,

Nancy Swan
Candidate for Masters in Education

Consent Statement

I understand the procedures described. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I freely agree to participate in this study. I know what I will have to do and that I can stop at any time.

I have been given a copy of this Consent Form.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Signature of Researcher

In my judgment, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX B

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

100 Campus Center
Seaside, CA 93955-8001

PARENTAL/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT
FOR MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

APPROVED PROJECT: Readers Theater: Effect on Adolescents with Learning Disabilities

Dear _____ ,

I am writing to ask your permission for your child to participate in a research study conducted by me, to be used for my master's thesis at California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB).

The purpose of this research is to determine the effectiveness of a reading program called Readers Theater in addressing students' reading skills and attitudes toward reading, as well as to add to the variety of strategies being used to teach reading within your child's class. This program was chosen for use and evaluation because it has been shown in multiple studies to be successful in improving reading fluency, reading comprehension, and attitudes toward reading across a variety of student populations. Although students with learning disabilities of various ages have participated in many of the studies evaluating Readers Theater, there is little research that directly targets its use with adolescent students with learning disabilities. As a student in my reading class, your child was selected as a participant in this study.

If you agree to have your child be a part of this study, he or she will participate by rehearsing and performing several short plays. Even though this program is called Readers Theater, these plays will not involve acting, props, costumes, getting up on a stage, or memorizing lines. Readers Theater's plays involve reading a character's part aloud from a script. The performances will be before small audiences in our classroom.

With each new play students will first hear a description of the storyline and characters. They will then follow along as I read the play to them. Students will be given individual roles and will highlight their lines in their scripts. They will practice their lines in small groups or pairs. Reading with expression will be modeled for the students and encouraged.

Readers Theater rehearsals will typically occur three times a week and will range from about twenty minutes to an hour each time. Each play will be introduced, practiced, and performed within a two-week period. Your child will participate in three or four plays over the course of eight weeks. Audiences may include other students in the class, parents, staff members from the school, or some younger students from the elementary school. After each performance the students will host a small celebration and serve treats to the audience members.

The benefits of your child's participation in this project include exposure to and participation with reading instruction using the methods of "repeated reading" and "modeled reading", strategies that have been shown to be directly effective in improving reading fluency, and both directly and indirectly effective in improving reading comprehension. Additionally, Readers Theater has been demonstrated to improve students' attitudes toward reading, and to be an acceptable and motivating program for adolescent-aged students.

It is not uncommon for people at any age to feel nervousness, or "stage fright" before a performance. Students will be told that this is a natural feeling and encouraged to participate even if they experience this. However, no student will be forced to perform if they don't want to for this or any other reason. If your student chooses to not participate, he or she can become an audience member or be provided with an alternative way of helping out during the play. Additionally students may risk embarrassment if they make mistakes in

reading during the plays, though preemptive measures will be taken to address the fact that mistakes are to be expected during performances.

To measure the effectiveness of Readers Theater in this study, your child will be administered three short assessments, both before and after participating in the program. The results of these assessments will be compared to determine any impact on your student's reading fluency, reading comprehension, and attitudes toward reading. Your student will not be graded on the results of these assessments or on his or her performance. Your student will be given participation points for his or her work in reading class. The findings from this research will be evaluated and used by me in writing my thesis for the Masters of Arts in Education degree. The completed thesis will be housed in the CSUMB library.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your written or witnessed verbal permission or as required by law. Your child's name will not be contained anywhere in the thesis, nor will there be any mention of the name of the school your child attends.

Allowing your child to take part in this project is entirely up to you. You can choose whether or not to allow your child to participate. If you consent to your child's participation in this study, you may withdraw that consent at any time without consequences of any kind. Your child may also choose to not participate or answer any questions he or she does not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

If you want to know more about this research project or have questions or concerns, please email me at nswan@csumb.edu or call me at (831) 338-7309. To reach my advisor, Dr. Irene Nares-Guzicki, email her at inares-guzicki@csumb.edu or call her at (831) 582-5081.

The project has been reviewed and accepted by the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) California State University Monterey Bay's review board for research involving humans as subjects. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

If you have questions about CSUMB's guidelines and policies for human subject research, they're posted online at: http://grants.csumb.edu/human-subjects-research. To speak with someone about human subjects, please contact the CPHS Chair, Dr. Chip Lenno, at (831) 582-4799, or in person at CSUMB, 100 Campus Center, Media Learning Center (Building 18) , Seaside CA 93955.

You will get a copy of this consent form. Thank you for considering participation.

Sincerely,

Nancy Swan
Special Education Teacher
Candidate for Masters of Arts in Education, CSUMB

Parental Consent Statement

I have read the contents of this consent form. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I freely give my permission for my child to participate in this study. I know that I can withdraw my consent at any time.

I have been given a copy of this form.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Signature of Researcher

In my judgment, the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX C

MINOR ASSENT FORM

MINOR ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN
HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

APPROVED PROJECT: Readers Theater: Effect on Adolescents with Learning Disabilities

Dear _____ ,

I am going to be doing a research project through my college, CSUMB, using a reading program called Readers Theater. I would like you to take part in it. It has helped other students with their reading skills and enjoyment of reading, and I'm hoping it helps you as well. If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be rehearsing and performing several different short plays in class. Even though this program is called Readers "Theater," these plays are not plays that involve acting, props, costumes, getting up on a stage, or memorizing lines. These plays will involve reading a character's part aloud from a script before a small audience in our classroom.

With each new play you will hear a description of the storyline and the characters. I will then read the whole play to you while you follow along. Once you have been assigned a role, you will highlight your lines in your script and begin to practice. For several days we will rehearse our scripts in class. I will help you to read your lines with expression. We will perform each play once we've finished rehearsing it. We may ask your parents, staff members from our school, or some younger students from the elementary school to come and listen. After each performance we will have a little celebration and serve treats to our audience members.

Some good things that students have experienced with Readers Theater is having fun doing the plays, becoming faster at reading, getting better at understanding what they're reading, feeling good about their reading skills, and enjoying reading more. I expect that you will have some of these same experiences.

Sometimes people can feel nervous, or "stage fright", before a performance. This is a natural feeling and even adults and professional actors and actresses feel it sometimes. Occasionally people feel so nervous that they really don't want to participate in the performance. If this were to happen to you, you would not be forced to perform. You could do something else to help out or you could be an audience member.

I will give you three assessments, both before and after we do the program. I will compare the results to see if the program was helpful to you. You will not be graded on your assessments or your performance, but you will get participation points. Once we are finished using the Readers Theater program, I will write a report called a "thesis" so other people can read about what I find. I will not mention your name anywhere in the report, but I will let them know if it helped your reading skills or your feelings about reading.

I will also be asking your parents to give their permission for you to take part in this study. I want you to know that although your parents may agree to your participation in this study, you may decide to not participate. Also, you can stop at any time if you change your mind, just by telling me you don't want to participate. If you choose not to participate, other reading instruction will be provided to you.

Do you have any questions about this study? You can ask any questions about this study at any time. You can call me, email me, or ask me at school. My email address is nswan@slvusd.org and my phone number is (831)338-7309.

Thank you for considering participating in this study,

Ms. Swan

Signing your name at the bottom of this form means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form.

Assent Statement

Please mark one of the choices below to tell us what you want to do:

_____No, I do not want to be in this project.

_____Yes, I do want to be in this project.

I understand the procedures described. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I freely agree to participate in this study. I know what I will have to do and that I can stop at any time.

I have been given a copy of this Assent Form.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Signature of Researcher

I have read this form to the participant and/or the participant has read this form. I have provided (or will provide) the participant with a copy of the form. An explanation of the research was given and questions from the participant were solicited and answered to the participant's satisfaction. In my judgment, the participant has demonstrated comprehension of the information.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Witness Statement

I have witnessed the assent process and believe that the participant listed above has been fully informed, understands the project and his/her role, and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

_____   _____
Witness's Signature   Date

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Sojourner Truth:
A Life Devoted to Justice

Narrator 1: In 1797 Sojourner Truth was born into slavery in New York State. She was given the name Isabella Baumfree.

Narrator 2: Now, Baumfree is an unusual name. It comes from the Low Dutch language spoken in New York, and it means "tree." Isabella's father was very tall, and he stood very straight. That's why he was called Baumfree.

Narrator 1: Isabella's mother was named Betsy, but she was known by her nickname: Mau-mau-Bett. When she was very young, Isabella would sit with her mother under the trees, and together they would gaze up at the stars.

Betsy: *(to Isabella)* Remember Isabella, whenever times get tough, just look up at the stars. The heavens are bigger than all of us. Looking at the stars reminds us that there's a plan to the world, though we may not understand it.

Isabella: But Mama, why can't we understand it? Why must life be so hard?

Betsy: I don't know, child. But just remember: Look at the stars when you need the strength of the heavens. That strength is always there for you.

Narrator 2: Soon Isabella would learn what her mother meant. She was about to face one of the greatest hardships of her life.

Narrator 1: Isabella's beloved mother died, and not long after—when she was just nine years old—she was sold away from her family. She was made to work very hard, but when she was able, Isabella would glance up at the night sky and remember her mother's words.

APPENDIX E

DYNAMIC INDICATORS OF BASIC EARLY LITERACY SKILLS (DIBELS)

SAMPLE PROBE

The Bakery

Light crept through the bedroom window and woke Josh up.   10

At first he was a bit disoriented and did not recognize the room,   23

but he quickly remembered where he was. Yesterday had been   33

moving day, and this was his new home.   41

"Today, I'll explore my new neighborhood and, with any   50

luck, I'll make some friends," he said to himself.   59

Josh jumped out of bed and pushed open the window. He   70

stretched and took a long, deep breath, and that's when he   81

noticed it. The air was filled with the most wonderful aroma.   92

"I've got to find out where that incredibly delicious smell is   103

coming from!" exclaimed Josh, as he threw on his clothes and   114

ran down the stairs.   118

In the kitchen, his stepmother and dad were conversing about   128

their plans for the day over breakfast.   135

"Did you notice that wonderful aroma?" his stepmother   143

asked.   144

"Absolutely," replied Josh, "and I'm going to investigate   152

where it's coming from as soon as I finish breakfast."   162

"That's not necessary," Dad said, "because I can tell you it's   173

the smell of fresh bread from a nearby bakery. In fact, I bought   186

these breakfast muffins there just a little while ago. You should   197

stop by and introduce yourself. Mr. Lee, the baker, really wants   208

you to meet his son."   213

After he had devoured his breakfast, Josh ambled down the   223

sidewalk toward the bakery. He found it at the corner where his   235

street intersected the main road. Inside the bakery, Josh saw a   246

The Bakery (Continued)

counter where loaves of bread were stacked alongside muffins,   255

cookies, and sweet rolls. They all smelled and looked   264

mouthwateringly delicious.   266

Mr. Lee came out and welcomed Josh to the bakery. After   277

they chatted for a while, he introduced Josh to Li-Young, his   288

son. The two boys began talking and soon found they had many   300

things in common. Li-Young offered to show Josh around the   310

neighborhood, and they spent the morning roaming around   318

together.   319

Josh headed home for lunch with a good feeling. He had,   330

indeed, made a new friend, and what could be better than waking   342

up each day to the smell of fresh-baked bread? He couldn't wait   355

to learn more about his new neighborhood and meet more   365

friends.   366

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell: ORF Total:_____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71
72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94
95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112
113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129

Retell Total:_____

Notes:

APPENDIX F

BRIGANCE READING COMPREHENSION SUBTEST SAMPLE

Name: _____ Date: _____ Examiner: _____

Form A

DIRECTIONS: Read the story below. Then answer each question about the story by circling the letter of the best answer.

Carlotta entered the race for beginning runners. She ran every day to develop her strength. She increased her speed.

She felt prepared as she positioned herself on the starting line.

When she heard the signal, she ran as fast and as hard as she could. Carlotta grinned as she crossed the finish line. She knew she hadn't won, but she was sure she had done her best.

36. Carlotta was
    a. a winner.
    b. a beginner.
    c. always grinning.
    d. not prepared for the race.

37. What happened last?
    a. Carlotta positioned herself on the starting line.
    b. Carlotta decided to enter the race.
    c. Carlotta grinned as she crossed the finish line.
    d. Carlotta developed her strength and speed.

38. Carlotta ran every day because
    a. she wanted to be prepared to do her best.
    b. her coach told her to.
    c. she was a beginning runner.
    d. she knew she would be the winner.

39. In this story, the word *positioned* means
    a. practiced.
    b. got ready or got in place.
    c. developed strength and speed.
    d. crossed the finish line.

40. The main idea of this story is that Carlotta
    a. did not win.
    b. increased her strength and speed.
    c. positioned herself on the starting line.
    d. entered a race.

APPENDIX G

ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDES SURVEY SAMPLE

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School_____ Grade_____ Name_____

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1. **How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?**

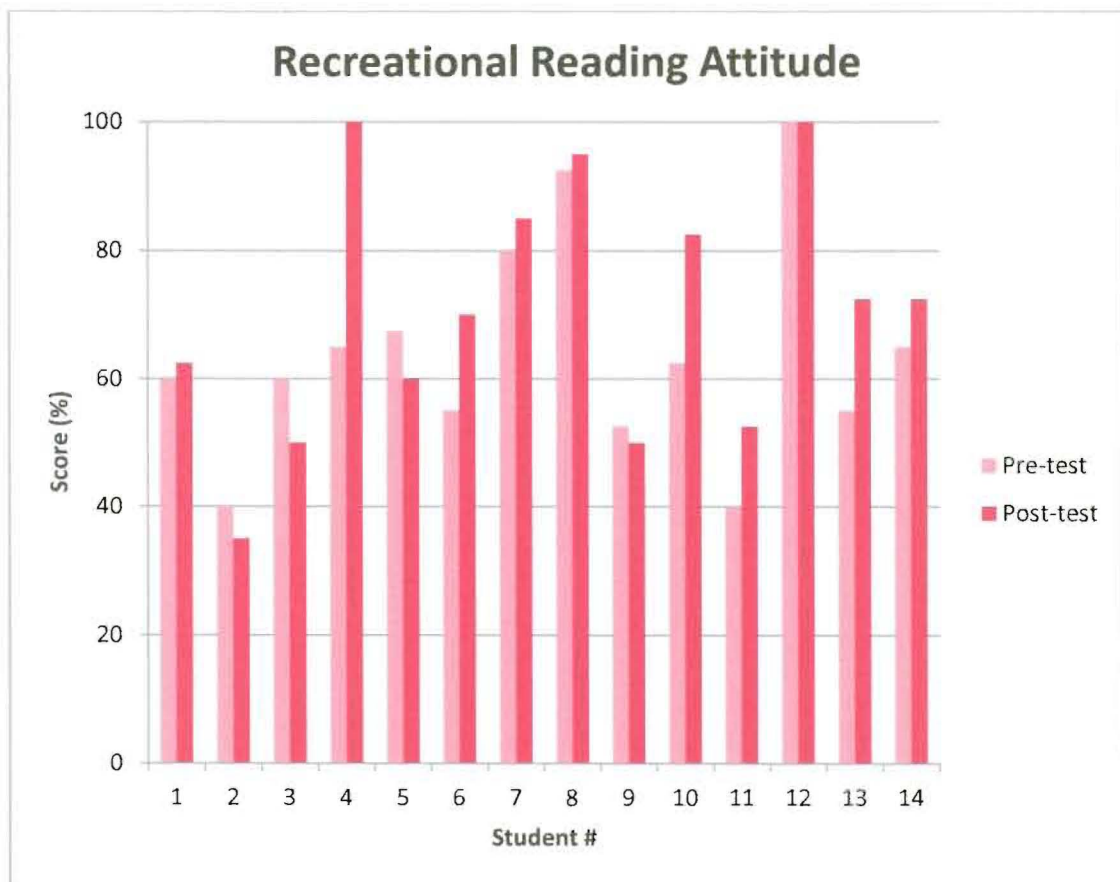2. **How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?**

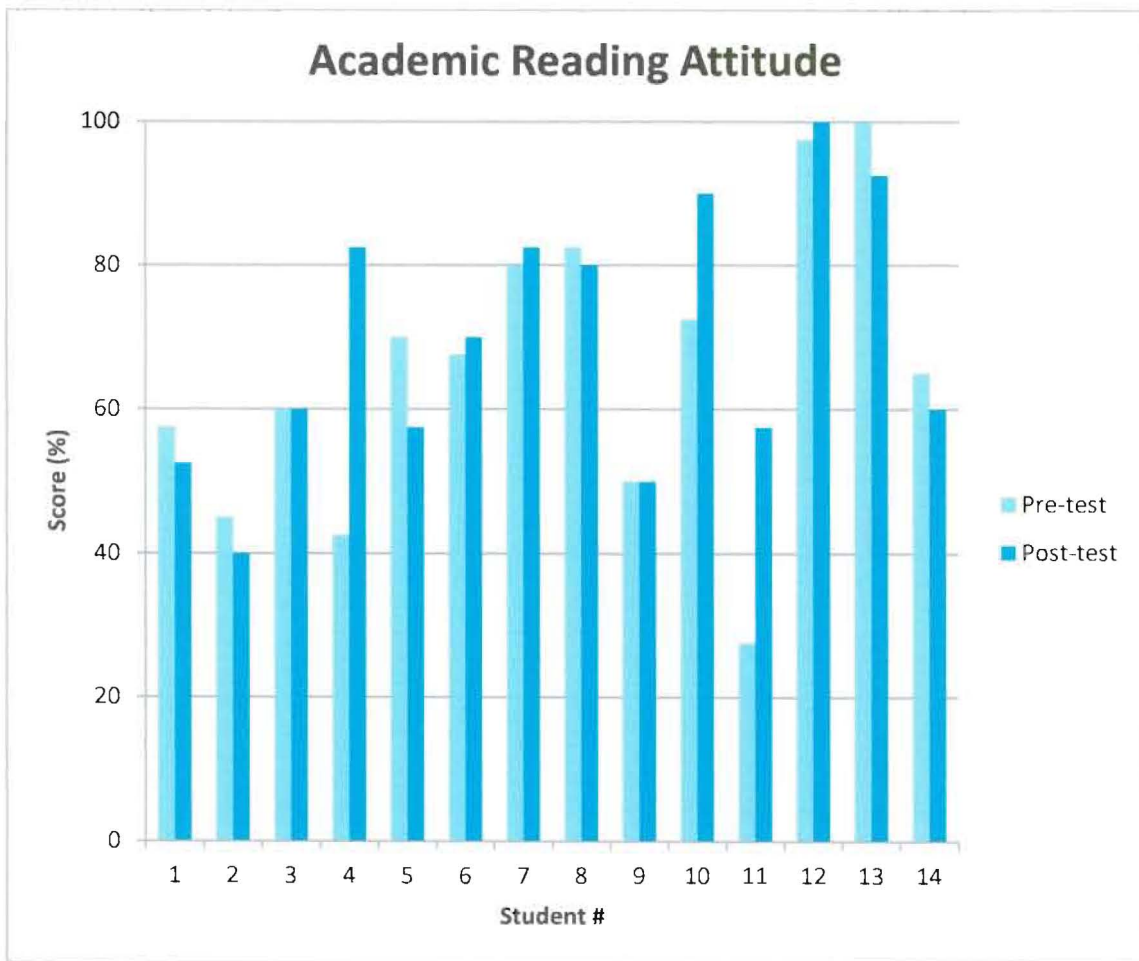3. **How do you feel about reading for fun at home?**

4. **How do you feel about getting a book for a present?**

APPENDIX H

INDIVIDUAL PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES FORATTITUDE TOWARD

RECREATIONAL READING GRAPH

Recreational Reading Attitude

APPENDIX I

INDIVIDUAL PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES FOR ATTITUDE TOWARD

ACADEMIC READING GRAPH

Academic Reading Attitude

APPENDIX J

INDIVIDUAL PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES FOR OVERALL ATTITUDE

TOWARD READING GRAPH

Overall Reading Attitude