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HOW READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES SUPPORT ENGLISH LEARNERS IN  
A PRIMARY INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENT

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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## ABSTRACT

English Learners (ELs) are an important and growing population of students in schools nationwide, and how they are taught can have a major impact on their academic success (of course). The overall purpose for this study is to ensure that ELs in my own classroom are taught reading comprehension strategies from an effective curriculum that meets their specific needs. The curriculum used in the school in which this study was conducted was a combination of Daily 5 and the Treasures curriculum. The question posed for my research is: ***“What instructional strategies are appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?”*** In particular, I examine what aspects of the Daily 5 and Treasures curriculum work for ELLs in this class.

The literature review for this capstone describes various literacy curricula that have been used and examines the evidence of academic success for ELs. It also describes the Daily 5 curriculum in detail, since that curriculum is used in this study. The study itself uses a mixed methods approach in which qualitative and quantitative research methods are used to analyze the success of the Daily 5 curriculum with a group of third grade EL students. Specifically, the study uses state test scores, formative assessments, student surveys, teacher surveys, and researcher observations as data. This data is analyzed in detail and I draw conclusions about the Daily 5 curriculum in my analysis. This study suggests that while the Daily 5 curriculum has

some successful components, it is generally not successful with ELs and needs to be supplemented with additional instructional strategies. Finally, the capstone provides a series of recommendations for supporting ELs in a primary integrated environment.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction to Research and Personal Experience**

Third grade was and still is my favorite grade. It is a year that takes fundamental reading skills to a new level of comprehension. As a third-grade teacher in an urban and diverse school district, I know that this year of school is essential for student growth. I want to have as positive an impact as possible on my students, especially in the area of literacy.

I was born and raised in a small town called New Hope. Growing up, I stayed in the same school district from kindergarten through twelfth grade. I had many teachers along my journey that inspired me to do great things and strongly influenced my decision to become a teacher. I knew that there was a lot to be done as a teacher and I saw teaching as a way to have an impact on society. I wanted to make a difference and help students who, like myself, struggled to overcome learning difficulties. Some of the learning difficulties I grew up with were the ability to pay attention, comprehend material, and feel successful, even when my work was correct. In high school I started to notice that I was able to complete assignments, but when I was given a test, it was as if I had never learned the content. Later, while I was in my last year of college, I was tested and diagnosed with anxiety, depression and ADHD. Realizing this made a huge impact on the way I viewed my life. I decided that a future in teaching would still be my dream, and it also made me think that there are ways to help students like me. I want them to be

successful and accomplish their dreams like I am able to today. All students, regardless of challenges or barriers, should be given the support and skills they need to succeed academically.

The school district where I teach now has seen a significant increase in racial and cultural diversity over the past several years. With this increase of population came a need for a more concerted effort in reaching students in a wide variety of ways and sometimes accommodating specific needs. Unfortunately, with not enough support to guide instruction in the core content areas of math and literacy, we have seen a steady decline in standardized test scores that measure both reading and math. With such a wide variety of learning differences in the classroom, implementing effective differentiation for every lesson can be a challenge. In my first year of teaching in this school district, I learned a great deal about how to make sure I am not only helping students learn grade level content, but also differentiating the instruction so learning can be engaging and fun. In order to make this happen, I had to gather resources from various curricula and websites in order to meet the standards requirements. Throughout my three years in the district, I have redesigned and tailored curricula to meet my students' needs in various ways. But I still have much to learn.

**Purpose.** For the purposes of this capstone project, I have decided to focus on a topic that will make me better at differentiating instruction, particularly with the English language learners I work with. I hope to be able to learn more about how English language learners can be taught most effectively through specific curricula that meets their needs. I want to be able to expand my own knowledge and improve my practice through carefully researching this topic. Although I am a firm believer that small group instruction is valuable in differentiation in the classroom, I have also found that it is nearly impossible for one teacher to work with just one or

two students consistently without ignoring the rest of the students who require various supports. The study that I am going to conduct will focus on reading comprehension strategies and how EL students perform compared to their other classmates. I hope to find ways to support ELs without neglecting the needs of other students in the class. Specifically, my research will focus on the following question: *“What instructional strategies are appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?”* In this chapter, I describe the experiences that have brought me to this topic.

**Personal Experience.** My years of K-12 were encouraging and inspiring, but the idea of differentiation in teaching had not yet occurred to me, since I had a very traditional school experience. My goal after graduating high school was to be able to go back to this same school district and teach in an elementary setting. I decided in college that third grade would be the ideal grade for me to teach. I had taken a few child development courses and I was able to relate to many different styles of teaching and learning for students. This gave me the feeling that I should be pushing myself to learn more and to teach others who struggled like myself. I graduated with my Bachelor’s Degree from Minnesota State Mankato University in 2013 and applied for a position as a third or fourth grade teacher for my childhood school district. It was nostalgic but rewarding to know that my dream was finally coming true. Later that same week, I was selected within that district as a third-grade teacher in a racially and ethnically diverse school with a very high rate of poverty.

Before reaching the goal of becoming a third grade teacher, I participated in field experiences and student teaching, just like any other teacher. My field experiences also had a major impact on my decision to become a teacher and paved the path for my educational career.



One of my first field experiences in teaching began when I was in my third year of college. I was nervous about the experience and was unsure whether I would be able to meet the expectations of the mentor teacher and the needs of my students. This particular semester, I was working in a fourth-grade classroom with twenty-five students. Two of these students were Somali and had immigrated to Minnesota from their home country with little to no English, spoken or understood. However, I could tell they were bright children with a successful future ahead. With one-on-two teaching, I was able to support the students in certain literacy skills, including phonics, word recognition, and various other strategies to support their individual needs. In my five-week journey with these students, we were able to teach the whole group three days a week and have small group lessons with the two students every day. My mentor teacher would implement whole group lessons. I would then work with the two students on sight words, eventually leading into small books with pictures and working on comprehension strategies that would guide their reading. Every time I worked with them, I could tell something was clicking, cognitively. They were engaged and during summative and formative assessments, they were able to perform close to proficiency. I was able to support the students through explicit instruction and their reading levels increased from a kindergarten reading level to a second-grade reading level. They made immense growth in a short period of time. Through this initial successful experience, I found myself thinking about what I can do to make sure my students are proficient in comprehension with each literacy lesson. I noticed that ELs have particular needs. Decoding words can be frustrating. Omission of incorrect words and/or mispronunciation of words is a common challenge. Correcting errors and miscues was beneficial, especially in a small group tutoring setting. The question that occurred to me after this success

was: How can this type of growth occur with twenty plus students? I wanted to know how general education teachers could help a larger group of students succeed with their literacy strategies, as I had done in my small tutoring sessions.

My initial experience with the two Somali students compelled me to consider how small group tutoring can be incorporated into classes without interrupting other students and their need to learn grade level material. Each time I met with these two students, I could work closely with their specific needs and was able to use strategies that worked for them. A lot of the credit belongs to them, of course. They pushed and persevered because they actively wanted to be successful in their new language. I also noticed that when working closely with a small group, I was able to have a greater impact. I could identify skills that were needed to enhance their reading. Could this level of careful attention still occur when one teacher was working with a larger group of students? And if so, what would this look like?

**Present day.** Now that I am a full-time teacher, I try to plan carefully according to the needs of all of my students. Unfortunately, there are days that I know that I am not reaching all of them, and I worry especially about my ELs. Sometimes I may talk too fast as I give directions or I may not be giving enough time for students to write down notes. Students complete tasks at different rates and I always do a good job of balancing their varying needs. I want to find ways to work with ELs on an individual or small group basis, without taking away from the experiences of the native English speakers in the classroom. In other words, I need to get better at differentiation, particularly when it comes to working with ELs.

Looking into the school district data on the MCA (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment), I discovered that the performance of the EL population in literacy reflected

minimal to no growth. This was not just for third grade, but all grades. It made me realize that this was something I needed to research. I immediately remembered my first encounter with the two Somali students and how much progress they had made through small group instruction and tutoring. Was it possible to still use this strategy while working with a much larger group of students? With these thoughts in mind, I decided that my research should focus on ELs and how best to help them make consistent progress as readers. I also wanted to discover if our current literacy curriculum, Daily 5, was succeeding at meeting the needs of our ELs. And if it wasn't (as I suspected), how might I supplement it most effectively?

**Pre-research.** I started researching informally with an interesting book called *How Languages are Learned* by Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada (1993). This book not only explains how teachers think second language learners should learn, but also describes the misconceptions that often come with that thinking. "The book succeeds in presenting theoretical views and research findings to experienced language teachers. It acts as a kind of workshop-in-a-book" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Although I am not an experienced language teacher, I found this book to be very helpful and it nudged me to keep researching this important topic. It helped me see that I had developed some misconceptions about my ELs and their learning. It also gave me some initial reading strategies to try out with my students. In addition, it reminded me how important it is for students to have motivation to read.

I sometimes take time to remember what third grade was like for me and how I absolutely loved reading the *Little House on the Prairie* books. Laura Ingalls Wilder was a teacher at a young age and I had always dreamed of becoming a teacher. Reading that series truly helped me with my love for reading. I not only had an interest, but a purpose for what I was reading. I think

that having an interest in a book is important, but so is having a purpose for reading. Many of my EL students struggle with reading independently and I want to be able to make it possible for them to love reading.

In this chapter, I have narrated events in my own life that have led me to my research topic. My own experiences have shown me that when ELs are supported through small guided instruction, they are more capable of learning and growing as readers and writers. As a general education teacher, I want to provide this small group support for ELs while also continuing to support an entire class of twenty third-graders. This has led me to my research question: ***“What instructional strategies are appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?”*** In the next chapter, I will present the literature that I reviewed on literacy, particularly as relates to ELs.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

In the early years of learning how to read, students are often taught through explicit and direct instructional strategies. As students venture to third grade, reading shifts from learning to read, to reading for meaning. Various strategies can help students to build the skills they need to become more fluent readers and writers as third graders. Research also suggests that second language learners in a mainstream classroom may have difficulty with literacy and may require particular kinds of instructional support to become successful at reading for meaning. In this capstone, I hope to address this challenge with my own teaching, so I have posed the following research question: *What instructional strategies are appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?*

In this chapter I will be examining three categories of research that apply to my research question. The first category considers literacy curricula used in general elementary settings -- what is out there and what districts in my area are using to help kids develop as readers and writers. The second category considers strategies and best practices for working with EL students in mainstream classrooms. The last category examines the Daily 5 curriculum specifically, by describing several reading strategies used by the program. In each category, I will try to relate the information presented to my research question.

Many educators realize how important data is for analyzing students' literacy skills and deciding what needs to be done in the classroom. The data that is produced helps with the process of differentiation to match each student's learning needs. In this study, general diversity and differentiation are important (as they all for all classrooms), but the main focus will pertain to the students who are ELs (English Learners). A classroom teacher can help all students grow through individual and whole group lessons with the proper implementation of reading comprehension strategies. My goal is to show how teachers are able to reach all learners in literacy through specific comprehension strategies that are effective.

**General elementary literacy curricula.** Through various research, I was able to find some of the most up to date curricula that are being used in the districts around my school. Here, I will describe the curricula being used and how it supports ELs. In one district there were three different forms of curricula being used: Scott Foresman Reading Street curriculum, RAZ kids, and Evan-Moor Educational Publishers Non-fiction Reading Practice materials. According to one district website: "Scott Foresman Reading Street © 2011 is an all-new comprehensive Reading and Language Arts series for the 21st Century. Reading Street delivers a wealth of groundbreaking online experiences for high student engagement, especially English language learners, toward greater proficiency with a sustained Unit focus on concepts and language" (Scott, 2017, para.1). Just reading this abstract of the curriculum makes a teacher feel inspired for her or his learners. The next curriculum was RAZ kids. This was something that was introduced to me in a clinical experience but not in my own teaching. According to the website, "Raz-Kids is an award-winning teaching product that provides comprehensive leveled reading resources for students. With hundreds of eBooks offered at 29 different levels of reading

difficulty” (About, 2017, para.1). Raz kids is a website that can be accessed by all students. The website can be set to the an individual student's current reading level and students can read ebooks at their own pace. Students also take a quiz on the ebook that was read. After the students have taken ten quizzes in the reading level they are currently working on, the quizzes show proficiency in the reading level. Then the student is moved up to the next reading level. Another curriculum being used is from Evan-Moor Educational Publishers and their Nonfiction Reading Practice materials. Evan-Moor is an educational publishing company that creates materials for educators to support student learning. The nonfiction reading practice materials are a part of what has been created by the company for students to practice reading non-fiction materials and asking comprehensive questions that align with the learning.

Reading about some of these other curricula being used makes me want to try using these resources for my students in hopes of more success. I was able to take three other curriculums and relate them to the one I am using. Throughout this research you will see that these are just a few of hundreds of curricula that are used nationwide. In order to understand which curriculum is right for ELs, it’s also important to know what types of EL instruction is being used in the mainstream classroom.

### **EL Instruction in the Mainstream Classroom**

More and more ELs are entering the mainstream classroom, so it is, of course, important that we teach them equitably and using best practices. To ensure that all students are receiving resources for academic success, we need to consider what is essential for ELs in their everyday learning. As I researched several articles on this topic, I noticed that many of them discussed the misconceptions about how to teach EL students and what you can do correct your

misconceptions. In one article called “Misconceptions about Teaching English language learners” Harper and Jong point out that, “many teachers assume that exposure to language and opportunities for interaction with English speakers are the essential necessary and sufficient conditions for learning ESL” (2004, para.1). Harper and Jong go on to explain that small group and individual practice is the best way to ensure retention of literacy (which actually requires that teachers and students spend at least some time working separately from native speakers of English). I wanted to compare this source to something more current. In “Moving Toward a Diversity Plus Teacher Education: Approaches, Challenges, and Possibilities in Preparing Teachers for English Language Learners” the authors suggests that, “most teacher education programs focus on preparing pre-service teachers to learn about understanding and accommodating cultural and ethnic differences, rather than on learning about language and linguistic differences as well as pedagogical tools to address these disparities” (Moss, p.216, 2014). Other sources also reinforced the idea that pre-service training tends to focus on cultural needs, rather than actual pedagogical strategies to help ELs develop as readers and writers.

In the article, "Over tested: how high-stakes accountability fails English language learners" Katz reminds us that, “EL students are the fastest growing group of school-age students in the United States, and they come from tremendously diverse backgrounds” (2013, p.209). With this in mind, teachers need to be more culturally aware of students and consider that activating prior knowledge may look different, depending on the cultural needs and experiences of the students. Also, ELs may already possess content knowledge that they cannot yet demonstrate in English. Like all students, ELs may look for opportunities to make associations between previous experiences and new experiences (whether with culture or academic content)



but they may not be able to articulate those associations in English. Allowing ELs to use their native language with peers can help alleviate some of this difficulty (students can make connections in their native language with others).

**Daily 5 Cafe Menu.** In this section of the literature review, I examine the “Cafe Menu,” which is a menu of literacy strategies suggested by the Daily 5 framework. I examine this literacy curriculum model in greater detail, since this is the model used in my own district and the being examined in this study. Although the curriculum provides a wide array of literacy strategies to use, I have selected five to focus on here, because I have found them to be the most useful in my classroom and I will focus on them in my study. The strategies include; activating prior knowledge, asking and answering questions, making connections, making predictions, and main idea.

Now that Daily 5 has been taught by many educators throughout the United States, educators are starting to get a better understanding of the Daily 5 model. Teachers and literacy instructors can be coached in Daily 5 with conferring, behavior management, teaching the CAFE strategies, and learning how to put together strategy groups instead of guided reading groups to help advance the reader. Daily 5 website states, “It is what enables teachers to choose individualized goals, assign strategies, monitor progress, and provide just-in-time instruction to meet the needs of every student” (2007, para.1). Teaching is more than just instructing a classroom from the front with a whiteboard. Teaching is about taking the time to make sure the students are retaining what is being learned. Short & Fitzsimmons (2007) claim, “Although many strategies for supporting literacy in native English speakers are applicable to adolescent

ELLs, there are significant differences in the way that successful literacy interventions for the latter group should be designed and implemented” (p.11). It’s a task for the students to get in the habit of picking good fit books and critically thinking about what they are reading. According to the two sisters who came up with the Daily 5 model, “Daily 5 also helps build stamina, develop independence, and make successful choices” (Boushey & Moser, 2014, p. 20).

**The Importance of Comprehension.** Literacy has many components that are fundamental for all learners. According to Reading Rockets “Studies on good readers have identified a number of comprehension strategies to be highly useful. From the array of strategies examined by researchers, the following strategies have been shown to be especially helpful and to lend themselves particularly well to instruction” (Reading Rockets, 2016, para.2). The first experience I can remember having with reading comprehension as a teacher was teaching how to ask questions and answer them. Some may think this is an easy task because we are continually asking and answering questions in real life. But often, young readers have not developed some of the key strategies we use to ask question in conversation every day. And even if they have, they may not be able to transfer these skills to their reading.

Colorin Colorado, another site about comprehension strategies for ELs, states “Spending time working with text structure and guiding ELLs in how to access expository content effectively will have huge benefits for your students now and in the future” (Colorin Colorado, 2016, para.1). Here, teachers work with small groups to help students who are struggling. The teacher can guide them through the importance of using these comprehension strategies. Through scaffolded instruction in reading, students are able to show growth in comprehension.

Reading Rockets states, “Research shows that instruction, even in the early grades, can help students become better at monitoring their comprehension” (Reading Rockets. 2016, para.1). When it comes to our students, we want to make sure we are giving them different ways to use the strategy so that they are able to start using them independently. We are here to identify and describe the main strategies students have used and how they have been implemented to show strong engagement. An article about young readers says, “Adolescent readers benefit from robust, general strategies that can be applied to a range of situations” (Alexander & Jetton, 2000). Since my students are in third grade they are between the ages of eight and nine. With this being known they are still little sponges in which everything they are learning they are absorbing. Knowing this as a teacher, educators should want to make sure that their students are soaking up the strategies that mold their comprehension. There are comprehensive strategies that will be explained. There will also be information on how they impact my students reading comprehension and how they are related to the standards we are advised to implement while concluding the need for the research.

**Activating Prior Knowledge.** The Daily 5 website suggests “Use prior knowledge to connect with text, teaches readers how to bring information from what they already know or what they have read before about a topic and connect it with what they are reading to increase their understanding of the text and to remember what they have read” (2017, para 1). According to the Daily 5 framework, it is key to activate prior knowledge in order to engage learners. For example, if I were to teach a lesson in math on multiplication strategies, I would make sure to bring up how it relates to the students’ lives. This will grasp the engagement that is needed for the lesson to be understood. Another example would be if I was teaching to how to check for

understanding which is a comprehension skill. In order to teach this skill I will go back to a text we have already read as a class, and I would talk about the summary of the story to remind them of what we read and also relate that to their lives. Students at times like to be recognized and when students are able to make connections with their life to what is happening at school they take the opportunity to share. Accessing background knowledge and asking the students to consider how the topic relates to them can be engaging.

A benefit of teaching activating prior knowledge is having partner shares which allow students to use their oral speaking skills for what they know about a topic. EL students benefit from this skill because it gives them an opportunity to use the language, listen to others, and share what they know. In return this gives EL students the motivation to be engaged in the lesson. This can also support EL students with confidence of learning the language. Background knowledge can be effective according to a teacher in the Denver public school system; Greene states in her blog, “It also allows ELs to bridge new knowledge to old knowledge, increasing understanding, and it helps some ELs fill in contextual information (such as American political history or cultural details) that they may not have due to coming from different cultural backgrounds” (Greene, 2015, para.7). As EL’s are starting a second language it is important to make connection and by having them access their background knowledge is going to be beneficial for comprehension.

In sum, teachers who provide the opportunity for activating prior knowledge give students a chance to use what they have already learned and apply it to their reading. This strategy works well for most students, though it can present some additional challenges for ELs, given the cultural and linguistic “static” that may exist between the teacher and students.

**Asking and Answering Question.** Students are able to read stories and comprehend them through various strategies. According to the reference guide on the Daily 5 website, asking and answering questions can be defined, “Readers are actively involved in reading by asking themselves questions before, during, and after reading a selection, thus increasing their comprehension of the material” (2009, para.1). Asking questions can help feed the curiosity that students have, but answering those questions exhibits comprehension of the text.

Students are prone to asking questions throughout daily lessons but when EL’s are asking questions it’s good to go into depth. There are a few ways to use this strategy in the classroom. An article titled "Questions Before, After, During Reading" by TeacherVision explains “To help readers learn to ask questions before, during, and after reading, think aloud the next time you are reading a book, article, or set of directions. Write each question on a post-it note and stick it on the text you have the question about” (2016, p.1). By using the post it notes as a place to write down questions, students can be mindful of what they are reading at the time. It also gives EL students a chance to ask questions about the book that can clarify the information being retained.

Another way to use this strategy is when you are previewing a story. By having the students complete a picture walk in which the students briefly read the pictures of the story and start to write down questions they may have on that page without reading the words. That way the teacher can read through the questions the students may have and get the questions answered as the students start to actually read the text aloud.

The key to making this strategy successful is to make sure the students have evidence of the answer for their questions. Students who actively search for the answer in their reading are following the strategy properly and it can ensure comprehension of what is being read. This

strategy is a great way for students to be a part of their learning and show what they have learned.

**Making Connections.** “Students who make connections while reading are better able to understand the text they are reading. It is important for students to draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to connect with the text” (Simon and Fitzsimmons, 2016, p.3). The third reading comprehension strategy that I teach is making connections in the Daily 5 model. The framework is set to expose students to the basic fundamentals for comprehension. As students make connections through their reading journey it's through connections of text, self, and the real world.

The lessons that mold this strategy of making connections give students the opportunity to be a part of the class and the discussion. The more opportunities EL students are able to relate to gives them a chance to feel more comfortable in the classroom environment, thus sharing their prior knowledge of a topic. Roberston from the Colorin Colorado website writes, “Becoming familiar with the backgrounds and/or prior knowledge of ELL students allows a teacher to engage students in literacy experiences that connect with their diverse backgrounds, thereby building on this knowledge” (2009, para.7).

There are a few ways to use the making connections strategy in the classroom. One example would be to make connections at the beginning of a story by looking at the title and asking the students “Can you make a connection with what we are about to read, how did that connection help you?” This wakes up the students to think about previous experiences or maybe other stories they have read before that relate to this particular one. Another example would be to show students that their cultures are important. When learning about a new topic let say students

are learning about money. The teacher can connect with students by adding information about how other cultures currency, and how it is used, what it looks like, how it relates to our country's currency as so on. This can open up the gates to students critical thinking skills about a topic. EL students can benefit from this strategy by having the teacher; use stories or folktales from other culture, also by looking for resources that go beyond the textbook that will engage students in the learning process so that they can connect to.

Once we make connections we can read text and find supporting information to make predictions. It's important for the students to be able to learn these strategies in this order for them to be prepared to find the main idea in a text. It builds the students comprehension and teaches the students responsibility of their own learning.

**Making Predictions.** In the primary grades besides teaching phonics students are also learning about reading comprehension. The Daily 5 website explains, "Making and adjusting predictions, using text to confirm, allows readers to think ahead, make connections, and draw on background knowledge to deepen comprehension" (2017, para. 1). Literacy researchers have created strategies that enhance reading that is active and increases comprehension. Though often seen as a single strategy, it is actually a multifaceted on going process. This is reflective of how the brain uses schema to accustom other parts of learning. Successful readers seem to routinely predict what they will be reading just before stepping into the next portion of the text. Their experience or prior knowledge allows skillful readers to make these continuing predictions.

There are a few ways to use making predictions in reading. One way is to use a whiteboard or post it note to write a prediction of what a story may be about. Another way would be to have the students use the post it notes in their own text that they are reading. At the

beginning of a chapter the student can write down their prediction how what the next chapter will be about. When they finish the chapter they can go back to their prediction and write down if they were correct or incorrect. This can also help with students' confidence in reassuring their comprehension in reading.

Teaching this strategy to EL students can be beneficial. According to an article by ESL by Design "English language learners may not have sufficient fluency to generate predictions. They may need additional input that can enrich their background knowledge and increase their vocabulary before they can predict" (2016, para. 2). For my EL students predicting is a good indicator of what they already know and how they are going to take that information and apply it to their present learning. A way to help EL students with this strategy is to teach them that making predictions allows us to write down our thoughts about what we are about to read. As I teach this skill to my students, paying attention to the predictions that are being made can drive the comprehension of the student.

Making predictions can be used in all content areas and can be highly beneficial when students are able to also access their background knowledge. Each skill that is being explained in this capstone are strategies that help form comprehension skills that can be broadened throughout students' educational careers. It can also form habits of learning in a way that gets students ready for other comprehension strategies like main idea and finding the supporting details.

**Main Idea.** Finding the Main idea is a literacy strategy taught in just about every elementary grade level. The Daily 5 website defines main idea, "Readers understand the most important idea about what is being read. This idea is often stated in a sentence in the passage, whereas other sentences comprise pieces of information that tell more about the most important



idea” (2017, para.1). Main idea can focus on fiction or nonfiction all depending on the standard that is being assessed.

There are a few ways to teach this strategy. By modeling how to find the main idea we show students that there is a table and legs. With a table at the top this is our main idea, the legs support our table with important details. After demonstrating this model to them students can use an exit slip on a piece of paper that has 3, 2, 1 written on it. The students can write three details for one main idea that they found in their reading. They can then share with a partner and explain to one another what they main idea of the story is according to them. This is also a great way for EL students to communicate using verbal skills to explain their ideas. In the article “Reading Comprehension Strategies for English Language Learners” it states “ Often, standard strategies that teachers use in mainstream classrooms are a good starting point—they just need to be tweaked with ELs' language and academic needs in mind” (Breiseth, par. 1,2017). Another way to use this skill is by doing a think aloud with the students. Teaching the students to stop during their reading and think about the main idea. This can give students the chance to stop and think about their learning and what is the most important part of what they are reading.

Main idea is a comprehension skill that is taught in every grade level. Each year the skill becomes more vital for the students to implement in their own learning. By finding the main idea in the content that is being learned the students can get a better idea of the topic at hand and why it is being learned. Teaching these strategies shows you how to engage the students and keep them engaged long enough to comprehend the content being implemented. In the next part of this lit review I explain how teaching the strategies can affect students learning.

**Teaching the Strategies.** Through research I have seen many strategies that are helpful with all students. The ones that I just finished describing can be essential for EL's. Each learner has a different learning style and with each style I create small groups depending on how well they are learning the skill at the time. The first skill when teaching reading comprehension is activating prior knowledge. As you activate prior knowledge with a student you are recalling information that they have previously learned. For example if we are introducing a fiction story and the students make a connection with the book right away we then use that to talk with the whole class to see what the other students know as well.

In the Daily 5 model students are able to represent their learned strategies in any text. By showing what they have learned on a post-it I am able to easily assess if the students are getting the concept or strategy that is taught. Daily 5 has five components, each of them is vital for students to learn when using this model. The first component of the Daily 5 model is to teach read to self and getting the students excited about independent reading. I teach them by modeling how the process should be performed, followed by students who model the task in front of the whole group. Next we practice as a class for the component read to self and we chart the students stamina. Charting stamina shows the students how long they are able to stay focused and engaged in their reading. At the very beginning of teaching the Daily 5 model, the expectations have been set and the students will know what read to self looks like, feels like, and sounds like. For each component of Daily 5 there is a process of knowing what it looks like, feels like and sounds like when working independently. Throughout teaching read to self, work on writing, read to someone, listening to reading and word work there is a skill framework that follows each component. This framework is CAFE. CAFE provides skills through strategies to help support

reading comprehension in the elementary grades. Comprehension, Accuracy, Fluency, and Expression is the acronym for CAFE. As you use CAFE there are vital skills to acknowledge and understand as an elementary student. This framework is the assisting model of Daily 5. CAFE gives the students a chance to become engaged in the reading process through learned strategies. For example in C for comprehension when using the model you can teach the skill of asking and answering questions, finding the main idea, making inferences, or cause and effect. These are just a few examples of what you can pick to teach in each part of CAFE as you are teaching the 5 components of Daily 5. Many students flourish in their reading because of the way they are taught and with the Daily 5 model, students get choice and independence in their work. Although teachers facilitate the student learning, it can also be very powerful to have the students be accountable in their own reading journey. I want students' reading skills to guide their drive to read and discover more literary possibilities in the future. As I focus this paper on reading comprehension I also want to ensure that I am doing this for my EL students as well as my non-EL students. Many of my EL students struggle daily in various content areas because of their low reading skills. Implementing a reading model that shows students can progress and become successful in their reading is encouraging. The Daily 5 model has ways of supporting EL students through various parts of Daily 5 and CAFE.

**Conclusion.** Reading comprehension can be a struggle for any student. There are countless factors that can take place in a student's life to increase or decrease reading comprehension. As the students get to third grade reading shifts from learning to read to reading for meaning. Comprehension is an important factor in reading and when students are challenged through various strategies we can start to see what best fits each student's learning style.

Throughout our teaching experiences we want to encourage all of the students in our classrooms to be successful in anything they practice. But I know that reading is the most important and basic skill that is necessary for growth in all academic areas. Through my research and discovery, mixed methods is the way to start my data collection so that I can analyze and describe trends. These trends can help me identify what parts of the curriculum are useful, what areas my students struggle with, and how I can support my students for their future learning.

In this chapter, I have examined general elementary literacy curricula, considered the specific needs of ELs as literacy learners in a mainstream classroom, and described and examined specific aspects of the Daily 5 curriculum model. In the next chapter, I will describe the methodology used for this research study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methods

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the methods I intend to use for my action research study. As a reminder, this research study focuses on second language learners and their proficiency with literacy comprehension. Specifically, the study asks: *“What instructional strategies are most appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?”* I will begin with a description of the research site (both the school and the classroom) and the specific participants in the study. Next, I will describe the type of research that the study will employ and explain why I have selected this approach. Then, I will share the actual research tools to be used in the study and describe my process for obtaining informed consent. Finally, I will describe how I intend to analyze the data once it is collected and share my results.

**Site Description.** The school where I am conducting this study is a public elementary school in a first-ring suburban area just outside of a major city in the midwest. The school website describes its mission as follows: “In an environment of mutual trust and respect, [Eagleton School, a pseudonym] will, in partnership with parents and community, enable all

children to learn and become productive caring citizens in an ever changing world.” The school has 79.5% students of color (primarily African-American and Hispanic). 82% of the students at Eagleton receive Free and Reduced Lunch. 75.5% of these students are EL who are also part of the free and reduced lunch program.

The specific classroom in this study has twenty-two students, twelve girls, ten boys, all of whom qualify for Free and Reduced lunch (in fact, two students are identified as homeless). I serve as the lead teacher for this class of third graders. In terms of racial make-up, the class has seven African Americans, seven Hispanics, three European-Americans, three African born students, two East Asian born students, and one Native American student. There are nine English language learners in the class, who will be the focus of this study: four Hispanics, two Liberians, one Somali, one Laotian, and one Vietnamese. The Vietnamese student has an IEP (Individualized Education Program) that addresses social skills and reading. This study will focus specifically on the ELs in the classroom, with a goal of understanding their use of Daily 5 reading comprehension strategies and its impact on their success and confidence as readers.

**Type of Study / Data Collection Tools.** This study will employ a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Creswell (2014), “Mixed methods involves the collection of both qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (close ended) data in response to research questions or hypotheses” (p.217). Mixed methods can be described as “two forms of data that are integrated in the design through merging the data, connecting the data, or embedding the data” (Creswell, 2014, p 217). For example, surveys often combine both quantitative (fixed-response) and qualitative (open response) questions. I believe that a mixed-methods approach will work best for this study, since it will allow me to collect and

analyze different types of data about my students' success, thereby giving me a more complete picture of what is working and not working for them.

Specifically, I will use student and staff surveys, described further below. I will also review formative assessments that students write throughout the study, as an additional way to analyze how the various reading comprehension strategies work for them. Finally, I will review standardized test scores that focus on reading comprehension for each student in the study.

I have created two surveys (see below), one for students and one for staff. The surveys use a combination of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. Survey questions focus on the use of "Daily 5 reading strategies," the reading curriculum described in chapter 2. Surveys will be distributed electronically through a Google Forms format.

### **Daily 5 Reading Comprehension Strategies**

#### **Student Survey**

1. How do you feel about **Daily 5** as a way to learn about reading?

Really Like    1        2        3        4        5        Really Dislike

2. Do you think **Daily 5** has helped you to improve as a reader?

Yes, Definitely                      Kind Of                      Definitely Not

3. What part of **Daily 5** do you like the most?

Read to Self

Work on Writing

Read with Someone

Word Work

Listen to Reading

4. What part of **Daily 5** do you like the least?

Read to Self

Work on Writing

Read with Someone

Word Work

Listen to Reading

5. Write one or two sentences about how Daily 5 has changed you as a reader.

### **Daily 5 Reading Comprehension Strategies**

#### **Staff Survey**

To be distributed to all staff in grades K-3

Note to Teachers: In addition to being a third grade teacher at \*\*\*\*\*, I am also pursuing a Master's of Education at Hamline University. As part of my capstone project, I am studying the implementation of Daily 5 reading comprehension strategies and their impact on student learning. I would greatly appreciate your taking a few minutes to fill out this survey. By filling it out, you are agreeing to have the survey included in the study. If you have any questions about the study or the survey, please feel free to contact me at 763-504-7722



amanda\_roberg@rdale.org or my Hamline advisor, Dr. Joe Lewis at [jlewis06@hamline.edu](mailto:jlewis06@hamline.edu) or 651-523-2659.

1. Do you use Daily 5 in your classroom?

Yes                      No

2. On a scale 1-5, how do you feel about Daily 5?

1 Really Like    2    3    4    5 Really Dislike

3. Would you recommend Daily 5 to another teacher?

1 Really Like    2    3    4    5 Really Dislike

4. What parts of Daily 5 do you use (check all that apply)?

Read to Self

Work on Writing

Read with Someone

Word Work

Listen to Reading

None

5. If you do use Daily 5, describe how it has helped your students.

6. If you could change some aspect of Daily 5, what would you change and why?
  
7. If you do not use Daily 5, what other pedagogical approaches do you use and why do you find them more effective?

**Informed Consent and Protection of Participant Anonymity:**

For each of my student participants, I will send the following letter of informed consent to parents. Only those families that agree to participate in the study will be included.

May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Dear Parents,

In addition to being your child's third grade teacher, I am also a Hamline University student pursuing a Master's of Education degree. As a capstone to my program, I need to complete an Action Research project. For this project, I am going to study the implementation of Daily 5 reading comprehension strategies on student reading ability. I plan to use student surveys and classwork as data for the study.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you of this research and to request that your student be included in the study. If you decide to include your child, please return this form with your signature. Though I hope you will be willing to include your child in the study, you are in no way required to do so.

To make an informed decision, the following information may be helpful:

- I am working with a faculty member at Hamline University and an advisor to complete this particular project.

- Your students learning will be personalized based on your child's individual preference/academic needs.
- I will be writing about the results that I get from this research. However, none of the writing will include the name of the school, the names of any students, or any references that would make it possible to identify a particular student. Other people will not know if your child is in the study.
- The final report of my study will be electronically available online at the Hamline University library. The goal of sharing my research study is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve their teaching.
- There is no penalty for not having your child's data involved in the study. I will simply delete his or her responses from my data set.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [amanda\\_roberg@rdale.org](mailto:amanda_roberg@rdale.org) or 763-504-7722 or. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Joe Lewis, at 651-523-2659 or [jlewis06@hamline.edu](mailto:jlewis06@hamline.edu).

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

I agree to allow my child to be included in this study:

Signature of Parent

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to collecting informed consent letters, I will also do everything I can to protect the anonymity of my participants. This includes: keeping all data in a safe and locked location; using pseudonyms for all participants; removing any specific information that could identify the individual participant.

**Analysis of Mixed-Methods Data.** I will use the surveys to identify how teachers and students understand their use of various comprehension strategies and the impact of those strategies on student learning. I will also use formative assessments written during the study to further analyze students' success with particular types of reading comprehension. Rather than bringing a specific method of data analysis to the study, I plan to read and reread the data several times, with a goal of finding themes that surface from the data itself. I will then code the data and write up my analysis, based on the themes that have emerged from my readings. This is a method of data analysis called "grounded theory." "Grounded Theory is a systematic design that qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive product topic" (Creswell, 2008). Grounded theory is currently the most used method of research but mainly used for qualitative research. This theory is used when you are trying to explain a broad theory of a process. I feel that using this approach I was able to be more accountable for what I was researching and how I was analyzing the data.

**Analysis of Quantitative Data.** In addition to coding my surveys and formative assessments, I will also review standardized reading comprehension assessments for each of the students in the study. These assessments have been aligned with the state English and Language Arts Standards and are given to students throughout the year. For each student in the study, I can review the reading comprehension scores for the specific strategy being taught and assessed. My intention is to examine how reading comprehension scores have changed (if at all) throughout the school year and to analyze the effect of specific comprehension strategies on student test scores.

**Conclusion.** In this chapter, I have described the methodology for my action research study, including a description of the research site, the specific data I will collect throughout the study, and my approach to analyzing that data. I have also presented data collection tools and my process for obtaining informed consent from each of my participants and parents. In chapter four, I will present the data collected in the study, including my analysis of what can be learned from it.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Analysis of Results

In this chapter, I will focus on presenting the data I've collected and analyzing the results. Specifically, I will consider how the data answer my research question: *“What instructional strategies are most appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?”* There are various relationships that I have discovered between this question and my data. This study has led to several realizations about the Daily 5 curriculum being used for this demographic of students. In this study, I wanted to explore the relationship between the curricula and EL student success. I have discovered that the EL students in this study need specific modifications in order to be fully successful.

As a third grade teacher, I used the reading curriculum that was provided by the school. Now that I am in my third year of teaching at this same school, I realize that this reading curriculum helps foster reading stamina and an organized framework for literacy, but it does not fully support the EL learner in a manner that scaffolds their learning for reading comprehension. I hope to provide enough evidence from my results to show that although the Daily 5 reading curriculum may work for many students, but it does not work or benefit all the students in the classroom. It needs to be supplemented, especially when it comes to meeting the literacy needs of ELs.

**Methods of Data Collection.** After receiving consent forms back from parents, I was able to get sixteen of the original twenty two students to participate in the study. With the sixteen students I had participating, seven were EL students and the other nine students were non-EL. I

wanted to be able to compare the two groups, particularly as relates to reading comprehension using the Daily 5 curriculum. Data collection was completed in two formats; formative assessments and surveys from staff and students. The formative assessments are linked to the reading comprehension strategies implemented by the Daily 5 and Cafe curriculum. The summative assessments are from the state standardized test, the MCA (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment), and give an overall picture of how this literacy framework supported the EL and Non EL students. The surveys were sent in a google form. Participants were teachers in kindergarten through third grade. There were sixteen student participants in the class; seven were English language students and nine were non-English language students.

I have been engaged with the Daily 5 curriculum for a total of five years, since my teacher preparation program in 2012. Daily 5 is a reading curriculum that integrates student choice with implementation of the fundamentals in literacy. Daily 5 focuses on reading, writing, and working with words. Most of the staff jumped on the bandwagon right away, integrating the Daily 5 lessons into their literacy teaching and dropping the previous district-provided curriculum. The staff survey was intended to show how the staff at my particular school use the Daily 5 curriculum, if they like it, what they like about it, and if they have seen significant progress with the data that is being provided from assessments.

I will also be discussing literacy proficiency on the MCA tests and whether my students have met or not met proficiency. The percentages for proficiency are anywhere between 80%-100%. Anything below 80% is considered non-proficient.

Survey are used to understand staff and student opinions on the curriculum. This provides me with some attitudinal feedback and an opportunity to view the material from a

student lens. I also want to make to compare (and possibly correlate) the formative test results with the surveys. This will give me a sense of the overall value of the Daily 5 curriculum, by answering two important (but separate) questions: 1. Do students and staff like it? 2. Is it working (that is, do students' have greater proficiency after it is implemented)?

**Reading Strategies Implemented and Analysis.** Daily 5 is a reading framework that was introduced by two English teachers who needed a better system to stay organized and show student success in reading. This curriculum is supposed to be integrated with the reading resources already provided by the schools, which may result in some repetition. The reading curriculum in the school district is called *Treasures* and was adopted in 2007. I had a hard time establishing what would be a good use of material that would be engaging to my students but also culturally relevant. I was able to use most of the assessments from *Treasures*. Daily 5 helped my students understand the importance of how to read, when to read, where to read, and how reading affects their learning in other subjects. The results below will help you understand how this framework supported my students.

**Results from Activating Prior Knowledge.** The first part of many lessons is to make sure that the students are remembering and understanding what was learned in prior lessons, what we call "activating prior knowledge." This strategy helps students to remember and/or review what they learned in a previous lesson. To measure this skill, I wanted to use something quite informal, by asking and answering questions about the lesson from the day before, where we learned the three ways to read a book (read the pictures, read the words, and retell the story). To ensure that all students were participating, I had students use a whiteboard. I asked students to write down the three ways to read a book that they had previously learned. The whiteboards



allowed me to quickly and informally assess whether or not my students could recall this information. I then had students looking at an anchor chart and reviewing the three ways to read with me. I then continued to measure “activating prior knowledge” by giving the students a post-it note. This was their exit slip for the lesson. I would have them make three columns to create a KWL chart. The students had to list: what they **know**, what they **want** to know, and what they **learned** from the prior lesson on the read aloud. I was able to take these post-its and assess whether or not the students were able to activate their prior knowledge or if they needed more guidance in the skill itself. Of the sixteen student participants, fourteen were proficient (performed 80% or higher) on the exit slip. The two students who didn’t make proficiency were EL students who also had the the lowest reading levels. Having a strategy group with the two of them benefited them immensely. We were able to discuss why we use this skill to inform us about what is going to happen and how we can apply this skill to our everyday reading.

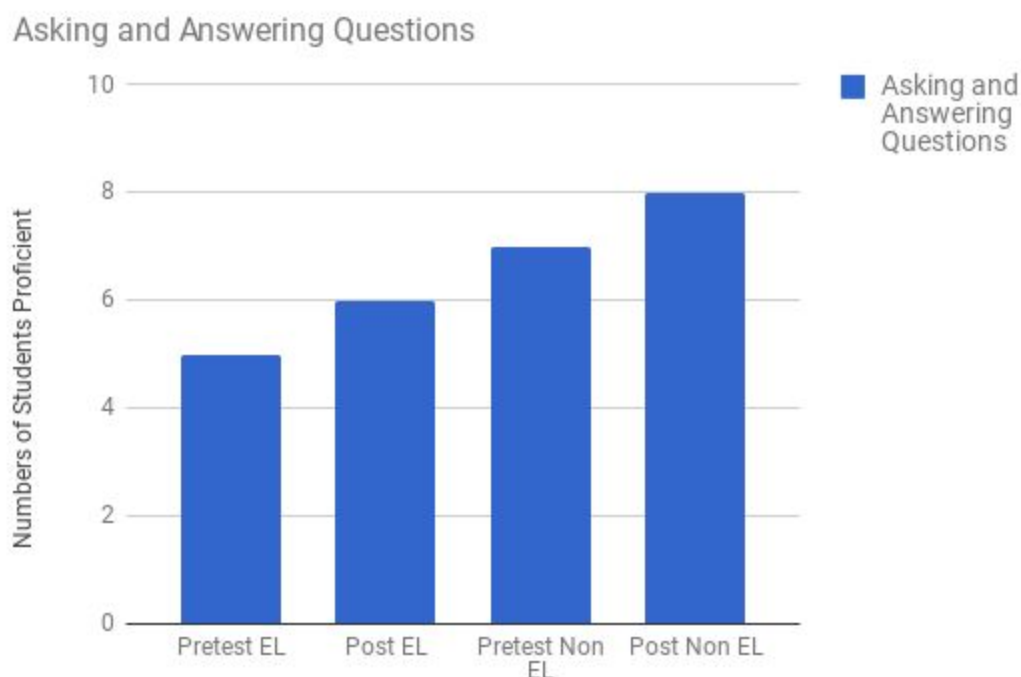
**Results from Asking and Answering Questions.** The asking and answering questions strategy is used to help students understand the importance of asking certain questions as they read for meaning. The student's goal is to understand more about the book. In order to interpret data I needed to provide the students with a half sheet of paper that asked them to find two “thin questions” and two “thick questions” in their reading of a Time for Kids article. This was completed independently. Reviewing the pre-test results, I realized that out of sixteen students, twelve were proficient, five EL students and seven Non-EL students. The remainder of my students were not yet proficient, two EL and two Non-EL. The criteria for proficiency was a checklist that indicated if students asked a who, what, or where question. This would show their understanding of “thin questions.” If the students were able to ask questions that were based on

textual evidence, asked a reader's opinion, or used the words "why" or "how" to begin the sentence (and the question related to the article logically), then they were proficient in understanding a "thick question."

This lesson was taught throughout five days, in 8 mini lessons. Each day the students would ask and answer their own questions during their read to self time. The students would then post those questions on the whiteboard with a post-it note. I was able to look over their questions and assess which students needed one-on-one guidance. In the end, the students were given a post-test on their learning of asking and answering questions in a fiction text. They were given a text to read and then answer multiple choice questions for comprehension and then ask three questions about the text.

According to the Reading Rockets website "Asking and answering questions....It can improve students' reading comprehension. It teaches students how to ask questions about their reading and where to find the answers to them. It helps students to think about the text they are reading and beyond it, too. It inspires them to think creatively and work cooperatively while challenging them to use higher-level thinking skills"(2017). With this type of critical thinking I can only help flood the gateways of knowledge with more questioning and answering to enforce comprehension.

Overall, out of sixteen students who took the post-test, six of my EL students were proficient after the post-test and eight Non EL students were proficient. The graph below shows how the data correlates with EL and Non-EL students. The graph shows the number of students who performed with proficiency. These were results from the pretest and post-test for answering and asking questions. Reminder that the total number of surveyed equals sixteen.



**Results from Making Connections.** In everyday life, we make connections continually between the things we are experiencing and the things we have experienced in the past. Making these kinds of connections with a text can strongly influence reading comprehension and motivation to read. The more we connect with a text, the more likely we are to enjoy it and keep reading it. I value this strategy because it gives the EL students a chance to share their personal experiences with others and practice their spoken and written language skills at the same time. EL students vary in their levels of academic knowledge; sharing their previous experiences and their connections to the text allows these students to have greater voice and, ideally, feel more comfortable in the classroom.

As I teach the “making connections” strategies, I emphasize connections with self, the text and the world. The first part of the strategy talks about making connections with the text

from your own experiences. For example, as I began to read about Rhinos, I had a student from Liberia who explained how he was able to understand the meaning of the rhinos tough skin because when he was younger he remember being with his mother and sister and the rhinoceros was in the deserted pasture munching on grass. It was interesting to hear from another person's perspective about something so amazing. The other students were completely engaged and wanted to acquire more information from this particular student. This connection was all made possible because the student referred to a personal experience that connected with the text we were reading as a whole group. In that moment, I saw that, with the level of diversity in our school, making cultural connections (and sharing those connections with others) is really important for understanding and motivation.

I wanted to measure student understanding of making connections as a strategy. In order to do this, I used a nonfiction article that talked specifically about shark attacks. The students were to make one self-connection, one world-connection and one text-connection. I asked them to submit an exit slip as a formative assessment. As I read through the students' responses, I was surprised to see how many connections students were able to make. Many students who were Non-EL were able to make connections easily with the text and themselves that included swimming in the ocean. EL students had a harder time making connections with the text. This could have been from a lack of background knowledge about shark attacks, or swimming in the ocean, etc. This observation made me realize that although making connections is important for all students, teachers also need to make sure that students truly understand what they are reading. Making connections is a helpful strategy. But in addition to this, we need to help students access

particular texts that may be difficult for them, which may mean preparing them to read the specific text.

Overall the essential issue is that without the skills of proficient reading at grade level, EL students can have a hard time understanding what is being asked and how to respond. For this reading strategy, I did not measure the students based on a survey or an assessment, but merely an observation. I was able to see what personal connections could be made for some students. This is very important for EL students to motivate them as readers. I noticed that the more a student has a personal connection with a story, the more involved and engaged the student becomes. Student interest is key to reading for meaning in literacy. While I am fostering learning, I need to also remember to support student interest along with student voice in order to properly engage all students. But the mixed results also suggest that student motivation is not enough; they also need, of course, the required reading skills to access the specific text being read. In some cases, additional text scaffolding may have been appropriate and useful.

**Results from Identifying the Main Idea.** In any state standardized literacy test, there is one common skill that is tested in all grade levels: Identifying the Main Idea. It's a core skill that is built upon as the students progress to higher grade levels. Locating the Main Idea can be a bit of a conundrum, though, if you do not know how to properly identify a fiction and nonfiction text.

My EL students had a hard time grasping the concept of finding the main idea. On the common formative assessment, the students were to answer four questions from the nonfiction book that was copied onto their paper. The students were to answer comprehension questions after reading the piece, with questions focusing on the main idea and key details. Out of the

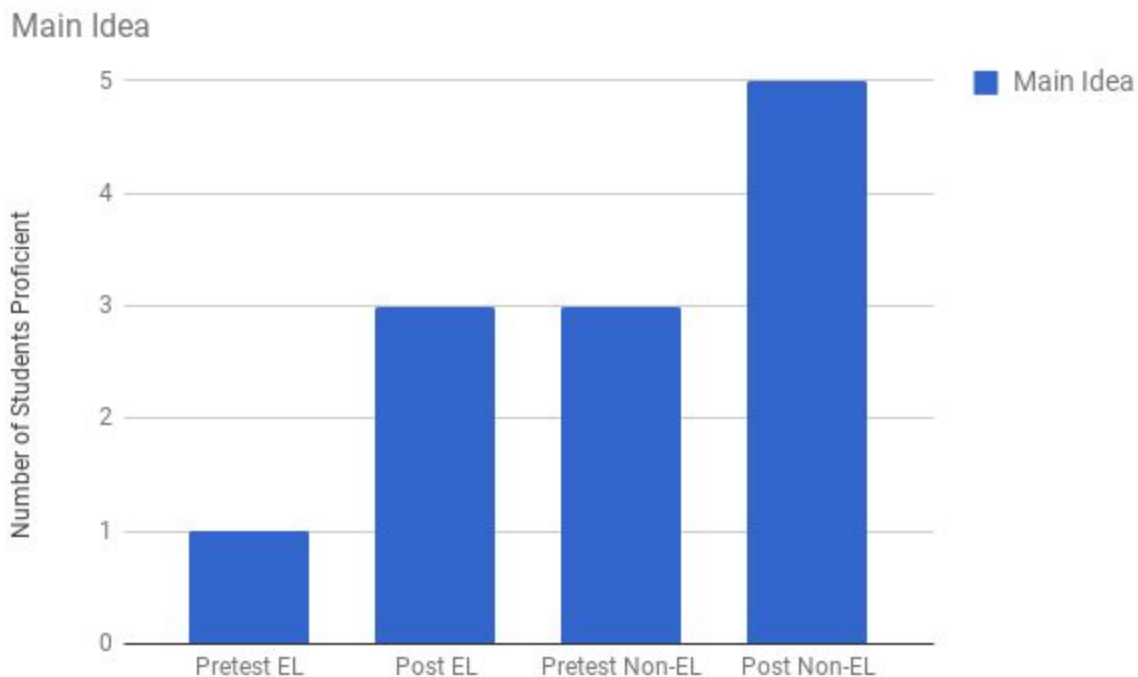
sixteen students who participated in the study, there were seven EL students. Of those, only one EL student passed the main idea pre-test (leaving six who did not pass the pre-test). There were three non-EL students who passed the pre-test and six who did not pass.

Using the pre-tests to guide my planning, I was able to review with students in small “strategy groups” of three to four at a time, working specifically on finding the main idea. We worked on identifying and representing how to find the main idea and the key details in a nonfiction text. This was completed during Daily 5 time, while the rest of the class was divided into other groups (such as read-to-self, or listen to reading, or writing). It was helpful to be able to work with a small group of students and have the rest of the class focused on their personal tasks and achieving reading stamina.

According to the website Colorin Colorado “Teaching students how to paraphrase can help them learn to pick out what is important in the material that they read”(Bachar, 2006) . When I am able to paraphrase with my students the article or story that is being read, students are able to get a better understanding of what the main idea is along with the key details. I have also found that it is especially helpful to have the students look over challenging vocabulary and definitions beforehand. This additional strategy seems to help ELs especially.

Main idea can be difficult for many students. As I analyzed my data, I saw that EL students were able to do better after strategies were taught explicitly. When I gave the students the post test after a couple weeks, there was a slight increase in proficiency. Out of the seven EL students, there were three who met proficiency instead of just one. The other five students who passed were non ELs. Unfortunately that leaves four ELs and four non-ELs who were still not

proficient. Eight of sixteen students who participated in the study were still not proficient at identifying the main idea. The total number of respondents of the survey included sixteen.



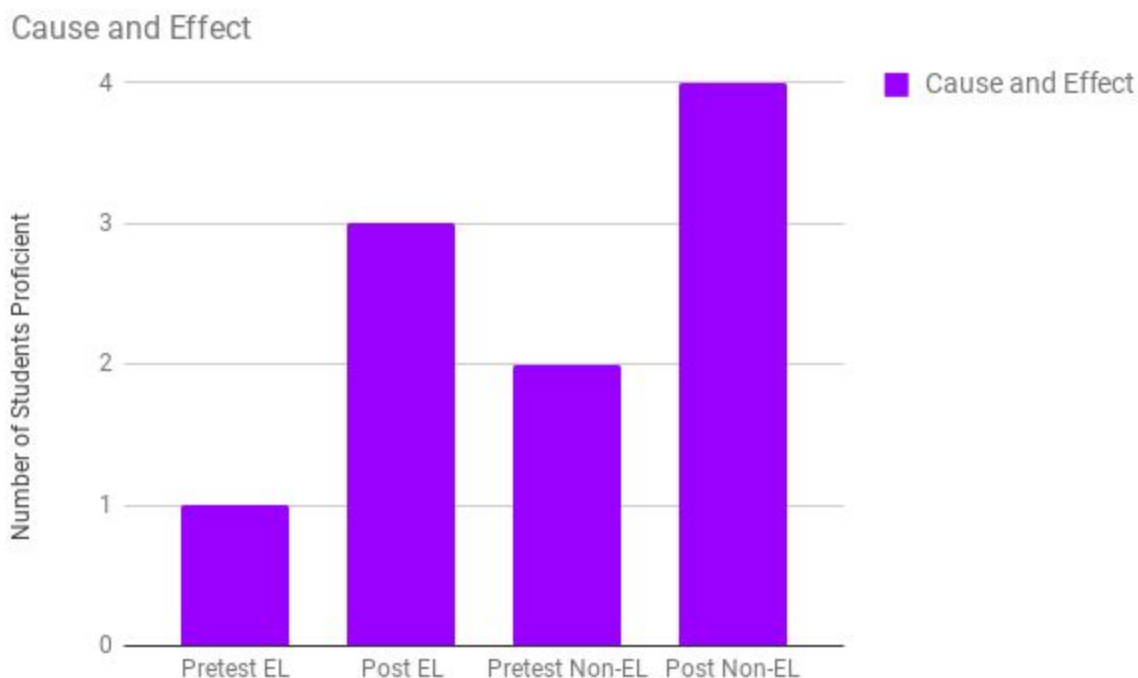
This data helped me to decide how to form my strategy groups for the next week. The nine students who were unable to perform with proficiency were retaught the strategy. I used another article for a nonfiction text and I scaffolded the learning throughout the week. Throughout our time together, the students were able to reread the same article and find the main idea and key details through note taking. The students used highlighters and special symbols to create an understanding of how main idea is determined. With the use of note-taking and paraphrasing, my students were able to retake the test with a different article and eight out of the eleven students who were originally not proficient on the first test raised their proficiency in the

second test. There was a posttest that I did not put into the table above but it proved that the students had learned after the interventions they received. That experience taught me that giving the students multiple ways to solve a problem or accomplish a task can lead to higher proficiency. Also, it demonstrates that additional time and more practice can lead to proficiency.

**Results for Cause and Effect.** With cause and effect, it is most important to get the students to have a complete understanding of the cause and the effect separately. As I taught this strategy, I found a few videos from the website Flocabulary and I integrated them with the students learning . I also taught mini lessons on cause and effect, with read alouds following the Daily 5 curriculum. The first step was to find out what my students knew already about this strategy. I implemented a formative pretest for the students to take on cause and effect in a fiction text. I administered the test and when the students were finished, I was able to analyze the data and form mini lessons that specifically reached the students that were lacking proficiency. I had some students who needed support specifically in defining cause and the effect. The biggest misconception I had with this strategy is that cause and effect can be difficult for EL students. If it is explicitly taught, then EL students seem to have a good chance of understanding the skill. After giving the pretest, I implemented my mini lessons that focused on defining and determining the cause and the effect. After two weeks of teaching these lessons, I gave a posttest to my students. This time they were given a different fiction story and had to define three cause and effect situations (answering multiple choice questions, fill in the blanks, and a written answer). With this test, I was able to measure not only their knowledge of the skill, but also how the Daily 5 strategy influenced their learning. Three EL students met proficiency on the posttest (up from one). Four non-EL students met proficiency (up from two). This left five EL



students and four non-EL students not proficient. We definitely improved at this skill, but not as much as I would have liked.



After implementing two strategies from Daily 5 -- main idea and cause and effect -- there wasn't as much growth between pretest and posttest as I would have liked. I began to realize that Daily 5 may not be the best curriculum for my diverse group of students. It was not explicitly and rigorously teaching the students the skills that were necessary for them to improve. I was implementing read alouds and giving the students small group instruction, but I was not seeing independent improvement. Though they could often perform the task with teacher guidance and small group support, when it came to transferring the skill to paper and demonstrating it individually on a test, the task was too difficult for many students. I tried to prepare them in other ways to read on their own, become independent learners, and advocate for their own

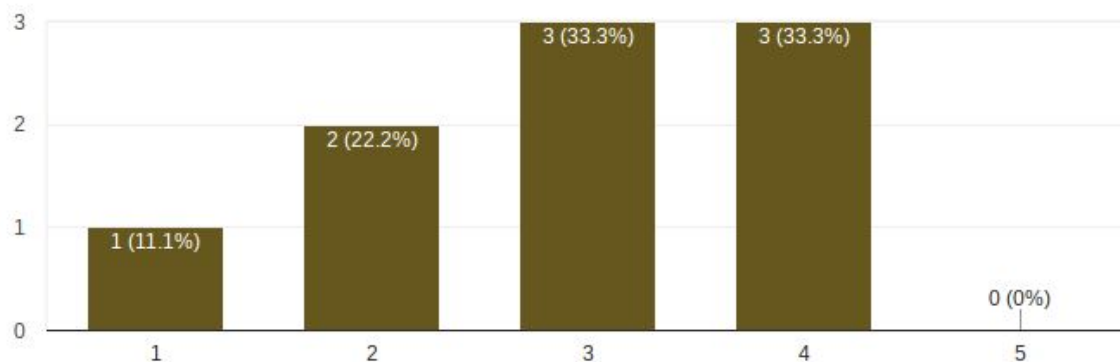
learning, but Daily 5 just didn't seem to be working for all students. Based on what I've learned from these formative and summative assessments, I would advocate for either changing to a completely different curriculum, or supplementing Daily 5 with other methods and strategies that further reinforce those concrete reading fluency skills, especially for diverse reading populations and English Learners.

**Staff Survey Feedback.** In addition to collecting data from student assessments, I also wanted to learn more about how other staff members felt about the Daily 5 curriculum. To survey staff opinion, I made a google form that included both multiple choice and open-ended questions (to allow for different kinds of response). I had nine K-3 staff members participate in the survey.

The first question asked “ On a scale of 1-5, how do you feel about Daily 5?” 1 meant that the respondents really liked Daily 5, and 5 meant that they really disliked it.

### On a scale of 1-5 how do you feel about Daily 5?

9 responses

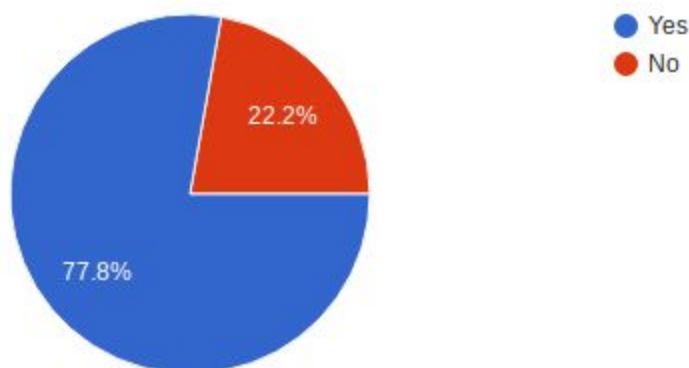


This data gave me the understanding that only 33.3% of the people that took this survey actually liked teaching Daily 5. There was 33.3% that were neutral about the implementation and the remainder 33.3% did not like teaching Daily 5. So I needed to dig deeper and see why this was

the case. I next asked the question of “Would you recommend Daily 5 to another teacher?” The answers were a little more positive this time.

### Would you recommend Daily 5 to another teacher?

9 responses



Upon seeing the data I was a bit confused on why 77.8% of the staff that participated would recommend Daily 5 but 22.2% still did not like the curriculum being used. I still needed more information to understand why this was the feedback given.

On the next question, I was able to be more specific and get more of an answer from the staff. I asked “If you do use Daily 5 please describe how this has helped your students?” I had answers of the following:

- “It keeps kids engaged while I work with small groups. I like the choice aspect.”  
Which I agreed with and was also a big seller on this curriculum for many staff members.
- “They have gained a lot of independence and are stronger at understanding what a good fit book means.”

The above statements were in direct correlation with my thoughts. In the fact that students were able to choose books that were specifically for them, they were able to read it, stay engaged and it was also at their reading level. This was a big factor in reading because choosing books is how students learn to become successful readers. Continuing on with the feedback I asked another question “If you could change some aspect of Daily 5, what would you change and why?” This question opened up more written answers and deeper reflection. Some answers included

- “accountability! I feel like some kids are not reading good fit books and are wasting learning time. There isn't a way of keeping track of what they are doing and I hate that aspect.”
- “Students need direct instruction, especially when it comes to things like comprehension skills, finding evidence, writing, etc. It is difficult to move students along in skill development to proficiency when you are conferring. They need more practice than conferring provides.”
- “It’s not embedded in our curriculum, so I feel that it doesn't flow from one week to the next. I am concerned about scope and sequence and if my students' needs are being met.”

This last response I agreed with immensely, I was always concerned that what I was teaching was not reaching the needs of all the students. In my classroom having ten EL students impacted my teaching greatly in trying to be able to support all my students individual needs. Conferring in Daily 5 meant that you were to meet with your students once a week individually unless they were already in a strategy group with you. In implementation of conferring students are supposed to be working on a specific skill separately in their independent reading. This skill is assessed by

me and it's very subjective on whether or not I think that the students are fully implementing the skill and if they are comprehending the skill. It started to become a hassle in keeping all of those records and holding students accountable for their independent work. With the survey coming to an end I had one last question to analyze. "If you do not use Daily 5, what other classroom pedagogical approaches do you use and why you find them more effective?" This question would help me see if teachers really are using the curriculum to the full extent or if they are mixing in something else to support the needs of students still lacking in skill areas. Here are some responses:

- "I do guided reading small groups and like it because I know the kids are reading books that are at their level. I wish there was a way to combine the two a little better."
- "I moved away from Daily 5 and started using our Treasures curriculum for spelling, grammar, leveled readers/guided reading, comprehension skill development."

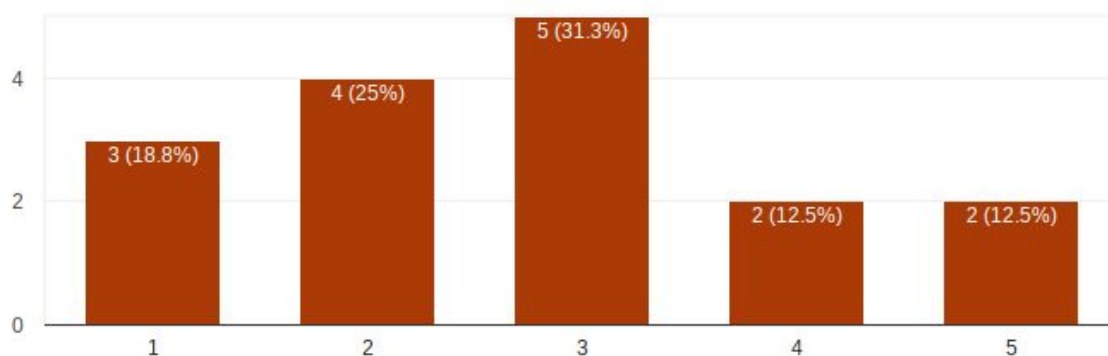
The last statement was what I could relate with the most. I was able to use Daily 5 but in order to meet all the students standardized skills I should have also implemented the district bought curriculum called *Treasures* in order to feel a little more successful with teaching my students. Giving this survey helped me as a teacher understand that dynamics that I face and how I am supposed to take the information I am given and implement what is needed for my students. I understand that the Daily 5 curriculum can work great for grades K-3 but overall it helps build independence in finding good fit books but the implementation of strategies needs to be more specific and direct when coming to students who especially have English as their second

language. Now that I have inspected the feedback from my colleagues I am going to dig into the student feedback to see how they feel about Daily 5.

**Student Survey Feedback.** My mission for the student survey was to provide feedback for myself and others about how students feel about a reading curriculum. Since the students are the reason we teach, it's important to get their perspectives and opinions about what and how they are learning. The first question I asked was "How do you feel about Daily 5?" (1 means that they really liked it and 5 they really disliked it.) The results are laid out in the following table.

### How do you feel about Daily 5 as a way to learn about reading?

16 responses



\*Reminder the total number of respondents is sixteen.

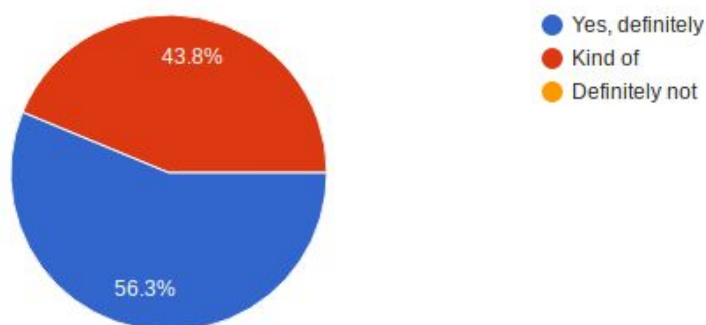
It seems that 75.1% percent of my students really like, like or are okay with Daily 5. Which seems realistic to me. As I conferred with my students throughout the year, I had pushback from a couple of my ELs and also students who had a hard time paying attention or being engaged in the strategies and learning centers. I wondered if the 25% of students who didn't like Daily 5 were the same students who were not proficient on their testing. I suspect that this is the case

and wonder I might reach them with a different model or a strategies other than those presented in Daily 5.

The next question I asked was, “Do you think that Daily 5 has helped you improve as a reader?”

### Do you think Daily 5 has helped you to improve as a reader

16 responses



As a result of this question there were 0% of students that participated that definitely did not think that Daily 5 helped them improve as a reader. I can see how the students would feel that there was some type of learning going on throughout the year. 43.8% of these students kind of thought Daily 5 helped improved their reading, suggesting that they probably didn't know whether it truly improved their reading. This leads me to believe that the students themselves may require a more accurate measure of their growth throughout the year (so that they can chart their own progress and know their own areas of strength and weakness).

This leads into my next surveyed question in which I ask, “Write one or two sentences on how Daily 5 has changed you as a reader?” Here are some of the responses I got from the participants.

- “It helped me know some words that I did not know.”

- “It is so fun reading now and I love reading.” Many of the responses were similar in which students replied that they thought it helped them spell better or read better. One of my higher level learners responded
- “It made me happy that i can read now.I like it because it always got me on track.” It’s important to hear student voice in the classroom.

Many of the comments seemed very bland, as if my students didn’t really know what they had learned. It almost felt like everything we worked on this year was missing from my students knowledge, and the only thing they actually retained was how to be a good reader. This sort of scared me, since self-assessment is an important part of learning. On the other hand, it may be a bit much to expect of third graders, and they did retain the essential skill of continuous improvement as readers. Again, these comments made me wonder if Daily 5 is not the best option for my diverse group of students. Perhaps this group of diverse learners needed more direct instruction, more academic language integrated into the lessons, and more hands on work that fostered independence.

**Conclusion.** At the beginning of this capstone, I predicted that my students would be successful with the Daily 5 model. Every teacher hopes that what they have planned will work for most of the students in the classroom, with some modifications and accommodations along the way. I assumed that with my previous years of experience incorporating the Daily 5 model that it would be beneficial for this group of students. I also assumed that since many of my students had been using this curriculum since kindergarten, they would be able to catch on quickly to the reading comprehension strategies being taught.



With the data I have collected, I now see that the Daily 5 was not the best curriculum for the diverse group of students I taught this year. I still believe that the basic structure of Daily 5 is helpful in promoting better readers and fostering independence is key, but the reading comprehension strategies are less effective, particularly because they are not assessed properly. The assessments that I added and the data I collected about those assessments suggests that the comprehension strategies are only partially effective, and that the whole program might benefit from the addition of more personalized comprehension strategies and more consistent formative assessments to help monitor student progress along the way.

In this chapter, I have analyzed the data I collected from a series of formative assessments, teacher surveys, and student surveys. In each case, I have tried to present the data in a comprehensible way and offered my own interpretation of the data as it relates to the Daily 5 curriculum and my own teaching, particularly when working with ELs. All of this was intended to answer my research question: ***“What instructional strategies are most appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?”*** In the next chapter, I will consider the larger implications of what I have learned from my capstone project.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I draw conclusions from my research that may help me better serve students in my own class and, potentially, help other teachers as well, either in my own school or in other settings. I will begin by highlighting my four major takeaways from conducting the study and analyzing the data. Next I will point out some of the limitations of the study. Finally, I'll suggest other research students that could follow this one and lead to greater knowledge about the topic.

#### **Major Takeaways**

**Reading Curriculum Influence.** One major lesson I've learned from this research is that a reading curriculum can have a strong influence on student reading, but that individual teachers must still make consistent modifications in response to individual student needs. My data suggests that the most impactful strategies from Daily 5 were the ones that I personally modified in response to student need. At the beginning of my research, I was in it to make sure that future ELs would be able to benefit from a reading curriculum that helps them achieve success. As I began my research, I realized that what I had learned from my past experiences molded the way that I was implementing Daily 5. While I was following the general structure of the Daily 5 curriculum, I was also making a variety of modifications that I thought would serve my students best. What I learned through this experience was that there is no perfect curriculum for all

children. Each student has a different way of learning, and as we build relationships with our students, we start to understand how it would be best to teach that individual child.

**Daily 5 Curriculum Analysis.** This brings me to my second major takeaway: Daily 5 does not appear to be the best curriculum for English Language Learners, or at least this was the case for the ELs in my third grade classroom. Daily 5 provides a structure in which students are given choice; they have more opportunities to perform independently. Although there are small groups for literacy instruction, it is still vital that when working with ELs we are taking time to explicitly teach reading comprehension skills.

As I started off the research I was hopeful that the curriculum I was using was benefiting all of my students, not just a few. My journey as a teacher has shown me that there are many sides to implementing skills and standards in the classroom. The question that I posed for this research *“What instructional strategies are appropriate for teaching reading comprehension to second language students in an integrated primary environment?”* is a reminder that I am teaching in a classroom where I have twenty-one students, in which ten of the them are EL’s. The school that I teach at is eighty-two percent free and reduced lunch and our diversity has impacted the dynamic in the school setting. In my classroom I try to implement a growth mindset in which we can all learn as much as we want, but this only can occur if we stay positive and push ourselves to excel past our own expectations. Now I can preach this and hope that all my students understand having a growth mindset can help lead them to educational success. My hope was that if I engulfed myself in a growth mindset I would be able to implement that with my students. I understand now how much praise for effort can affect the perseverance of a student to challenge and push themselves.

The Daily 5 curriculum was created by two sisters who were fed up with the way they were teaching literacy and wanted to make a change for the students in order to see more progress in their learning. Their research demonstrated that with certain dynamics of a classroom, you are able to whole group teach, small group teach and have students working independently on their own without distracting others or a teacher's small group. Now in theory they conducted this research on their students in their own classrooms. This research was then passed onto other educators to implement in their classrooms as a way to structure their literacy model. But the two sisters, Gail Boushey and Joan Moser, also created another component of Daily 5 which was called CAFE. This brought me to the hope that I would be able to take these strategies and incorporate them into the classroom. According to the sisters, “The CAFE Menu breaks each component—comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary—into significant strategies that support each goal. Posted on the classroom wall and built throughout the year, it serves as a visual reminder of whole-class instruction as well as individual student goals” (Boushey & Moser, 2017). It was exciting to me as a young educator that something like this was possible in any classroom. The sisters' research is known worldwide and has positively affected classrooms. But my worry was that with a high percentage of EL students in my room I wouldn't be able to meet with all of my students directly in order to help them meet proficiency. I had three years of experience in the field as a student teacher with learning and implementing Daily 5 and CAFE. Now as a teacher with my own classroom I found that although I was able to engulf my students in the key components of literacy, I was struggling to meet all my students with low achievement in reading. Through the research I conducted I was able to discover that my EL's had the highest percentage of low achievement in all reading comprehension skills. As I

used the Daily 5 and CAFE curriculum, I noticed the way that students were learning was not beneficial for their learning styles. I was able to have a solid seven students out of twenty-one students who were able to perform independently in the classroom, but when it came to the remainder of the class it left students on their own, feeling helpless in the fact that there was no direct instruction happening. Independence continued to be a struggle. There were too many students who needed the direct whole group instruction, and small group instruction that left other students to work independently was not able to happen unless those students were able to withhold the stamina to work quietly alone without bothering others or becoming distracted by others as well. With a large group of students that come from other countries and continue with English as their second language, being able to work independently can become a struggling and lead to boredom and distraction. Now, although I was able to teach the component of Daily 5 and instill in the classroom that in order to be successful we needed to have stamina in Read to Self, Work on Writing, Read to Someone, Listen to Reading and Word Work, it always ended up happening that even with careful implementation and high expectations, if students became confused or needed help they started to distract one another and get off topic. With this in mind I would create different groups to manage classroom behavior along with academic compatibility.

**Implementation.** My final take away was that throughout this research I was able to come to the conclusion that even with careful implementation and working on reading comprehension strategies rigorously students can still be unsuccessful. Overall I have discovered that EL students need a separate curriculum and guided instruction that helps them form a better sense of independent learning. In order to foster a positive growth mindset they have learned that if they can't figure something out on their own there are strategies that they have learned that can

support them in their literacy journey. I have experienced Daily 5, and although I feel that it is a great literacy framework, CAFE strategies are not assessed properly to fit all students. I think that as I learned more about the CAFE curriculum that aligned with the Daily 5 framework, I was able to tweak certain parts for my EL's when it came to strategy groups, teaching mini lessons, and providing students with the appropriate supplemental materials. Making my own resources and supplementing in order to support my EL students properly was to ensure extra time in my schedule and also less time spent to engage my students.

**Limitations.** Although I was able to conduct the research there were some limitations that affected my study. The first was the fact that even with various reminders I was only able to get sixteen out of twenty-one students to be a part of the study. I feel that if I was able to have at least two or three more students the data and results would have been more conducive to the study. I also would have liked to have at least five more teachers take the survey and to give statements about their experiences with Daily 5. Even though I was able to get some teachers it was a limited amount and it would have been nice to see a wider variety of responses. Another limitation was the amount of time that was given for the surveys to be completed along with the permission slips to be signed. I felt that if I was able to give more time and not have these completed two months before the end of school I wouldn't have felt as rushed and have more time allocated for the return of permission slips and the surveys to be taken. The final limitation was being able to report the results of the survey to the teachers and the students. With it being close to the end of the school year and still having to analyze the data I wasn't as able to share my results with others. This occurred because I was given a new set of students for the following year, and not all teachers who took the survey returned the next school year. This affected my

research very lightly but was more of an pmcpomvemivce that the results were not able to reach all member of the study.

**Conclusion.** I am happy to say that this research made me a better educator. It pushed me to think outside of the box. I was able to take something that I had learned as a student and implement it in the classroom in hopes to benefit my students. Although the results were not necessarily positive for my students, I was still able to see what I should be doing to support all students in my classroom. The data provided shows the rate of success my Non-EL students had versus my EL students, but also a reasoning for this conclusion. My hope was to prove that there needs to be more to support our EL students and that just because you are given a curriculum doesn't mean it will meet the needs of all students. I hope that my data and interpretation can help other educators understand the importance of a curriculum that can shape students for the better. Although it might not be the perfect way to support our students, we can find other ways to inform our students with successful strategies to promote that academic accomplishments in literacy.

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