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The Benefits and Limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System

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Benefits and Limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System

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Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

The chaos of the first week of school has come to a close. Classroom teachers and Academic Intervention Service (AIS) providers have met countless times to compile reading groups to best address the needs of the students. On Monday, Academic Intervention Service (AIS) providers are getting ready to meet their students for the first pull out small reading group. The students are apprehensive about leaving their classroom teacher; but some students are excited about the small reading group, where others are reluctant about the groups they will be in. The AIS provider and students travel down the hallway to the small reading room, where they will be participating in the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention system.

Problem Statement

Students in grades three-five, who do not earn a 3 or 4 on the New York State English Language Arts exam are automatically enrolled in Academic Intervention Services (AIS) where they receive pull out small group reading instruction based on their specific reading deficits. Often students are placed in groups based on their specific reading difficulties and with other students who are reading at the same Guided Reading Levels. Even if a child successfully performed at grade level throughout the school year, but did not earn a 3 or 4 on the English Language Arts exam, the student is still required to participate in pullout reading services.

Allington (2011) discovered two thirds of children are reading below what is considered proficient at their grade level. Furthermore, Allington goes on to write that core reading (commercial) programs do not work; they do not offer self-selected texts (2011). The Fountas and Pinnell, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) system is a

scripted program that does not offer student self-selected texts and falls under the category of a "scripted" program. This is where the teacher language (exactly what the teacher is supposed to say) is written out in every lesson. The issues that Allington describes in his article about what struggling young readers need, and more importantly, what they don't need can be seen throughout schools across the country. Allington's ideas will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

Significance of the Problem

Fountas and Pinnell believe students who find reading difficult exist in every classroom regardless of economics status and other extenuating circumstances (2009). Now more than ever, teachers are faced with the challenge of supporting students with reading challenges and raising test scores (Founts & Pinnell, 2009). In New York State, students whose reading challenges impact their ability to pass the New York State ELA exam go through a process entitled, Response to Intervention (RTI). Howard (2009) describes this process as a multi-tiered framework designed to support students who struggle in all facets of literacy. The attributes of this framework vary from district to district, but the philosophy is the same; support students to become better readers.

Response to Intervention is a system of three tiers that increase in the level of support students need to become better readers and to limit special education referrals. Howard defines three tiers in the RTI process. Tier one is a reading intervention that is delivered to students in the classroom setting and is administered by the classroom teacher; this falls into the realm of high-quality instruction for all students. Tier two can be a pullout service. Usually, the classroom teacher and the literacy specialist work together to make informed decisions regarding instruction for the student. Typically

students are placed in small, homogenous groups while working within this tier. Students receive this intervention for one, 30-minute session each day. The most intensive tier is tier 3. This tier is for students who require the most support. Students functioning in this tier, receive two, 30-minute intervention sessions each day. The interventions are administered by an expert reading teacher, or by a reading specialist (Howard). This three-tiered framework may look different, depending on the school district, but the goal is the same; support students to become better readers (Howard).

Starting in grade three, students who attend public schools are required to take the New York State ELA exam. The exam is scored using a four point rubric, 1=below standard, 2 =meets basic standard, 3= meets proficiency standard, and a 4= exceeds proficient standard (NYSED, 2012). Students who earn a 2 or 1 on the NYS ELA exam are enrolled in Academic Intervention Services (AIS) falls within tier 2 and tier 3 of the RTI framework (Howard, 2009). According to the New York Sate Education Department, in 2012 55.10% of students in grades 3-8 earned a 3 or 4 on the NYS ELA exam. This means across the state, a little less than half of students are not performing at grade level (2012).

Students who did not pass with NYS ELA exam are automatically enrolled in AIS services. Some schools use commercial intervention materials such as Fountas & Pinnell's Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program. Fountas and Pinnell describe the LLI systems as a short-term intervention system that that supports children who do not read at grade level. Students who participate in this intervention read texts that are developed by Fountas and Pinnell. This intervention is administered in small reading groups that meet daily (2009). In the LLI reading groups students are reading texts at

their Guided Reading Level (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009); the problem with this is how are struggling readers supposed to function in the classroom, when the texts are above their reading level?

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to closely examine the benefits and limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system for teachers and other professionals who use this system. The perspective of the professionals using this system needs to be closely examined because this reading intervention is very costly and is used widely in the school district where the data was collected. The findings of this study have the potential to strengthen the implementation of the intervention for both professionals who administer it, and the students who participate in the small group reading intervention. In addition to exploring the benefits and limitations of the LLI system, this research study also explored how this program adheres to the guidelines of the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. The RTI framework is another widely implemented instructional framework that is used to support students who struggle academically are not performing at grade level in core subject areas. Subsequently my research questions are as follows:

- What are the benefits and limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention Program?

- How does this program adhere to the Response to Intervention guidelines?

All of these questions are intertwined and are related to student success. In order to fully explore the research questions I will take a qualitative approach in conducting a case study with three fourth grade students who attend a suburban, Title I school, and who are participating in the Leveled Literacy Intervention Program. In addition to the

case study, I will conduct interviews with members of the literacy team, students and their parents to gain a better insight of the benefits and limitations of this intervention program. I will take a quantitative approach by researching the trends in literacy in regards to pullout services.

Rationale

This study has a large-scale relevance as well as a personal relevance. I conducted this study and researched my questions for two reasons. First, I wanted to gain as much information about the LLI program to better meet the needs of the students. Secondly, to gain a clear insight on how to better the program and relay that information to other teachers in the school district as this programs' use is mandated by the suburban school district. I have experienced firsthand, the lack of deeper level questions that this scripted program uses and how comprehension is second to fluent reading and decoding. I find that when I have used this program, I supplemented with materials to meet the students' needs and to make the lessons more rigorous to align with the newly adopted Common Core curriculum that is utilized by New York State.

Definition of Terms

Response to Intervention (RTI)- "Response to Intervention is a multi-tiered approach to early intervention for struggling readers, initially focused on k-2, but gradually extending to all grade levels" (Howard, 2009, p. 3).

Academic Intervention Service Provider- A certified teacher to delivers small group reading instruction.

Tier II Instruction-"Occurs in small-group, homogeneous instructional settings-students who have similar learning needs. Decreasing the size of the group increases the

instructional intensity as well the likelihood that the teacher can provide the right support at the right time" (Howard, 2009, p. 60).

Leveled Literacy Intervention Program- "A structured framework, the teacher provides daily small group lessons, that include, reading, writing, and phonics word study. The LLI system is supported by a specially designed set of 300 original texts" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009, p. 502).

Scripted Program- Typically speaking, this is a manufactured reading program where the teacher is given a manual and the language they are supposed to use is written out for them. The teacher reads the instruction like a script. The time allotted for each section of the lesson is also determined by script of the lesson (Crawford et al., 2002).

Summary

In my professional career, I have worked on both sides of the coin in regards to this reading intervention. I have worked as an Academic Intervention Service provider, a classroom teacher, and a classroom teacher who has implemented the Leveled Literacy Intervention system. I have administered this program and had students in my class participate in this intervention with me as the service provider, and the students participating in this intervention as a pull out service with another professional. I wish to further my knowledge of this program and how to improvement by completing this study. The insight gained from this study could be passed on to other service providers and other professionals who use this program. In addition, this study will assist in closing the gap that exists between classroom teacher and service provider in regards to tier 2 instruction for struggling readers.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The Leveled Literacy Intervention program (LLI) is a commercial program developed by Fountas & Pinnell (2010). The purpose of this intervention is to support struggling readers who are reading below grade level for a variety of reasons. The LLI program is comprised of lessons, which are sequentially organized and move students through guided reading levels in hopes to get their reading level closer to grade level. The students are assessed using Fountas and Pinnell's Benchmark Assessment System. The Systematic Benchmark Assessment System is a prepackaged assessment kit developed by Fountas and Pinnell (2009). Fountas and Pinnell describe the Benchmark Assessment Kit as a standard gradient reading professionals use to determine the level of text the student can process effectively in terms of decoding and comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009). Once the student's instructional level has been determined, the student works in a group no larger than three students and move through the Leveled Literacy Lessons sequentially. Odd numbered lessons focus on rereading books from previous days, phonics/word work, introducing a new book at the student's instructional reading level, and additional word work. Even numbered lessons focus on rereading the same book from the previous day and a running reading record to assist with progress monitoring, introducing a new book at an easier level to build confidence, and optional word work (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). The purpose of this chapter is to collect other perspectives from other professionals who work within Response to Intervention, to closely examine where LLI fits within RTI, close reading and LLI, word work within LLI, and to further investigate past research studies on the Leveled Literacy Intervention System from the perspective of the person administering this reading intervention.

Response to Intervention

In many schools across the United States students and teachers are subjected to high stakes testing. In effort to monitor student progress, and give support to students who are struggling, some schools have implemented a process termed Response to Intervention, otherwise known as RTI (Howard, 2009). Often, RTI is intertwined with state test scores. If a student is not making satisfactory progress in their grade level, chances are they will be placed in one of the three tiers of RTI in an effort to combat below grade level performance in the subject area of English Language Arts. In this three tiered approach to monitoring students' academic achievement and progress, teachers are required to collect data as they implement varying reading interventions that best meet the needs of the student (Howard, 2010).

In Tier I of the RTI framework students are in a general education setting. Meaning, they are in a regular classroom without any additional push in support from trained professionals who work outside the classroom, and should be receiving instruction from a highly qualified teacher. Howard (2010) describes this tier as the foundation of a school's literacy program. This is where high quality instruction intersects with differentiated instruction, and targeted support. Tier I is solid instruction that is beneficial for all students (Howard). Tier II is a more intense, targeted form of instruction. The model of this tier is a small group setting, with children who are functioning at the similar instructional levels. It is the most ideal to have a group setting with no more than three students. Students meet with a highly qualified instructor, once a day, for a 30-minute session. With a smaller group setting, students are able to receive a more intense instructional experience (Howard, 2010). Also in this tier, Howard

recommends using high quality supplementary resources, targeted interventions at higher levels of intensity, ongoing formal and informal assessments, and team decision and collaboration (2010).

The third, and most intense tier of this program is Tier III. In this tier, it is preferred that students receive intense instructional support in a one to one setting away from classroom distractions.   If this is not obtainable, Howard (2010), recommends absolutely no more than three students in their tier. Students should be scheduled for two thirty minute sessions daily, with progress monitoring collected weekly, and an expert reading teacher should be administering this intervention.

Where does the LLI System fit within the RTI Framework?

This question (as with RTI) is multi-tiered. The LLI system has high quality texts in the genres of fiction and non-fiction, and should be administered daily in a group of no more than three students. One would be quick to think this fits in very nicely to tier two of the RTI framework. When in fact, LLI is somewhere in-between Tiers II and III in the RTI framework. Fountas and Pinnell feel their texts are high quality, and their intervention system is research based (Fountas and Pinnell, 2010). The LLI intervention should be administered in a group of no more than three students, and student data should be collected weekly. The modes of data collection are most often running reading records that are administered as part of the lessons in the program, and are included in the kit. The LLI system allows the teacher to perform running reading records on students on a rotating basis, as well as make observations throughout each lesson. Students can be formally assessed using the Benchmark Assessment kit. This is where students do a cold read (a first time reading on a book they have never seen) on a text to determine their

reading level; and to see if the students are ready to move to the next level in the LLI system. A cold read is when a student is reading a text they haven't read before, and the reading professional is taking a running reading record.

Close Reading and LLI

One of the most significant parts of the LLI system are repeated readings of texts included in the lessons. Fountas and Pinnell (2010) state that the rereading of high quality books improves comprehension and fluency. The notion of re-reading familiar texts is not only seen in this specific intervention, but in the whole group classroom setting as well. With the introduction of the Common Core Curriculum and higher leveled texts, teachers and students have been engaging in a reading practice called close reading. Boyles (2013) explains close reading is a practice of re-rereading texts to uncover layers of meaning that then will lead students to a deeper level of comprehension. The Common Core standards are asking our students pull information from texts in a way that our students may not be accustomed to. The Common Core Standards require students to deeply engage with a text in order to methodically and thoroughly examine the texts' complexity (PARCC, 2011). Essentially, close reading is a means to get students to obtain a very deep understanding of the text (Boyles, 2013). Boyles (2103) feels now is the time to have students engage in this reading practice. Close reading goes beyond reflecting on a text, making connections as your read. Close reading makes there reader not only think about themselves, but the thoughts of other as they navigate through a text (Boyles, 2013).

I don't believe there is a teacher working in a public school that feels they have a plethora of time on their hands to constantly re-read familiar texts. Boyles suggests that
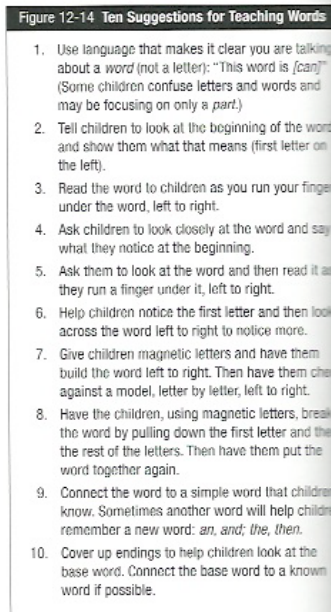
teachers engage students in close reading practices by using short texts. Please note the author is not suggesting the abandonment of longer texts. The use of a short text can be especially helpful to students who struggle with reading. They can access a variety of genres of shorter texts. Many different types of students, including students of various reading levels can engage in the practice of close reading (Boyles, 2013).

Word Work

As stated in previous sections of this research paper, it has been noted lessons that comprise the Leveled Literacy Intervention system have different components. Some lessons, introduce new texts, use repeated readings to reinforce skills, and all lessons include some level of word work. The word work portion of each lesson can have a different focus on a different skill set. Fountas and Pinnell describe the word work portion in their lessons as systematic phonics (2010). Fountas and Pinnell describe the systematic phonics instruction as a lesson with a focus on phonological awareness, letter knowledge, letter sound relationship, letter formation, word structure, spelling patterns, and high frequency words (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). All of these concepts are not taught at the same time, but spiral through the lessons. The word work concepts are also seen in the texts that students use (which are also included in the kit). This allows students to gain an authentic experience in application of the word work lessons, as the concepts appear in print they are working with.

In the text, *When Readers Struggle: Teaching that Works* (Fountas and Pinnell, 2009), these reading professionals offer strategies to literacy professionals, as well classroom teachers who work with struggling readers in different capacities. Founts and Pinnell, state that struggling readers need explicit word instruction that occurs outside a

text they are reading (2009). In the figure below, Fountas and Pinnell offer ten

suggestions for reading specialists who are teaching words to struggling readers (Fountas

& Pinnell):

Figure 12-14 Ten Suggestions for Teaching Words

1. Use language that makes it clear you are talking about a *word* (not a letter): "This word is *[can]*" (Some children confuse letters and words and may be focusing on only a *part*.)
2. Tell children to look at the beginning of the word and show them what that means (first letter on the left).
3. Read the word to children as you run your finger under the word, left to right.
4. Ask children to look closely at the word and say what they notice at the beginning.
5. Ask them to look at the word and then read it as they run a finger under it, left to right.
6. Help children notice the first letter and then look across the word left to right to notice more.
7. Give children magnetic letters and have them build the word left to right. Then have them check against a model, letter by letter, left to right.
8. Have the children, using magnetic letters, break the word by pulling down the first letter and then the rest of the letters. Then have them put the word together again.
9. Connect the word to a simple word that children know. Sometimes another word will help children remember a new word: *an, and; the, then.*
10. Cover up endings to help children look at the base word. Connect the base word to a known word if possible.

The previous suggestions are implemented in the Leveled Literacy Intervention

System. Research supports the statements. In 2004, Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn

conducted research project where they explored the building blocks that teachers us to

teach children to read. Armbruser et al., found teaching sounds along with letters of the

alphabet is crucial because if children cannot recognize letters names and shapes they

need to be taught them in conjunction with phonemic awareness (Armbruster et al.).

Fountas and Pinnell do include these building blocks into their word work potion of the

lessons in the Leveled Literacy Intervention system (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

Past Studies of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System

The Leveled Literacy Intervention system has been used as a pull out service for

children who struggle with reading. Fountas and Pinnell (2010) designed LLI for

children who require intense support, in a fast paced lesson framework in the hopes to boost their reading level to grade level expectations. The effectiveness of this literacy intervention has been researched in different capacities. A study of the effectiveness of LLI program (implementation and effectiveness) took place from 2009-2010 (Ransford-Kaldon, et al.). This study utilized a randomized controlled trial, and included both quantitative and qualitative data to determine the perception of use of this program, and student progress while using the LLI system (2010).

The researchers conducted teacher surveys, observed 90 lessons worth of LLI instruction of a second grade class. The control group did not receive LLI instruction until the first and second grade evaluation period ended. Students in either group did not receive any additional pull out services that involved literacy in any capacity during the data collection period. The researchers used the Fountas and Pinnell (2010) benchmark assessment kit to and DIBELS to monitor student progress. The researchers found that LLI when administered with fidelity positively impacted second grade students in terms of literacy achievement (Ransford-Kaldon, et al.). Furthermore, the researchers found that students who participated in LLI instruction gained between 1.5 and 5.5 benchmark levels. Students who did not receive LLI instruction gained between less than 1 to 3 benchmark levels by the completion of this study (Ransford-Kaldon, et al.).

In this particular study, they researchers collected student data in order to determine the effectiveness of this intervention. The researchers also examined the perspective of the teachers administering the LLI intervention as well. Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2010) found the teachers who participated in this study felt they were well trained and well supported in their district in training and implementation of the intervention.

Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2010), goes on to conclude that teachers felt LLI intervention system had a positive impact on students' literacy development. Teachers felt the small group setting of no more than three students was beneficial to the LLI lesson structure. Some teachers noted that they felt the pacing of the lessons could not always be completed in the 30-minute time allotment (Ransford-Kaldon, et al.). Other teachers noted that students who severely struggled with reading deficits grappled with the fast paced nature of this intervention. Most of the LLI intervention is implemented in the school setting. However, at the end of each session, students who participated in the LLI program have take home books, which are a black and white copy of the book they read during that lesson. Students are expected to take these books home, and practice with an adult. Some teachers who participated in this study felt, students were not always receiving the added time with the books in the home setting for a variety of reasons (Ransford-Kaldon et al., 2010).

After the Ransford-Kaldon et al. (2010) completed this study; they crafted many recommendations bases on their findings. Based on their own observations, and input from teachers who participated in this study, it is recommended that wherever possible, LLI intervention should be implemented as soon as possible to combat reading deficits. The researchers also recommended that continued education for reading professionals and other teachers be kept current in order to ensure the LLI intervention is administered with fidelity. In addition to recommendations for staff members, student and parental involvement suggestions were made regarding this system. The researchers also make note that a similar study needs to be conducted in an urban setting to cross examine results (Ransford-Kaldon, et al.).

The study referenced in the previous paragraphs focused on student achievement for students that participated in the Leveled Literacy Intervention System. In 2006, researchers Harrison, Peterman, Grehan, and Ross performed a study under the direction of Dr. Stephen Ross to determine the effectiveness of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system in regards to professional preparation for professionals implementing this literacy intervention. The researchers crafted four research questions:

- What were the status and needs of the teachers prior to the LLI?

- What were the teachers' experiences with and reactions to the LLI?

- To what degree did teachers change their literacy instruction according to LLI emphases and best practices?

- What were the impacts of the LLI on student achievement measured by student reading tests?

Harrison et al. (2006) used both qualitative and quantitative measures when collecting data for this study. The researchers collected data through LLI trainee needs assessment surveys; phone interviews with randomly selected LLI participants, post-training online questionnaires, and GMRTS administered to students prior to participating in LLI instruction, and at the end of the school year (Harrison et al., 2006).

During the course of this study, there were 38 participants who taught in 22 different schools in the same urban district. The researchers reported that this school district is a Title I school with a culturally diverse population, and most qualify for free or reduced lunch (Harrison et al., 2006). After reviewing the data that was collected as a result of this study, Harrison et al., found that 78.9% of the professionals who participated in this study reported that they had more than 20 hours of professional

development in the realm of literacy instruction in the previous school year (Harrison et al.). The reading professionals who participated in this study felt their students were motivated to learn because of the lessons. A majority of the professionals felt this way. In fact, 83.9% of the professionals felt their students were motivated to learn by the lessons in the LLI system (Harrington et al., 2006).

In addition to the benefits of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System, Harrison et al. (2006) found limitations as well. 48.4% felt their reading block was not protected from interruptions. Participants also reported the picture cards that were included in the Leveled Literacy Intervention System were cumbersome and hard to organize. Harrison et al., made recommendations for future studies as well. The researchers noted that they length of time future studies should take to complete should be lengthened and a control group should be used to get more authentic results (Harrison et al., 2006).

In 2011, researcher Michael Harvey conducted a research study that compared the reading interventions Reading Recovery and the Leveled Literacy Intervention system by Fountas and Pinnell (2011). The purpose of this study was to investigate not only the reading interventions themselves, but to also explore previous research conducted on the literacy intervention programs Reading Recovery, and the Leveled Literacy Intervention system. Harvey, found there was substantial research on the Reading Recovery program. However, very little research could be found on the Leveled Literacy intervention system (Harvey, 2011). As a result Harvey (2011) developed the following research questions:

- Does one intervention produce better results than the other?

- Can both interventions survive together under one school roof?

In an attempt to answer the research questions, Harvey conducted a quantitative research design using ANOVA to compare the mean gain of text reading levels. Students were placed in pairs based on ability, and their scores were compared to determine significance and effect size (Harvey, 2011).

The students that participated in this research study were in first grade, and attended three different elementary schools in a similar area. Two out of the three elementary schools used in this study were identified as low-income, and Title 1 schools in North Carolina. Harvey, found the Reading Recovery program yielded slightly more of a gain in reading levels than the Leveled Literacy Intervention system (2011). It is important to note that the Reading Recovery Intervention is implemented with only one student and one teacher. The Leveled Literacy Intervention system is implemented with as many as three students. Harvey noted that a limitation of this study was the Leveled Literacy Intervention data set, was evaluated after 20 weeks of receiving the intervention, while the Leveled Literacy Intervention is usually administered for a longer time period (2011).

This study produced many useful implications for professionals using both of these reading interventions in the school district where this study took place. Harvey found both of these interventions can coexist in the same school, but the students who are selected to participate in these interventions must be selected carefully (Harvey, 2011).

Summary

The Leveled Literacy Intervention system developed by Fountas and Pinnell is a reading intervention that targets students who struggle with reading, and are reading below grade level. The LLI system fits into the Response to Intervention framework of

Tier II instruction. The word work portion of the lessons will be examined in subsequent chapters, as there is research that states the importance of word work for students' reading acquisition. While a plethora of research of the interventions effectiveness does not exist; the previously referenced studies help shed some insight to the program, as it is used across New York State (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). All three studies used in this literature review cite benefits and limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System as it pertains to student achievement and professional use. In subsequent chapters of this research study, presented collected data that will corroborate pervious findings of the benefits and limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system developed by Fountas and Pinnell by other researchers.

Chapter Three: Study Design

Starting in grade three, students who attend a public school are required to take the New York State English Language Arts (NYS ELA) high stakes test every year, until they graduate from high school. At the intermediate levels (grades 3-5), the scores are used to place students in groups where their specific needs are to be met. As a push from Response to Intervention students who earn a 2 or lower on the NYS ELA exam are placed in small groups where they receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS). This is a pullout model where students are grouped together based on their specific needs and reading deficits, and receive services outside of their classroom setting. This framework described previously prompted me to question the benefits and limitations of this practice. It is important to note, in the school where the data collection took place, third grade students who were deemed "at-risk" of failing the NYS ELA exam were also placed in AIS pullout services. The question I researched was: what are the benefits and limitations of AIS pullout services for students who are participating in the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention system? I wanted to know how well the intervention worked, and what the effects were for the students participating in the intervention, both positive and negative. This chapter will describe the students I studied, the modes of data collection I utilized, how I analyzed the collected data, my postionality as a researcher, and the trustworthiness of my research design.

Students who Participated in this Study

The students who participated in this study were three fourth grade students who attended a suburban public school. They had previously taken the NYS ELA exam in third grade and did not earn a three or a four and had deemed "at risk for not meeting at

grade level expectations as set forth by New York State. They were not reading at grade level, and had received AIS services in previous school years. Two participants were female, and one participant was male. All three students were in the same fourth grade classroom. Two students were Caucasian, and one student was Hispanic and received the Leveled Literacy Intervention in third grade. The female Hispanic student was proficient in speaking English, but spoke Spanish in the home. As reported by their third grade teacher, all three students struggled with decoding, and comprehension. All three students were a concern for their classroom teacher, but were not on a track for entering a special education self-contained classroom.

Setting of the Study

This study took place in the suburban school in which I was employed as fourth grade, full year long term substitute teacher. For the first month of school, I was the students' AIS provider and I administered the LLI system to these students. In lieu of me becoming their classroom teacher, and previous AIS provider, the Principal, had requested me to also become their AIS provider and administer the LLI system in the classroom, while other students were receiving other pull out services during that time. The students were in a family group. The students stayed together in the same classroom group in grades three, four, and five, but had different teachers for each grade level. The students stayed in their classroom and other students traveled to the reading room that is shared with another AIS provider. Students met with me in the morning and received their LLI reading intervention from 9:45 AM-10:20 AM, five times a week. There were always two reading groups being taught simultaneously in the classroom. The reading room where the other students received their services was a two-minute walk from their

classroom. Each morning the students were met by the AIS provider at their classroom door and walked back to their classroom to ensure timely delivery of instruction. While I was meeting with my LLI group, other AIS groups were filtering in and out of the classroom to meet with their designated AIS provider. When students began their LLI session, they came and sat at a kidney shaped table where they received the LLI instruction. There was one desk computer in the classroom and a Smart Board. The two reading groups were separated by three rows of desks that had 5 desks in each row. Students had access to two classroom computers. The room had one large bulletin board and their ELA skills were posted so they could see them. Also, there was an easel that students used daily when doing word work. A unisex bathroom was also located in the classroom. The classroom was located directly next to the music room. There was a lot of traffic in the hallway, and the windows in our room faced the parking lot; distractions were frequent.

My Postionality as a Researcher

I was working as a full year, long-term substitute fourth grade teacher in a suburban, public school in upstate New York. My position for the first two months of school was a half-time position as an AIS provider. I worked with students who struggled with reading and were not deemed to be proficient readers based on their NYS ELA exam. At the time the data was collected, I was a fourth grade teacher in an inclusion classroom. I am a white female who grew up in a rural area in New York State. I completed my undergraduate degree at SUNY Geneseo in childhood education and special education. My concentration was in English. I am in the process of completing my Masters' degree at the State University of New York at Brockport in literacy. I have

been in the field of education since 2009 as a building substitute in an urban district and as an AIS provider in a suburban district, as well as having positions as a long-term substitute teacher in various lengths and capacities.

I believe students should receive literacy education that is balanced. Currently, I do not feel that we as instructors are producing children who are thinkers. I do not think all packaged reading programs are the answer to remediate this issue. The specifics parts of pre-packed reading programs need to be examined in order to determine the benefits and limitations of the reading program. Allington (2009) also feels that core reading programs, or programs with a one-size fits all philosophy, will not close the gap between struggling readers and proficient readers. Students are required to jump through hoops (in the form of high stakes testing, formal and informal assessments) to advance to the next grade, but when they graduate from school, they are unable to find a job. Kaiser and Kaiser (2012) acknowledge that students need authentic experiences with text; especially non-fiction texts as this will be the majority of what they read as adults. Students need to be pushed to be critical thinkers and close readers. Students need to question the integrity of what they are reading. I believe students need to leave school with the literacy skills that will allow them to be successful in college or in the workforce.

Researched based intervention systems are becoming more and more prevalent. It has been my personal experience that Fountas and Pinnell created high quality programs in terms of reading interventions, but it is my fear that these programs will replace expert teaching and continuing education training for professionals who are required to use these pre-packaged reading interventions. It is my hope that at the completion of this study, the benefits and limitations identified about the Leveled Literacy Intervention system will

strengthen the implementation of this intervention, as well as teacher awareness of the limitations. In identifying this limitation, it is my hope to educate other professionals and administration to better implement this program.

Data Collection

With written consent from parents, students, and school administration the data collection process began on May 9, 2013. The data collection period occurred over a six-week period. During that time, students were videotaped while participating in the LLI intervention. Students were recorded using a video recording device as well as an audio device in their classroom, with student and parental consent. Running reading records were also collected, as they are part of the reading intervention. In an attempt to triangulate data, I also sent a survey to two reading teachers who administer the LLI system to other students on a daily basis. The students who participated in the study were also given a survey orally, and I typed their responses into a Microsoft Word document.

Prior to beginning this study, I attended a mandatory training session in the school district where the data was collected. This training session had to be completed by reading professionals in order to be able to administer the intervention to students in this school district. The training lasted approximately two hours. There wasn't testing for the reading professionals who participated in this training to ensure they fully understood how to administer the reading intervention to students. There also wasn't any follow up or subsequent training. Before collecting data from students, I administered a Tier II reading intervention to the three students who participated in this study. The students who were selected to participate in this study did not pass the New York State Language Arts assessment in third grade, and were deemed by their third grade teacher to be

struggling readers. All three students were reading below grade level. I selected the students who participated in this study after consultation with their previous reading teachers and classroom teachers.   All three students struggled with decoding and comprehension.

One mode of data collection I used during this study was videotaping LLI sessions. My personal iPhone was used to video and audiotape the LLI sessions. I also sat with each student individually and asked them survey questions and typed their responses into a Microsoft Document, an electronic survey was also sent to two reading specialists and their responses were e-mailed back to me.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected it was organized and analyzed. This study was an ethnographic study of three, fourth grade students who participate in the Leveled Literacy Intervention system (Genishi & Glupczynski, 2006). One mode of data collection was videotaping LLI sessions; I transcribed the sessions and idetified trends across six lessons. After I transcribed the sessions into a Microsoft Word document, I read through all of the transcripts and color-coded sections. Each color code denoted a specific trend I identified in my data. In addition to videotaping and transcribing six sessions of Leveled Literacy Intervention system lessons, a survey comprised of five questions were e-mailed to two reading specialist who work in the same district as the students who participated in this study. I color-coded their Reponses in a Microsoft Word document and each color dented a trend I was able to identify in my data. For example, when I read through the transcripts and found trends that were similar in each response, that trend was color-coded with same color. The three fourth grade students who are participated in this study

were verbally asked six survey questions. After each answer I typed their response into a Microsoft Word document and color-coded the trends I saw. Each color code denoted a different trend.

In the Chapter Four, the color-coded trends will be discussed in more detail. These trends will then be identified as benefits or limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System developed by authors and researchers Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell.

Chapter Four: Results

Published reading specialists and authors Irene Fountas and Gay Sue Pinnell developed the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) system. This system is a tool both teachers and reading specialists use to support struggling readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). The LLI system is widely used throughout elementary schools across the country. This literacy intervention comes complete with all lessons, templates, training DVDs, and fiction and non-fiction books that students are required to use during the intervention. Other supplemental materials are available for separate purchase. For example, if a student uses all the pages in the "Writing about Reading" book, a new one must be reordered.

The framework of this intervention is to determine the student's instructional reading level, using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment system (sold separately). The lessons are designed to support struggling readers, and the readers move through the lessons hoping to increase their reading levels. This intervention system is designed to be fast-paced, and implemented for a short period of time. This system is not intended to replace whole group reading, but rather a supplement to students' reading instruction, at the student's instructional reading level. Fountas and Pinnell recommend this intervention to be administered in a pull out small group setting (2010).

The research questions that were used as a focus for data collection were:

- What are the benefits and limitations for teachers of the Leveled Literacy Intervention Program?

- How does this program adhere to the Response to Intervention guidelines?

My findings were extracted from transcripts of six video-recorded LLI lessons, running reading records, excerpts of surveys given to reading specialists, and excerpts of surveys given to the three students who participated in the LLI reading intervention. Five significant themes were identified as I sifted through the data. The five significant themes I identified, fell under the umbrella of benefits and limitations of the LLI system from a teaching perspective. The themes that were identified include availability of material and cost concerns, quality of materials, word work as seen in the lessons, book introductions and previewing the text prior to reading a new text, and the length of time allotted for each lesson. The themes identified in this study that are considered to be benefits are the quality of materials, word work portions of the lessons, and book introductions/previewing the text prior to reading a new text. The limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System are availability of materials/cost concerns and length of time allotted for each lesson. The perspective of the student is seen as well in the data collection process, specifically in the quality of materials section. Each benefit and limitation will be discussed and supported by data collected during this study.

Availability of Materials and Cost Concerns

After reviewing the surveys given to the reading specialists, observations I made when administering the Leveled Literacy Intervention to students, and reviewing the sample kit mailed from Heinemann that detailed the LLI system, one benefit of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system that became apparent was the completeness of the kit. When fully assembled, the kit includes everything the professional using the kit needs to administer the intervention. For example, each lesson is in a folder that is organized sequentially by lesson number. Within each folder are the contents needed to

administer that specific lesson. Generally speaking, in each folder is a copy or copies of the scripted lesson, master copies of any word work manipulative that the student would need to use (copies must be made each time from the master copy), copies of the books that the students will be using (groups are small, and each student gets a copy of their own book, a black and white copy of the student's take home book for students to practice reading a familiar text in hopes of improving fluency. Most copies of running reading records are in the folders as well as a means to collect data and monitor each student's progress, take home bags for students to keep their materials in, and "writing about Reading Books." It is important to note that while the LLI kit does come with these materials, they are consumed, or there are not enough for all the students who participate in the LLI groups in the building to access all of the materials at the same time. In addition to availability of materials, another limitation of the LLI system is the cost that the school district can incur when the issue of reordering materials presents itself.

Data that supports the previous statements are reinforced by my own observations and surveys from reading specialists. Reading Specialist A and B were e-mailed survey questions about the benefits and limitations of the LLI system. When Reading Specialist A was asked the questions, "What changes would you like to see in the LLI system?" Her response was as follows: "Wish it was cheaper so schools could afford more kits. We run out of materials, and we do not have the means to buy more. For example, the take home bag, and the writing books. Once they're gone, they're gone." In this particular school district, there are two reading specialists, four reading tutors, classroom teachers, and special education teachers who all utilize the LLI kits. Often, there are not enough materials to go around and materials can be scarce. With school budgets being what they

are, it is hard to reorder materials, especially when materials run out midyear. The take home bags that were referenced in this response are cloth bags that have a plastic insert for a name card. Due to the face that they are cloth, it is intended that they get reused and passed on to other students who are using this intervention system. From my own personal observation in using this system, the bags can become dirty, and students often lose them. It's costly to replace these bags, as they are specific to the kit.

When the same question was asked to Reading Specialist B, the person responded: "Replacement materials are costly. It's especially difficult when a new student joins the group, and there are no more take home bags or writing books." As part of the RTI process, some students are moved to different reading groups, or it is deemed that a different intervention would be more beneficial to student growth; some students leave the reading group, and other students join existing reading groups. As Reading Specialist A noted, once the materials are gone, they are gone. It can be difficult to have a new student join the group and have materials that are different than the other group members.

In addition to the changes that both Reading Specialists A and B would like to see in regards to cost, Reading specialist A would like to see the addition of magnetic letters for the following reasons: "I would also like to see the magnetic letters used in the Blue system so that chart paper doesn't have to be hanging all around the room especially in an intervention room that can see like 15 groups a day and no space to keep all the charts." In some lessons, the teachers are prompted to use chart paper for word work lessons. Due to the fact each lesson builds on itself and can be referenced later it is recommended that each teacher keep the work charts that are created within the lessons because the

charted material will be referenced in subsequent lessons. It is important to note that the reading teachers who participated in this study met with multiple groups, at multiple levels, using multiple interventions each day. As a classroom teacher who is implanting this intervention, I did not find the use of chart paper to be cumbersome or burdensome. The previous data supports the notion that the re-ordering of materials can be a financial burden to a school.

In addition, the kit itself is high-priced.   Reading Specialist A commented in her survey, that she wishes the school district could afford more kits. It is important to note that in this suburban school, there are two blue kits that are to be shared between two reading specialists and two special education teachers (not to mention the classroom teachers who are implementing this intervention in their own classrooms). This referenced comment about Reading Specialist A wanting more kits to implement this intervention, and Reading Specialists A and B commenting that reordering of materials can be costly, especially when new students join the group and continuity of materials is desired, and chart paper that is used within this system can be cumbersome to the Reading Specialist implementing this intervention are deemed to be limitations of this intervention. In chapter 5, recommendations to address these limitations will be discussed, in hopes to improve this intervention for future teachers and reading specialists who are implementing this program.

Quality of Materials

As noted previously, the Leveled Literacy Intervention system kit is all-inclusive when a new kit comes to the school. The materials that are required to implement this intervention are included, but some materials will need to be re-ordered as mandated by

student consumption. While the cost and need to reorder materials is seen as a limitation, Reading Specialist A and B also commented on the quality of the materials included in this kit. In this section, thoughts about the materials used in this interaction will be discussed. The perspective of the reading specialists who implemented this intervention will be included as well as thoughts about the materials from the student perspective will be included as well.

The Leveled Literacy Intervention System includes texts written specifically for this intervention. Throughout the intervention, students are reading both fiction and non-fiction texts. Reading Specialists A and B were asked the question, "In your opinion, what is the most beneficial aspect of the LLI system in regards to student literacy acquisition?" Reading Specialist B had a very specific response in regards to the quality of the non-fiction texts that students were using during this intervention: "Students generally like the non-fiction books better than the fiction in the blue kit the books." The layout of the non-fiction texts in the Blue kit includes commonly seen text features seen in non-fiction texts. These text features include headings, table of contents, captions, glossary, and index. It can be inferred that Fountas and Pinnell repeat the same text features throughout the non-fiction books to familiarize students with non-fiction text features they will encounter as lifelong readers.

While Reading Specialist B's comment about the non-fiction books in this system can be seen and a benefit to this intervention, it is also important to explore the opinions about the fictional texts in this intervention. Please note that the fictional books used in this system are of varying genres and topics. Some fictional texts are stand alone books, meaning the characters in this book and the topic is seen only once in the system, and

some of books have reoccurring characters that are seen throughout the intervention, and in subsequent lessons.

In reference to the fictional texts used in this intervention, both Reading Specialist A and Reading Specialist B commented on the quality of the books used during the LLI intervention. When asked, "What are the limitations of the LLI system?" Reading Specialist B responded: "The interest level of the fiction books at Blue and the need to add more comprehension at a deeper level [questions]. The writing attached to the lessons is also at the emergent level and I frequently have to change it to be more Common Core like." When digging deeper into this repose, I can surmise that Reading Specialist B feels that deeper level questions that are created for the teacher or reading specialist implementing this lesson need to be improved when students are reading a fictional text. Also, in some lessons the students are asked to write about what they have read. Reading Specialist B is stating that she often needs to change and/or add to the prompt crafted by Fountas and Pinnell in order to raise the level of thinking that is being asked of the students in an effort to make the lesson fit in better with the New York State Common Core Curriculum. When Reading Specialist B was asked, "What are the limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System?" She responded: **"**In the blue [kit] I would like to see more engaging fiction texts and increase the rigor a bit because many 3-5 graders are still at instructional levels that the blue system spans." Reading Specialist B feels that the fictional texts used in this system are not as engaging as the non-fiction texts. This is not to say that they aren't high quality, just that they are not at the same level of engagement as the non-fiction texts.

The purpose of this study is to examine the benefits and limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system from the perspective of the professional administering this intervention, it is also important to look at the student viewpoints of the texts used in this intervention as well. After all, teachers and reading professionals can have their opinions about the quality of the texts, but student engagement also plays a role in the success of the intervention. In the month of June 2013, the three students who participated in this study met with me one on one, and were asked six questions. I typed their responses into a Microsoft Word document to ease writing anxiety. Each student was asked the same questions on different days, as our busy classroom schedule does not account for large gaps of open time, or flexibility for that matter. Students did not comment specifically about the quality of the books (fiction or non-fiction), but when asked, "Do you think coming to reading group will help you become a better reader?" Student C remarked: "I think so. I want to read bigger (chapter) books like my friends and group will help me." The Blue Kit does not include chapter books, but the student is acknowledging that the books read in-group help the student become a better reader.

Reading Specialist B commented that she felt the fiction books were not rigorous enough for the New York State Common Core standards. However, the students enjoyed being able to read books that were at "their levels." When asked the question, "Do you think coming to reading group will help you become a better reader? Why or why not?" Student A responded: "Yes, I think coming to reading group is helping me because, the books we read are at my level, and I can understand them better than what we read in class." This demonstrates that if nothing else, students are at least building their

confidence in their reading and will be more apt to take reading risks as they develop their reading skills.

The quality of the materials, specifically the books used in this intervention systems have been evaluated by reading teachers who implement this system, and comments from students have been used to further examine the books used in this intervention. Based on the responses from the reading specialists, it appears as though there is strength in the non-fiction texts, and the fictional texts could/need to be improved to meet the increased rigor of the New York State Common Core Curriculum. The quality of the non-fiction texts can be seen as a benefit, where the lack of rigor of the fictional texts can be seen as a limitation.

Word Work As Seen in the Lessons

In previous sections of this research study, the lessons have been outlined, the quality of materials have been studied. In this section, I will delve deeper into the portion of the lessons that focus on word work and word studies, as the word work portion of the lessons are benefits of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system. I will use the surveys completed by the two reading specialists who work in the district and implement the Leveled Literacy Intervention, and to examine transcripts of actual student learning and participation of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system.

When asked, "What are the benefits of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System?" Reading Specialist A responded: "The blue system focuses heavily on word study and fluency which I know is needed at second grade, but with the rigor of the new Common Core Standards and what is expected by third grade, I believe that it could be more effective with increased level of comprehension skills and strategies as a primary focus as

well as increasingly more challenging written responses to the text." I'd like to focus more on the beginning part of this statement. There is a heavy focus on word work and phonics instruction, which is an integral part of literacy acquisition. Reading Specialist A goes on to state: "But mostly it seems that children are put in the blue second grade system first off if they are in second grade and need of an intervention, but at other grade levels, it appears that there is a great need for word study and fluency and NOT comprehension at the inferential level and students can keep up with the fast pace of the instruction." This need is great for students in second grade but this need is also great for students who are functioning far below grade level. The fourth grade students that participated in this study were reading far below grade level when the data was collected for this study.

Reading Specialist B had similar thoughts as Reading Specialist A in terms of the benefits to the word work portion of the lessons used in this intervention system. When Reading Specialist B was asked, "What are the benefits of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System?" She responded: "It benefits students who are developing readers and need word work strategies but lacks a deeper level of comprehension. Considering the system was developed to lay the foundation skills and strategies of reading the books are very little-kid-like so older students who are at these instructional levels may think the books are to "babyish." I do think it is a good intervention for emergent readers, and for readers who are reading far below grade level. The students are given a chance to read, "At their level." It is evident that both reading specialists feel this system is limited in terms of comprehension, but is strong in terms of word work, which will support students as they learn different reading skills and strategies.

It has been established that both reading specialists feel the word work portion of this intervention system is a benefit; I would like to examine what the word work portion of the lessons looks like. At no point in this intervention, are students given a book and told to read the text on their own without any prior instruction. Students are guided through the book with a very specific book introduction (which will be explored later on in this study) to familiarize students with the text prior to reading it. Also in each lesson there is a sections of word work, and the word work topic taught are seen in the text to reinforce the lesson, and to support students before the read through the text. In Session 1 LLI Lesson 111 on May 13, 2013, the following teaching moment took place:

Teacher: You do, okay. Papa told the boys to keep yourselves busy and then we'll do something fun together. Now I want you to think of yourselves and I want you to clap out how many syllables you hear, so I'll show you. I want to do the word hotdog. That would be how many syllables?

All: Two.

Teacher: I want you to do the word yourselves, go ahead.

All: your selves (students break the word apart).

Teacher: How many syllables did you hear?

All: Two.

Teacher: Very good. Turn to page 4, Jessie said actually it isn't, he tried to fry an egg on the sidewalk. Please think of that, do you remember actually trying to fry an egg on the sidewalk.

Student C: It's really not going to work because it wouldn't be hot enough to fry an egg on the sidewalk because if you look at the picture it's like 150 degrees.

Teacher: Good. I want you to find the word actually on page 4. Run your finger under it, clap out how many sounds do you hear?

All: act u al ly (students break the word apart into syllables).

Teacher: You got four, let's try it altogether, ready.

All: act ual ly (students break the words apart into syllables they hear).

Teacher: Three, did you hear it? Alright, so find the word actually again and run your finger underneath it and as you run your finger underneath it I want you to say it.

All: act u ally

Teacher: Alright, so you read it how you would read it.

All: actually.

Teacher: Good. Look at page 5, Papa told the boys there were two eggs left in the refrigerator and they would be enough. Enough of what?

Student A: Enough for them to fry the egg.

Teacher: Clap the word enough, how many syllables do you hear.

All: Two.

Teacher: Good. Find it on page 5. Now what do you think of this word? What is that word?

Student C: tough

Teacher: Tough, what do tough and enough have in common?

Student C: They rhyme.

Teacher: They rhyme. Good.

Student A: They have the same ending.

Teacher: What do you mean the same ending?

Student A: They end in ough

        Within this very short section of the lesson, there are many different word work concepts being taught. Students are reinforcing and practicing their knowledge of syllables, and breaking words apart and identifying the number of syllables they hear. The words that the students were asked to break apart were also in the text the students that were being prepped to read. Not only were students practicing breaking words apart into syllables, but they were also, using the clapping technique to break words apart. This is helpful to students who are kinesthetic learners. In addition to identifying syllables, students are exposed to words that have vowel blends that can be confusing and hard to read. For example, "ough" can be a challenging vowel blend for students to decode when reading. Students practice these words, and are asked what these words (enough and tough) have in common. Students were able to identify the words and that they rhyme.

        The word work concepts are not the only concepts that are taught in the lessons. In the next session where data was collected, students learned and practiced the concepts of adding endings to base words that change the meaning of the base word slightly. The excerpt below is from Session two, LLI lesson 115 on May 20, 2013:

Teacher: Today we're going to talk about some more of this. Base word, do you know what a base word is?

Student C: It's the end word

Teacher: It's not the end word

Teacher: Today we're going to talk about some words, what is this word right here.

All: Base word

Teacher: What is a base word, do you know?

Student B: I think it's the middle word.

Teacher: Well it can be the middle word.

Student C: It might be a word that's close to another word like if it's not with the other word like it's not a word by itself …

Teacher: I'm going to use the first part; it's a word by itself, so let's check this word out.

Student C: Oh

Teacher: Okay

Student C: When something is doing something It's either getting bigger or smaller.

Teacher: Here's the base word and then …

Student C: Change the word.

Teacher: …and then what about est, bigger, biggest, what do you notice about these words.

Student A: keep adding on to it.

Teacher: Keep adding letters, am I adding all different letters.

All: Yeah.

Teacher: Big, bigger, biggest, what do you notice about these three words?

Student A: They all have big.

Teacher: Big, alright, that would be the base word. Let's try this. What are these words doing? (Students' attention is directed to the white board).

Student C: Changing cause if you go from fast to faster…

Teacher: So if you see big, Mary is bigger than Lucy, Mary is the biggest of all of her friends. What are these endings doing, they're what …

Student C: They're saying how it's getting bigger

Teacher: So they're comparing, does that make sense. So "er", and "est"… those endings can turn a base word into comparison words. Let's do another one. What would be the … (Student C chimes in).

Student C: So like something brighter than the sunlight and the end

Teacher: Absolutely, these endings "er" and "est" are going to when added on to our base words will we be able to compare. So let's look at this, what's my base word?

All: Hard

Teacher: And what if we put "er" on there?

All: Harder … something is harder than that…

Teacher: Than what?

Student A: It means is harder

Teacher: Could anyone use these three words in a sentence?

Student A: Jordan hit the ball but Luca hit the ball harder and then Mary hit the ball the hardest.

Teacher: Excellent, did you see how she built on those words to compare who hit the ball harder? I want you to do this one.

Student C: Busy but he would

Teacher: Now, notice what letter does busy end with?

Student B: y

Teacher: Y. So, look what happened he had to drop the y and changed it to an "i:, okay? Alright let's use this one …

Student B: Crunchy

Teacher: Crunchy, now what letter does this end in.

Student B: y

Teacher: So how do you think we will spell crunchier?

Student B: c-r-u-n-c-h-i-e-r (Student spells out the word).

Teacher: Okay. And what about crunchiest?

Student B: c-r-u-n-c-h-i-e-s-t (Student spells out the word).

Teacher: Can you use these in a sentence to compare?

Student B: The potato chip was crunchy, but the Doritos was crunchier, and the and the eggshell was crunchiest.

Teacher: Beautiful, let's do this one, close, what would this be?

Student C: Closer – something is getting closer

Teacher: Hmm mm, and then?

Student C: This was the closest.

Teacher: Beautiful. Alright, so if you add "er" or "est" to a base word will the word have the same meaning though?

Student C: No

Teacher: Big and bigger don't mean kind of the same thing, but now we can compare right? So really big, bigger and biggest they increase right? Fast, faster, fastest.

   The students are drawn into this lesson by being asked questions to prompt their thinking. Then they are given examples, and then are led by their own thinking, and then the students are able to practice on their own. It is important to note, this lesson included a white board. The white board was not a part of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System kit, but I felt it would be a visual aid that the students could use to help

understand the lesson. Also within this lesson, students are asked later on to use the skill of breaking words apart before they encounter them in the text, and struggle to decode them. For example:

Teacher: You're going to stop at page 10. I want you to look at page 10; I want you to look for the word erupt on page 10. How many syllables do you hear in the word erupt. Let's clap it out.

All: Two. (Students clap out the word and then answer).

Teacher: Let's find the word erupted. Let's clap out and see how many syllables there are.

All: e rup ted (students break the word apart).

Teacher: How many did you hear?

All: Three.

Teacher: Excellent.

The skill set is reinforced throughout the lessons, so the skill is sharpened, and practiced. While there is some level of word work in each lesson, some lessons are more focused on the word work, and some are more of a reinforcement of skills taught in earlier lessons. For example, in session three, LLI lesson 118 on May 26th, 2013 students were given the opportunity to practice breaking words apart in to syllables. The purpose of this technique is to reinforce the word work framework to become a stronger reader and to prepare students to decode multi-syllabic words before they encounter them within the text. This will help build their confidence and improve fluency because the student will not have to stop and attempt to decode words when they are reading. The following example supports the previous statement:

Teacher: We are going to break words apart and it's going to help us read words. Okay.

So you know that you can look at syllables in order to read it. Today, you are going to

take apart some long words with the ly ending. It will help you think about syllables.

I'm going to say the word and you're going to tell me if it has two syllables, three

syllables or four syllables, okay? Are you ready … slowly.

Student C: Two.

Teacher: Slow and then what's the second syllable.

Student C: "ly"

Teacher: Good.   Really.

Student B: Two.

Teacher: So what is the first syllable?

Student B: "re"

Teacher: "real" and then what's the last part?

Student B: "ly"

Teacher: Okay, what about sadly?

Student C: "Sad"

Teacher: Yeah and then what?

Student C: "ly"

Teacher: Quickly.

Student C: "Quick" "ly" two, quick is the first word and then the second part is "ly"

Teacher: Excellent. Kindly

Student B: "Kind" "ly", two syllables, "kind" is the first and "ly" is the second

Teacher: Good.

Teacher: Alright, what about carefully?

Student A: Three.

Teacher: It's three so what's the first syllable?

Student A: "Care"

Teacher: Then what?

Student A: "ful" and then "ly"

Teacher: Good. Quietly

Student B: "qui" "et" "ly" … three.

Teacher: Okay, and what do you hear for the first syllable

Student B: "qui" "et" "ly"

Teacher: Specially

Student C: "e" "spe" "cial" "ly"

Teacher: Listen to the word … specially

Student C: "spe" "cial" "ly"

Teacher: Alright, finally so what do you hear for the first syllable?

Student A: "Fi"

Teacher: Actually

Student C: "Act" "u" "al" "ly"

Teacher: Not three, what do you hear for the first syllable?

Student C: "Act" "u" "al" "ly"

Teacher: Alright let's read one on the chart altogether, ready?

All: Actually, really.

Teacher: Read the whole word without the syllables, ready?

All: (Students read from the white board) Slowly, really, sadly, quickly, kindly, carefully, quietly, finally, actually,

In the transcript of the LLI lesson 118, I demonstrated how to break words apart into parts that make sense, and for students to identify patterns within words (such as "ly" endings). I can surmise that this explicit, direct instruction is structured this way in hopes to re-wire the students thought process when they come to words they do not know, that eventually, they will go through these steps automatically and their fluency and word awareness will increase.

The final example of strong and deliberate word work that is within the Leveled Literacy Intervention System is seen is session 5 LLI Lesson 119 June 4, 2013. The word work that is being taught/reinforced in this lesson is the understanding on homophones. For example:

Teacher: Alright here's the deal, so you've just finished re-reading Ugeani Clark Shark Lady and the Pirates. I want you to think about words that can look very similar but are spelled differently and sound similar. So I want you to look at this word. What is that word?

Student A: Flour.

Teacher: Flour, okay. So what is this type of flour do you know?

Student C: It's not a flower outside, it's … I forgot what it's called.

Student A: It's something you cook with and it's white.

Teacher: Yeah, you bake it and it comes from wheat actually. Now look at this word. What is that word?

Student B: Flower.

Teacher: And what type of flower is that?

Student B: The one that grows outside.

Teacher: So what do you notice about these words?

Student C: They both have the "flo" at the beginning.

Teacher: Okay, they do, they have "flo" at the beginning? Good.

Student A: They're a homophone.

Teacher: What do you mean a homophone?

Student A: A homophone is when a word is spelled differently but they sound the same.

Teacher: Okay, the word is spelled differently but they sound the same. Do they mean the same thing?

Student A: No.

Teacher: No, so they have different meanings. So in front of you I want you to spread out the word cards that you have please. Kind of mix them up. I want you to now go through your words and point to one and I want you just to read it inside of your head, okay. Go through all of them. Were there any words on there that you did not know?

Student C: This kind of hare, h-a-r-e

Teacher: Does anyone know what that kind of hare is?

Student A: It's a bunny.

Teacher: Yeah, it's like a rabbit, and usually they have long ears. Okay. I want you to find the homophone matches that you have in front of you.

Student A: I only have one

Teacher: I don't know you should have all of them.

Student C: There's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 that I have, oh 4.

Teacher: Okay so let's look at your matches. Give me one of the matches.

Student B: Week and weak.

Teacher: Okay the week, can you use that in a sentence.

Student B: There's seven days in a week.

Teacher: Good, and the weak, can you use that in a sentence?

Student B: A stuffed animal is very weak.

Teacher: How is a stuffed animal weak?

Student B: Because you can move it and squeeze it.

Teacher: That's not what weak means. What does that type of weak mean?

Student A: Weak means when a person is weak and they can't like fight back.

Teacher: Yeah, when they're not very strong. Give me a homophone match.

Student C: Maid and made.

Teacher: M-a-d-e, use that in a sentence.

Student C: I made a sandwich.

Teacher: Okay and maid, use that in a sentence.

Student C: The maid gave me a sandwich.

Teacher: Alright, give me one homophone match please.

Student A: Knew and new.

Teacher: Okay, give me the new in a sentence.

Student A: I got a brand new iPad.

Teacher: Brand new iPad, good. And the other, knew.

Student A: I knew how to multiply 12 by 5.

Teacher: You knew how to multiply 12 by 5, good. Alright. Give me another homophone match.

Student C: Brake and break.

Teacher: Okay.

Student C: Break and it means I break something.

Teacher: Okay good.

Student C: And then brake means that you step on the brake in the car.

Teacher: Good, excellent. Give me another one.

Student B: One and won.

Teacher: One and won, cool, give me a sentence with won.

Student B: I won the basketball game.

Teacher: Good and then one.

Student B: I am one year old.

Teacher: Okay, alright. Homophone match.

Student A: Stare and stair.

Teacher: Okay, stair, use that in a sentence.

Student A: I'm walking up the stairs.

Teacher: Good, and stare.

Student A: I stare at a poster.

This lesson introduced the topic of homophones by asking questions that will activate student's prior knowledge, gives concrete examples of homophones, and allows students to come up with their own sentences using homophones that the students are given. The end of the lesson, the teacher is able to gage student understanding by seeing

if the sentences the students are creating make sense, and that the students are able to identify homophones in pairs.

After reviewing the data from the reading specialist surveys, and examining the transcripts from students participating in the Leveled Literacy Intervention system, it is evident that the word work portion of the lessons are beneficial for students who are struggling with word work, and fluency issues. It has been my experience that some professionals' feel working with a scripted program limits their teaching ability. With a topic as difficult as word work, I found the Leveled Literacy Intervention System to be well scripted and deliberate. Fountas and Pinnell structured the instruction and the way the instruction was delivered to students was a benefit to the student, the teacher, and benefit of the program.

Book Introductions and Previewing the Text Prior to Reading a New Text

As outlined previously, word work is an integral part of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system. In addition to working with words, students read both fiction and non-fiction texts. Fountas and Pinnell designed this intervention to give the professional implementing this program the tools to do a proper book introduction as well as preview the text to support students to be successful when reading a new text. The book introduction and previewing the text also allows the professional implementing this intervention to focus on student reading behaviors, rather than starting and stopping throughout the text to answer student misunderstandings. This is not to say that students will not ask questions, but they are given a strong and clear book introduction and preview of the text to address anything they may struggle with as they read. They are

merely supported more before they begin reading the text, and are better prepared for
what the text may have in store for them.   For Example:

 Teacher: "I want you to open it and I want you to look at page 2. On this page papa uses
the expression that means it's really hot. He says it's hot enough to fry an egg on the
sidewalk, what do you think he means by that? What do you think he means by frying an
egg …" When introducing a new text to students, the language in the introduction is
deliberately selected to draw in student interest.

Student B: It means it's a really, really hot day.   I think they're resorting inside the house.

Teacher: And how do you think that relates to the egg?

Student B: That it's really hot, that they could go outside and crack an egg open and put it
down on the sidewalk.

Teacher: Do you think he means that literally or figuratively?

Student B: Figuratively.

Teacher: You do? Okay. Papa told the boys keep yourselves busy and then we'll do
something fun together.

        The teacher draws the student's attention to a specific place in the book to show
where the author uses figurative language to show how hot it is outside. This gives the
students a chance to stop and think about this before becoming confused when reading
the text on their own.

        In session two, Leveled Literacy Lesson 115, on May 20, 2013 a new text is
introduced to students. This text is non-fiction and is in the genre family of expository
non-fiction. The students are introduced to this text for the first time, and the teacher
supports students as they prepare to move through the text:

Teacher: So this time we're going to read All About Volcanoes. Now remember all about books have headings that tell you what the page is going to be about. Turn to page 2. This heading says Mount St. Helens and there's a map that shows where it is. You are going to read about this volcano, there is a picture on page 3, so here's your heading Mount Saint Helens, so this text is going to match the heading. Does that make sense? Okay, and then this picture matches the text. Go to page 5, look at the information in the red box, it tells how scientists predicted the volcano would erupt and people would have to leave. You see the red box? Now turn to page 6, the heading tells that this section is about what causes a volcano. Look at the diagram. Find the word lava. What is lava?

Student B: It's kind of like fire, I think it's, an educated guess it's hot, it's melted metal.

Teacher: It's not melted metal, but it is something melted.

Student C: Melted hot rocks.

Teacher: Melted hot rock. So I want you to go and find the glossary in your book and look up the word lava. Can you read lava for me please?

Student A: Lava – hot melted rock that comes for the inside of the earth.

Teacher: Go on and turn back to the beginning of the book and I want you just to read the headings to yourself.

The students' attention is drawn to specific parts of the book in order to clarify anything they may be confused by. For example, Student B struggled with the content specific work lava. Had this clarification not been made prior to reading the text, the student could have misconstrued the meaning of the text. Previewing the text allows the student to become familiar with the text prior to reading.

A similar framework is used each time a new text is introduced to students. During session four, Leveled Literacy Lesson 118 on May 28, 2013 the students began reading another book that is part of the Sam and Jesse Series (the students have read about these characters in pervious lessons). The content and points the teacher draws the students' attention to will vary depending on the genre and content of the book, but the book introductions remain similar. The book introduction is described below:

Teacher: Today we are going to be reading a new book. This book is from the Sam and Jesse series. Now we've read Sam and Jesse before. This book is called Pirates. Look at just the cover of this text, what do you think is going to happen.

Student B: I think that when the different pirates were on the couch one of them might flip over the couch. Because I see them on the couch.

Teacher: Interesting.

Student C: I think they might want to start playing pirates, so they start playing pirates and then they dress their dog up as a pirate and they play with their dog.

Teacher: I like your prediction.

Student A: I think they are going to do it's kind of the same as hers but it's a little bit different. I think that they're going to do pirates and maybe they're going to want to have their grandfather or one of their parents to do it with them.

Teacher: Turn to page 2, Jesse wants to play pirates, he used a telescope and a bandana around his head, what do you think Sam wants to do?

Student C: Umm He wants to play, he wants to just sit on the couch.

Teacher: Okay so he's sitting on the couch. Do you think he wants to go and do anything?

Student C: No because he's being lazy.

Student A: I think he wants to go fishing because I see right here that they've gone fishing before, these things are connected to that and that's how you reel in fish.

Teacher: Hmm mm. Do you see here how he's holding the line for the fishing rod?

All: Hmm mm.

Teacher: Yes, he wants to go fishing. Turn to pages 6 and 7; papa is giving the boys a treasure map. Look at the map; do you think it shows where buried pirate gold might be?

Student A: Yes because I see two X's and normally when there's pirates there gold under the X's in a treasure chest.

Teacher: What do you think?

Student B: I think yes because I've seen pirates once before where there's X's there's treasure.

Teacher: So you're using your schema or background knowledge to make that connection.

Student B: Hmm mm.

Teacher: Very good. Turn to page 13. Sam and papa should walk the plank; look at the bubble above Sam's head that shows what Sam is thinking. What do you think walk the plank means? What do you think that means?

Student C: I think it means that I know on my background knowledge that there's on boats with pirates they have this plank and it sticks out on the deck and if they capture someone, like if someone is being bad on the boat they make them walk a plank and then they have to go in the water.

Teacher: Hmm, so a plank is kind of like what?

Student C: A board.

Teacher: Yeah a board, good. And it also means that it can be an expression if I caught you doing something that wasn't appropriate and I said no you're going to walk the plank, it means you're in big trouble. Turn back to the beginning and read how papa tricked the boys.

The teacher asked the students to open to specific pages of the book and explicitly showed them points that will not only draw in student interest, but clarify parts of the book that may cause student confusion.

On June 4, 2013 during session five Leveled Literacy Lesson 119 students were introduced to a text about Chester Greenwood. This text is a biography. The books introduction is described below:

Teacher: I like it. Please make a neat pile of those and put them off to the side. Okay, today we're going to start reading a new book, and this book is a biography of Chester Greenwood. Does anyone know who that is?

Student C: He's a famous artist or something.

Teacher: He's not a famous artist but he is famous. He is the man that invented earmuffs. What are earmuffs?

Student B: They protect your ears from the cold.

Teacher: They protect your ears form the cold, good. And remember a biography is a book that tells about a person's life. This book is called Chester Greenwood's Big Idea. What do you think his big idea was?

Student A: I think his big idea was to make earmuffs.

Teacher: To make earmuffs. Alright. I want you to open up your book and I want you to look at the table of contents. There are four chapters in this book. The first chapter tells that Chester lived in Maine where it is very cold in the winter. Maine is actually not that far away from us. It's a state that's close to us up north. He wanted to keep his ears warm when he was ice-skating. In Chapter II he made a plan to keep his ears warm. I want you to open up to page 10. You can see Chester ice-skating but the scarf made his ears itch. Put your finger on who you think Chester is. Why do you think that's Chester?

Student C: Because he wanted to stay warm and he wasn't at all and he looks like he does in the first picture he had a scarf on.

Teacher: So he looks like the picture in the cover? Good. Turn to page 14, in Chapter III Chester got a new idea. His grandmother helped him take some wire circles in fur and soft cloth to make ear warmers. I want you to look at the illustration now on page 20. There is Chester's patent on the earmuffs. A patent shows who invented something. Look at the newspaper on page 21, see the advertisement for Greenwood's ear protectors, how much did they cost?

Student B: 25 cents.

Teacher: 25 cents. Based on what picture clues you've seen in your background knowledge on earmuffs, do you think that this biography is happening during our lifetime?

Student A: No.

Teacher: No, you say no?

Student A: I say no because normally earmuffs now cost more than 25 cents, they cost $1.00.

Teacher: Yes, depending on where you get them, absolutely.

Student C: And usually back in the day things didn't cost that much and we know that they don't have the, that the earmuffs don't cost 25 cents because now I think not a lot of things in the United States right now cost 25 cents.

Teacher: Good. Turn to page 22 … from the background in the picture you might know that these people are in Russia. People from all over the world used Chester's invention. Tomorrow we're going to turn back to the beginning and we're going to read about how Chester invented earmuffs and to find out what else he invented.

It is evident that the book introductions and the way the professionals implementing this intervention walk students through the book is a benefit to the program. The language used during these book introductions is specific to the book; however, the techniques used in the book introductions can be used to introduce any book to any student. In my opinion a lot of what is used in the book introductions are good teaching that can be used to introduce texts to students reading at various levels outside of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system.

Length of Time Allotted for Each Lesson

The time of day that is allotted for me to perform the Tier II intervention is about 40 minutes per day. It is important to note that this year the school where the data was collected, band and chorus times were in the morning, and often last minute rehearsals would cause me to cancel my reading group. Due to the way my classroom was there wasn't more time in the day to reschedule my small reading group. As part of a Tier II reading intervention students are required to meet each day. This did not always happen due to scheduling conflicts. Also, I found it difficult to complete all parts of the lesson in

the allotted time frame. For example, each individual lesson in the LLI system is specially engineered to be taught in entirety in one session. During classroom instruction and during data collection, I found it hard to complete all parts of the lesson in one forty-minute time slot. LLI lesson 118 had to be broken up into two sessions due to time constraints. Typically speaking, I found this to be true for lessons that required me to take a running reading record.

Conclusion

After completing the data collection process, and coding my findings, it became clear that there are definite benefits and limitations to the Leveled Literacy Intervention System, with the focus being on the blue kit. The benefits to this intervention system are the quality of materials (specifically the non-fiction texts), word work portion of the lessons, and the book introductions/previewing the text prior to reading a new text. The limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system are the availability of materials/cost concerns and the length of time allotted to me to complete each lesson. While I do not believe there is a perfect intervention for struggling readers, I do believe this system does bring a lot to the proverbial reading table. The word work portion of this intervention is strong, and deliberate, through teaching students, and based on their responses, they seem to enjoy the texts, the reading specialists who administer this intervention feel the quality of the texts are better in the non-fiction series, than the fictional texts, timing is an issue due to classroom schedule, and other interruptions/schedule changes that are out of the teacher's control. Based on my findings, I would continue to use this intervention to support struggling readers. In

chapter five, I will be making recommendations about this program in hopes to improve

my own teaching, and the teaching of other professional who administer this intervention.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

My study investigated the benefits of limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI) developed by authors and educators Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell. The Leveled Literacy Intervention system is a manufactured reading intervention designed to fit into the Tier II intervention of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model (Howard, 2009). Another purpose of this study was to analyze the compliance of the Response to Intervention with the implementation of this intervention as a classroom teacher. The purpose of the following sections of this chapter further explore the conclusions I drew while conducting this research study, discuss the implications of this study, and to make suggestions for future research studies on this topic.

As previously discussed in earlier chapters of this study, the Leveled Literacy Intervention system is a reading intervention designed to target struggling readers and increase their reading level. This intervention is administered in a small group setting, hoping to boost students reading ability and to increase their reading level in a short period of time (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). This is a popular reading intervention that is widely used in schools across the country. This LLI reading intervention system comes as a complete set. The lessons are preplanned for the professional administering this intervention. The lessons included in the Blue Kit are sequentially organized, starting at the students' instructional level. Meaning, each lesson is supposed to be taught in sequential/numerical order; each lesson builds on the previous lesson, and once the professional administering the intervention determines the starting point, no lessons may

be omitted, or skipped. At the completion of this study, I was able to draw seven key conclusions:

- The word work portion of this intervention is strong and deliberate.

- Through teaching students and based on their responses, the students seem to enjoy the texts.

- Students were able to access the text because the texts they read were at the students' reading level.

- The reading specialists who administer this intervention feel the quality of the texts are better in the non-fiction series, than the fictional texts.

- Timing is an issue due to classroom schedule, and other interruptions/schedule changes that are out of the teacher's control and can have implications to the RTI framework.

- Due to unplanned interruptions, the Leveled Literacy Intervention system was not always in compliance with Tier II instruction.

- If a student is absent or misses the LLI lesson, it is challenging to catch students up with the material they missed.

The conclusions derived from this study will be further discussed in this chapter, as well as the implications of the findings of this study and what they mean to me as an educator, and other educators who administer this reading intervention.

Summary of Findings

As stated in chapter four, after completing this study there were definite benefits and limitations to the Leveled Literacy Intervention System. The benefits that were identified from completing this study were as follows:

- The non-fiction texts were high quality.

- Students generally seemed interested in the texts they were reading.

- The word work portions of the lessons were strong.

- The book introductions set the student up for success prior to reading the text.

Analyzing and coding transcripts of Leveled Literacy Intervention lessons, student surveys, and reading specialist surveys determined these benefits of the LLI system from the perspective of the teacher/professional administering the intervention.

While the study yielded benefits from the teacher's perspective, this study also brought to light some limitations of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system. The limitations are as follows:

- The fiction books in this intervention system are not as rigorous and challenging as the non-fiction books in this intervention.

- The allotted time given to this reading intervention is not always enough to finish each lesson, and scheduling conflicts would come up, and the reading intervention would have to be cancelled.

Word Work

The first conclusion that I was able to draw as a result of this study was the word work portion of this study is strong and deliberate. Each lesson (in varying degrees) includes some form of word work. I was able draw this conclusion based on observations I made while administering the Leveled Literacy Intervention system during the data collection period; as well as research I was able to find about the importance of word work.

Researchers, educators, and developers of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell write in several different texts about the importance of word work. In the text *When Readers Struggle* (2009)*,* Fountas and Pinnell discuss the importance of reading professionals teaching students strategies and techniques when learning about words and how they fit together to make meaning when reading. The authors feel the techniques and strategies are imperative to a student's reading acquisition (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

During the course of this study, it became apparent the authors of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system took great care in designing the word work potion of the lessons. For example, the word work portion of the lessons generally appeared at the beginning of the LLI lessons. The lessons included word work that the students would encounter in the text they would be reading, and in texts outside of the Leveled Literacy Intervention system. For example, students participated in a word work lesson where the focus was on homophones. In the text the students were reading during the same lesson, homophones were embedded within the text. Homophones also appear in trade books, and other genres of texts that students are exposed to in print and in their environment surroundings such as advertisements.

Personally speaking, I found teaching word work in any capacity could be a daunting task as the English language is incredibly complex. It can be difficult to find the correct wording to explain how words work to fourth grade students. I found the way Fountas and Pinnell structured the word work portion of the lessons made teaching word work concepts less arduous for me, as a reading teacher to deliver the instruction. The

wording of the word work lessons and the concrete examples of word work concepts also benefited the student participating in the lesson.

Student Enjoyment of Texts

After completing this study and reviewing transcripts of the Leveled Literacy lessons, I was able to conclude that the students enjoyed reading the texts that were incorporated into the Leveled Literacy Intervention lessons. This conclusion is also supported by research discussed in chapter two. In a study conducted by Harrison et al., 83.6% of reading professionals who participated in this study concluded that the students who participated in the Leveled Literacy Intervention system enjoyed the texts they read (2006).

While I was the reading intervention teacher to the students who participated in this study, I was also their classroom teacher. I can speak to the students' reading behavior in the whole group setting and the small group setting. Typically speaking, the three students who participated in this study were more apt to share their thinking and take reading risks in the small group setting versus the whole group setting. The students who participated in this study remarked in their survey responses that they felt "good" in reading group because the books were at their level, and they could keep up with pace of instruction in the small group setting better than the they could in the whole group setting.

Student Accessibility to the Text

While the quality and rigor of the texts will be discussed in the following section, I want to focus on accessibility of the text for students who struggle with reading. The intervention time where students participate in the Leveled Literacy Intervention System

may be the only time during the day where they are exposed to books that are "at their level." The three students who participated in this study outwardly admitted that they struggle with reading, and they are aware that they are not at the same "level" as their classmates. The students also commented on that they feel reading group helps them. Based on my own observations, student responses, and previous research, I can conclude the students who participated in this study enjoyed the texts they read while receiving the Leveled Literacy Intervention system because the texts were accessible.

Quality of Fiction Texts and Non-Fiction Texts

The Leveled Literacy Intervention system includes books specifically written for this reading intervention. Some books are fiction (some are a series with reoccurring characters) and some are non-fiction texts about various topics. Both reading specialists who participated in this study noted the fictional texts in this intervention system were weak and often they would have to modify the questions crafted by Fountas and Pinnell to make them more "higher level questions". Furthermore, the reading specialists who participated in this study found the quality of texts better in the non-fiction books, rather than the fictional texts in this intervention.

The rigor, or lack thereof in the fictional texts of this program are a concern because the school where the data was collected adheres to the Common Core Curriculum learning standards. As part of the framework of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System, students reread texts as an attempt to practice fluency and work within a familiar text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). In most school across New York State, the Common Core Curriculum is being implemented. Students participate in something called close reading. Close reading is when a student reads the same text over and over

again in order to gain a deeper understanding of the text. The Common Core Standards ask students to engage with a text in order to methodically and thoroughly examine the texts' complexity (PARCC, 2011). Essentially, close reading is a means to get students to obtain a very deep comprehension of a text (Boyles, 2013). Boyles (2103) feels now is the time to have students engage in this reading practice. If the fictional texts in this reading intervention are not rigorous enough students will not be getting all that they can out of this reading intervention. This could cause a disconnect between the growth students show in the LLI reading group and the growth the students are demonstrating in the whole group setting.

Daily Scheduling of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System

In the school where the data was collected for this research project, the Principal formulates the master schedule. This means, the Principal creates the designated time slots for specials, reading intervention times, planning periods, and other times in the schedule for optional events such as choir practice and band practive. The teacher has very little control as to when reading interventions take place and other scheduling conflicts that might arise. During the course of this study, there would be times when I would have to cancel my Leveled Literacy Intervention due to a last minute band or chorus rehearsal. It is also important to note that when the data was collected this suburban school was implementing the Common Core Curriculum for the first time.

In addition to the benefits of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System, Harrington et al., found 48.4% felt their reading block was protected from interruptions (2006). At the conclusion of this study, I found the reading block was not protected from interruptions. Any classroom will have interruptions and unplanned occurrences that will

cause the teacher to have to make adjustments to the daily schedule. At the time of this study, the school where the data was collected had just implemented the New York State Common Core Curriculum. It was a very intense year with implementing new standards, and the added pressure of not only the New York State ELA and Math exams, but the New York State science exam as well (given in fourth grade). I made a conscious effort to maintain the schedule and keep the reading block intact, however that was not always achievable. Based on my findings, I am able to conclude the sequential nature of the LLI system can be a limitation when there are interruptions in the daily schedule that cause the reading intervention time slot to be shortened or canceled.

Compliance with Response to Intervention

The Leveled Literacy Intervention system is considered a Tier II intervention under the framework of the Response to Intervention model (Howard, 2009). The LLI reading intervention is supposed to be administered daily for a minimum of thirty minutes each day. With the daily scheduled interruption discussed in the previous section, I can conclude that the way the school where the data was collected did not have any extra allotment of time to allow Tier II interventions to be rescheduled.

Another added pressure to keep in compliance with the RTI Tier II intervention was the number of students in the classroom. While there were only three students in the Leveled Literacy Intervention group there were a total of 21 students in the classroom. The students who were not in the LLI group were either working on a portion of the Daily 5 (another reading program), or were receiving pull out reading services. With that being said, there was a lot of traffic coming in and out of the classroom. This posed a

mild distraction to the students participating in the Leveled Literacy Intervention group, as our reading table was right next to the entrance to our classroom.

Student Absences

With the sequential nature of the program, it was also challenging to "catch up" students who were absent when the intervention was being administered. Also, all portions of the lessons are supposed to be administered in one session. I found this to be challenging for a variety of reasons. First, sometimes the intervention time would be cut short or many different reasons. Other instances that caused the LLI lesson to be incomplete included, student questions that were formulated during the lesson, teachable moments, or assessments (running reading records) caused the lesson to take more then one 40 minute session to be administered. In conclusion, the time that it took to administer the intervention and scheduling conflicts posed a hindrance to completing all of the necessary parts of the intervention in the scheduled time allotted.

Implications for Future Educators

At the conclusion of this study I was able to identify several implications that my findings may have for future educators. This study was conducted from the perspective of the teacher administering the intervention, and the findings are related to the professionals administering this reading intervention. The finding of the study can help support future educators who are administering this intervention.

From a scheduling perspective, the finding of this study can help the Principal who creates the master schedule for the scheduled reading intervention times. To see how important this intervention time is to the students and their reading growth, changes to the band and chorus times can be made so they do not become a hindrance to the

reading block time. It can be suggested that the school where the data was collected could have a universal reading intervention time for each grade level, and building wide teachers and administrators could take great strides to not have interruptions during the designated reading time.

In an effort to remediate the lack of rigor in the fictional texts of this intervention, teachers could supplement other fictional texts to this program. How this could be achieved would be lengthening the allotment of time for this intervention, and have the professional administering this reading intervention read a higher level text to the student as part of a closing activity. The implication that this could have for future educators would be two-fold. The students would be exposed to a higher, more rigorous text and the student wouldn't have to struggle through the text because they would be listening to the text, rather than reading the text.

In conclusion, the findings of this study will help strengthen an already strong reading intervention. This will help better meet the needs of the students who participate in this intervention, and future students who will require this intervention to help boost their reading skills, and put them on the road to lifelong reading.

Recommendations for Future Studies

After the data collection process, finding trends in the data collected, and drawing conclusions based on my findings, several recommendations for future studies can be made. The data that was collected for this study was collected over a six week time period. For futures studies, a longer data collection period should be used. A full 10 weeks, or one marking period should be uses with fidelity. The district where the data was collected puts the students' reading levels on the report cards, and running reading

records must be taken to determine the student's reading level. Doing a similar study, over 10 weeks will allow the researcher to see the impact of the Leveled Literacy Intervention System in a realistic time frame.

In addition to collecting data for a longer length of time, the students experience should be explored more in a future study. The intervention researched in this study is twofold. The perspective of the professional needs to be analyzed as well as student who is participating in this study needs to be analyzed as well. The sign of a strong reading intervention shows results in student performance.   Every so many lessons in the Leveled Literacy Intervention system, the students are assessed using a running reading record with a familiar text to monitor reading behaviors. The running reading records should be analyzed as part of determining the benefits and limitations of the LLI system.

Lastly, other professionals who administer this intervention should be included in determining the benefits and limitations of the leveled literacy intervention system. The school where the data was collected for this study is a suburban school. Teachers who work in different settings should be included in a larger scale study to see if any trends can be identified with in the demographic of student participating in the study.

Summary

The Leveled Literacy Intervention system created by authors and researchers Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell is a widely used reading intervention to help students who struggle with decoding and comprehension (2010). The conclusions that were drawn in this chapter were supported by the data collection process, as well as previously conducted studies about the Leveled Literacy Intervention System. It is my hopes, that this study will be helpful to professionals who are currently using the Leveled Literacy

Intervention System, and for future professionals who will implement this intervention. While there are many strong benefits to this program, the limitations should be explored in order to strengthen the experience of the students who participate in this intervention. This will help smooth the path to becoming lifelong readers.

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