8-2012

Exploring the Use of Interactive Read Alouds to Support the Literacy Development of Fifth Graders Receiving Academic Intervention Services

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By

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August 2012

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of

The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

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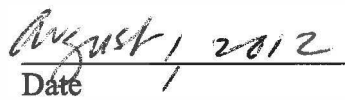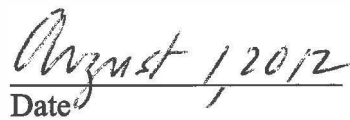
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

As Friday nears to an end and all of the elementary students have gone home, I use the last half hour of my day to sit down with my plan book and begin to create my plans for the next week. There are fifth grade planning pages, teacher's guides, and student readers spread across my desk. I open the teacher's guide (Harcourt, 2007) to determine the English Language Arts (ELA) skill my students and I will focus on next and then open the student reader (Harcourt, 2007) to pre-read the story that reinforces the skill. According to the guide the skill that we should focus on next week is developing an understanding of narrative elements (including characters, setting, problem, plot, and solution). The correlating story is *Painting my Homeland* by Deborah Akers (Harcourt, 2007). This short story is about a man who moves from Italy to his homeland, Mexico. When he returns home he paints a mural depicting the trials and tribulations experienced by his people. The mural receives mixed feelings from the public.

In addition to familiarizing myself with the skill and the story, I also review the vocabulary words targeted by the short story. After I have reviewed the story and pertinent vocabulary, I determine how I am going to target my students' development of this skill, or knowledge. Typically, I would then use this information and some of the provided activities within the Teacher's Guide to help design my lessons for the week. I provide Academic Intervention Services (AIS) support beyond what is provided in the classroom to students who struggle within the area of ELA so I

believe it is necessary to find an educational approach that will enable me to engage my students not only in the story but help them develop skills to become successful readers. In order to do this, I think back to my own time as a fifth grade student with my teacher, Mrs. M. When I reflect on my time with Mrs. M., I recall that my favorite part of the day was read-aloud. As I fill in my plan book with next week's lessons I consider how I might incorporate this reading strategy into my own instruction of my AIS students.

I am drawn to the concept of an interactive style read-aloud, which according to Fountas and Pinnell (2006) happens when "the teacher reads aloud to students; but both the teacher and the students think about, talk about, and respond to the text" (p. 216). I decide to incorporate this style read-aloud into my half hour lesson with my AIS students. In order to do this, I realize that I must include a deliberately thought out and well planned reading of the story into my lesson (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Typically, such a read aloud would consist of my reading the story with planned stops and pauses to discuss and interact with the text and my students on a deeper level than a more traditional read aloud. The premeditated pauses would serve as teaching points where I could engage the students with the reading skill determined by the teacher's guide and based on the students' needs.

With the decision to incorporate this instructional method of interactive read alouds my planning takes on a new appearance. Instead of simply opening the teacher's guide and student reader to familiarize myself with the goal of the lesson as well as the story selection, I now must become immersed in the story to determine

how I will best achieve my educational goal. Now that I have established the skill for the coming week as developing knowledge of narrative elements I begin to read the story with more of a critical eye determining where I will stop to help reinforce the narrative elements of a text.

I reopen the student reader to page 38 and begin to reread *Painting my Homeland,* marking the designated places that I believe will allow me to best exemplify and engage the students with our skill of focus. I make a mark on page 38 to remind myself to stop and discuss the main characters in addition to the secondary characters focusing on the difference between the distinctions with the students. I continue through the short story marking similar places where I will engage students with the story and work toward developing their reading strategies.

After I complete my plans for the coming week I close my plan book and neatly pack away all of the materials that I have spread across my desk, as I do so I wonder about the benefits of this style of instruction. Specifically, I wonder if, within this type of controlled setting, my students be able to interact with the story's content in such a way that will help them make gains in their understanding of a story or text? What kind of merit might interactive read-alouds have in an AIS setting?

Significance of the Problem

I believe that one of the most important outcomes of reading should be the ability to make meaning of the words on the page while being an enjoyable process that students are able to partake in as they grow in literate adults. This process of

meaning making, known as comprehension, is defined by Fountas and Pinnell (2006) as a "kind of in-the-head problem solving" that occurs before, during, and after reading the words on the page (p. 216). From my previous experience it seems that as we evolve into literate individuals engaging with this process of comprehending becomes somewhat automatic but for some students it may be quite difficult; for students who receive AIS this can be especially true. Thus, I believe that it is imperative that students are exposed to text through meaningful and deliberate activities.

The process by which we evolve into "readers" starts when we are young children having our first interactions with text by either being read to or reading on our own. I believe that the process of making meaning is very complex and as a result, requires explicit instruction to develop the skills to appropriately comprehend what is being read. By employing interactive read-alouds into my instruction, I hope to help students develop a range of comprehension strategies that will enable them to make meaning while significantly interacting with text.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the benefits of using interactive read-alouds with students who struggle with reading comprehension. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), an interactive read-aloud is the action of the teacher reading the words yet both the teacher and students are active in discussing and exploring the text. Through this method it is my hope that students will be able to

make gains in reading comprehension through the use of this engaging instructional method.

My experience with Academic Intervention Services (AIS) shows that students who are identified as requiring AIS, either through testing or teacher recommendation, often struggle with fluency, comprehension, or a combination of both. I believe that it is especially important that these students receive meaningful instruction to help them develop the skills necessary to make growth in reading comprehension or fluency. Santoro, Chard, Howard, and Baker (2008) believe that students in general education settings have been able to make growth in reading comprehension when read-aloud strategies are incorporated into the instruction they receive. Santoro et al. (2008) conducted a study to expand on previous studies conducted by Santoro in 2004 in conjunction with fellow researchers. Through this federally funded project, the researchers examined and created a read-aloud curriculum to maximize the effect of read-aloud strategies in the classroom. Their observations focused on the use of a designed read-aloud curriculum for teaching comprehension of narrative texts in first grade classrooms. They then examined the performance of students who received instruction directly from this curriculum and those who did not. As a result, the researchers indicated that "read-alouds, with explicit comprehension instruction and active, engaging discussions about text, can promote comprehension" (p. 407).

In a study of 25 elementary teachers, Fisher et al. (2004) indicated that read-aloud activities must be deliberate and purposeful. They worked with teachers in

grades three through eight who were indicated as "expert" teachers by their administrators to determine how read-alouds could be used most effectively. The findings showed that students who were given a purpose for reading were much more likely to become engaged in the meaningful text discussions conducted as part of the read-aloud.

As a result of the findings from previous studies related to read alouds, I discovered the answers, through this six week study, to the research question:

> What happens when I incorporate read- aloud activities including explicit instruction of reading comprehension into the instruction of students who receive Academic Intervention Services?

I designed this study to extend the current research related to the use of read-aloud strategies that include explicit comprehension instruction in the classroom as discussed by Santoro et al. (2008) and Fisher et al. (2004) instruction in the classroom as discussed. More specifically, I designed this study is to investigate the possible benefits of this instructional approach for students who receive academic intervention. My study aligns with my personal belief that comprehension, or understanding, is the most important result of reading. The focus of the study also aligns with my personal belief that any student can become a lifelong reader who enjoys taking in a variety of texts if he or she is supported at an early age. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) indicated that read-aloud create a shared enjoyment of reading, which is what I hope to convey through my own read-aloud activities with my

students. Through this study, I strived to help my students develop comprehension skills that they can use as lifelong readers to make meaning of a variety of texts.

I refined my skills as a researcher through the process of conducting this study. My goal was to improve my data collection skills in addition to analyzing and triangulating the data to begin to draw conclusions. I believe that conducting this study will help me develop those skills and knowledge to further determine the best research practices within the field of literacy education. I hope to be able to apply what I have learned through this research study to the ever changing and evolving world of education. By reviewing existing research in conjunction with my own, I hope to gain a solidified knowledge of best practices that can then be added to my own repertoire of instructional practices for students who struggle with reading comprehension. I strive to improve upon my own toolbox of reading strategies and therefore become a better educator in the field of literacy.

Study Approach

I used qualitative research approach for this study. As the teacher-researcher, I designed a plan to extend my knowledge of explicit read-aloud practices and their potential benefits for students who are receiving Academic Intervention Services (AIS). I used this data to inform my own instructional practices for teaching reading comprehension.

Participants

Alan, Bill, and Callie were the three participants of this study and are from a small rural school in western New York. All three had been identified as being in need to academic intervention based on their scores from last year's New York State English Language Arts (ELA) exam. Each student received a score of two out of four, which indicates each student struggled on the reading comprehension portions of the exam. The three students did not have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) nor did they receive special education services. The three students were in blended classrooms, with a combination of classified students and general education students, of about 17 students each. In addition to their classroom teachers, the students received push-in assistance from a teaching assistant (TA) during either their ELA block or mathematics block.

The three students received intervention services with me for one half hour on three days a week: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The school in which I conducted the study used the Harcourt Program (2007) for its ELA instruction. I used the intervention component of the Program as a basis for the AIS lessons.

I gathered data from the students' performance on benchmark assessments, continuous progress monitoring, and work samples. I progress monitored the students weekly by assessing the students' abilities with both a fluency passage and MAZE assessment from AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) to observe either the presence or absence of growth. I videotaped my interactions to later review and take notes each of the days the students meet with me. I used this information to chart the growth, if

any, that students make in their reading comprehension, higher level thinking, and reading fluency.

Rationale

I chose to do a study of read-alouds because the topic is of interest to me and there appears to be a limited amount of information about the use and benefits of such an activity. Fisher et al. (2004) noted that there is a "limited" amount of information regarding the most effective procedures of a read-aloud activity but does not dispute the benefit of their use in the classroom. I hoped to gain insight into the use of read-aloud as an instructional practice and the benefits, if any, such a practice holds for students, specifically students who receive academic intervention. I chose to work with Alan, Bill, and Callie because they have been identified as needing intervention, have struggled with reading comprehension, and because are part of a group with whom I work weekly.

I chose to focus primarily on comprehension because of the students' needs. Based on their test and benchmark scores, I received through the administration of the AIMSweb Benchmark and Progress Monitoring System (Pearson, 2010), they did not indicate a high need for support in fluency but rather in terms of reading comprehension. Research from authors such as Santoro, Chard, Howard, and Baker (2008) has shown that read-aloud practices can help improve the reading comprehension of students in general education settings so, I proposed to investigate the effects of read-aloud practices on students receiving academic intervention.

I proposed to engage students with texts by using read-aloud practices such as thinking aloud, creating opportunities for text based discussion, and modeling good reading behaviors. According to Albright and Ariail (2005), these are all behaviors suggested to classroom teachers in order to make the most out of the read-aloud experience. In order to do this used texts provided by the school district, which is the Harcourt Trophies series (2007), and execute careful planning of an interactive style read-aloud activity in order to engage students with the text. While I was limited in terms of the stories I could choose and the reading skill I addressed, I gave students ample opportunities to engage and interact with our Harcourt text selection. It was my hope that students would use those opportunities and apply what we have discussed and learned to their own reading experiences.

Summary

My education experiences, philosophy combined with my observations of my current students have all led me to the curiosity of what effects could read-aloud practices have on my students' reading comprehension. I wanted to offer the three students a meaningful chance to interact texts to help them develop their comprehension strategies. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) indicated that interaction before, during, and after reading aloud is key to helping students begin to develop comprehension skills. Researchers such as Santoro (2008), Fisher (2004), or Fountas and Pinnell (2006) indicate that this interactive read-aloud practice has been shown to help improve students' reading comprehension, or meaning making. Through this

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study, I wanted to uncover if, and how, I could use this practice within an academic intervention program to help my students develop their comprehension abilities. I believe that the findings from my study could be used to inform best practices not only for my instruction, as an AIS provider, but to indicate the potential benefits of read-aloud for other educators who work with students who struggling with reading comprehension.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To contextualize my research, I reviewed and synthesized literature related to read-aloud practices, best practices for providing literacy instruction to struggling readers, and best practices for literacy instruction of intermediate grade level students. Through this research, I noted that there are a variety of ways to conduct a read-aloud session. Most of the researchers indicate the need for student interaction with a text in a highly structured and guided setting. In this setting the teacher can model appropriate reading strategies and behaviors that they would like their students to develop. The concept of modeling was also noted as an important instructional practice in intermediate literacy instruction as well as the instruction provided for readers who struggle.

While the information received was plentiful, it provided for an interesting study since the benefits of read-aloud practices, especially for readers who struggle, seems to be understudied.

Read-Aloud Practices

While there are many ways to conduct a read-aloud, to me, the definition generally meant that someone was orally reading a text. Rasinski and Hoffman (2003) outlined a history of oral reading in which they note that oral reading is not a modern instructional practice but has come back into popularity since the publication of the 2000 National Reading Panel report. Oral reading was an integral part of literacy instruction since colonial times when it was a desired outcome for students to

be able to read texts orally. Since it was an entertaining pastime for families to listen to stories orally, reading aloud was a frequent practice in colonial schools. Rasinski and Hoffman also noted that as years have progressed read-aloud has become aspect of literacy instruction, although they explain that this was not always the case as education has developed. However, Rasinski and Hoffman (2003) state that indicate that they feel that oral reading has been "woefully understudied" (p. 250).

Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) share a similar belief to Rasinski and Hoffman (2003) in that they recognize the benefits of using the read-aloud instructional practice but indicate that there is a lack of information regarding how to do this effectively. In order to discover how to maximize the potential of the read-aloud Fisher et al. examined the practices of twenty-five educators who have been indicated as "expert" by their administrators. Administrators of a variety of urban schools in San Diego were instructed to select only the teachers they would consider models for other educators when it came to their read-aloud practices and had students with relatively high achievement. This process yielded 120 candidates from grades three through eight. After the researchers conducted interviews with these individuals 18 teachers were selected, three from each grade level. The researchers use video-taped interviews and observations to collect their data regarding these "expert" teachers and the practices they use while conducting a read-aloud. The researchers used a Likert-type scale to judge the teachers on their use of seven basic components including text selection, modeled fluent reading, expression and animation.. The data collected indicated that these teachers were indeed skilled at

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conducting a read-aloud but noted that a lack of practice led to less fluency readers in some of the teachers. This emphasized the necessity of practice.

In their conclusion Fisher et al. also noted that these "expert" educators used an pre-reading activity to introduce the text, which the researchers believe allowed the students to become more involved with the purpose for reading. Fisher et al. noted that since one of the purposes for reading is often enjoyment, teachers must clearly convey this message to their students despite a variety of other educational goals.

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) believe that "when students have the opportunity to hear a variety of written language read aloud, it becomes accessible to them" (p. 216). To make sure the action of reading written language aloud Fountas and Pinnell have added an additional layer; they added an "interactive" layer to the read-aloud referring to it as an *interactive read-aloud* through which the teacher reads a text aloud but "both the teacher and the students think about, talk about, and respond to the text" (p. 216). Fountas and Pinnell argued that interactive read-aloud activities have payoffs in other contexts of learning by allowing students to be on even ground and ensuring students of all reading levels are exposed to rich literary texts. Since read-alouds can be selected from levels above the students' independent reading level, the read-aloud expands the rich literary texts students of all reading levels are exposed to. According to Fountas and Pinnell, interactive read-alouds require strategic and intentional teaching; as the teacher reads there would be various planned pauses, called "embedded teaching," to discuss the text aloud as a group. For example, as a teacher is conducting a read-aloud he/she may decide to stop in the

middle of a page to discuss the meaning of some difficult language. When describing this read-aloud style Fountas and Pinnell used words such as "planned," "prepared for," "active," and "connected" to reinforce how important it is to properly and strategically plan this lesson to achieve a specific goal. For example, if the goal is to teach students skills need to make inferential predictions the teacher may plan to stop at points in the story to discuss what the language means and think aloud how they make their inferential prediction.

Beck and McKeown (2001) conducted a study designed to capture the benefits of read-alouds through which they developed the concept of "text talk." Their idea of 'text talk' is similar to the discussions, between teacher and students, that would be conducted within a Fountas and Pinnell style of an interactive read-aloud. Beck and McKeown conducted studies of kindergarten and first grade children during a read-aloud; they observed the behaviors and responses of these students and organized them into charts noting the specific response to both recall and higher level thinking questions. Beck and McKeown (2001) noted that children naturally use the pictures and draw upon their background knowledge, including their own experiences, to help derive meaning from the text. However, they believe that these natural reactions may actually hinder the students' ability to derive meaning based on the text itself and so Beck and McKeown cite the importance of teacher interaction through prompting. The prompts need to promote a higher level thinking rather than scratch the surface of the text which could result in the false impression that comprehension is taking place. For example, instead of asking the students to

simply recall an action that a character has made you may ask the students to consider the consequences for the character as a result of that action. With these beliefs in mind "text talk" was born. "Text talk" is characterized by open questions posed by the teacher during reading that require the students to think about the ideas of the story and connect with them. One example of such a question would be: how does a certain character fit in with what we already know about him or her? Beck and McKeown felt that this instructional method helps to foster comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

Morrison and Wlodarczyk (2009) described the benefits of engagement within the read-aloud instructional method by citing the transactional theory. They cite Rosenblatt (1978), noting that she had made the assertion that reading is a process by which a reader must transact with the text in order to make meaning. Morrison and Wlodarczyk cite the idea that meaning does not lie within only within the text nor does it lie solely with the reader but it is when these two things transact that true meaning can be made. Morrison and Wlodarczyk discuss the transactional benefits of using the read-aloud emphasizing the benefits of using thought provoking activities before, during and after the oral reading of a text resulting the potential for improved reading comprehension. One sample activity that allows students to connect with a text is a discussion web; a discussion web is a graphic organizer that allows students to examine different sides of an issue, making statements as to whether they agree or disagree with a character's actions. The students can then come to their own

conclusions based on these thoughts. This allows the students to interact with a text in order to make deeper meaning.

Reading Strategies to Use in Intermediate Grade Levels

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) suggested a variety of instructional methods that they believe will help students develop fluency and reading comprehension skills. In addition to the interactive read-aloud they cited book clubs, shared and performed reading, and guided reading as some recommended practices.

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) suggested book clubs are way for students to become engaged in reading and the discussion of reading, which can lead to students developing better and deeper comprehension of the text. The typical group size should be about six students but in the intermediate grades, the group could be enlarged to up to eight students. Fountas and Pinnell indicated that "groups of this size have enough diversity to make the discussion interesting while providing plenty of opportunity for all students to participate" (p. 295).

Another key component to successful book clubs, according to Fountas and Pinnell (2006) is the text selection. It is imperative that the text is appropriate for thes' student reading level and is about a topic in which the students are interested. Fountas and Pinnell note that no one will want to discuss something they are not interested in. Like most of Fountas and Pinnell's other suggestions, book clubs work best on a set schedule and follow a specific structure.   A teacher may wish to assign a role to each group member in order to facilitate a successful learning experience

(Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Some examples of these roles include *the leader* who begins the group discussion or *the facilitator* who sets the scene for the discussion. Fountas and Pinnell also note that assessment can play an integral role in book clubs through student self-assessment and the teacher's assessment of both the content and the process. They believe that the reflection is just as important as the process.

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) discussed instruction related to shared reading, choral reading, and reader's theater. They define shared reading as an activity that is led by the teacher in which the students read from a large text, chart or book, as a group while the teacher uses a pointer to guide them through the reading. They define choral reading as a similar activity except that students have individual copies of the text they are reading as a group. They define reader's theater as students receiving scripts and parts that they read in order to bring the text to life. This form of reading, despite its name, does not require props or costumes. Fountas and Pinnell noted that shared reading may be better suited for the primary grades (kindergarten through second) but that choral reading and reader's theater may be better suited for students up to eighth grade. In this way, Fountas and Pinnell concur with Holdaway (1979), the developer of the shared-reading experience, as he highlights the benefits of using the shared-reading experience in the first three years of schooling.

Fountas and Pinnell (2006) indicated that guided reading is a practice in which a teacher brings together small groups of students who are similar in their reading development to examine texts. Through this group meeting the teacher facilitates the development of reading strategies. Often guided reading is an aspect of reading

workshop that allows teachers to work more intensively with a small group of students while the other students engage in other reading activities.

Tankersley (2005) outlined some beneficial practices for helping students, from grades four through eight, develop their fluency and comprehension. She highlights how important it is for teachers to model good reading behaviors for students. In order for students to develop into fluent readers they must hear what fluent reading actually sounds like. Tankersley believes that modeling of smooth, expressive reading should occur at least once daily even if only for five to ten minutes. She indicates, like Fountas and Pinnell (2006), that performing texts such as poems and the use of reader's theater are beneficial forms of helping students develop reading fluency. Repeated readings and echo readings are also among her list of effective strategies. Not only did Tankersley emphasize the strategies as a form of practice she examined the effectiveness of feedback on a student's growth. Tankersley indicated that immediate and direct feedback is imperative to student's fluency development. One method of feedback that Tankersley recommends is taped readings.

Tankersley (2005) also outlined several beneficial practices for helping students develop their comprehension skills. She noted the importance of students having adequate background knowledge. And she indicated students' use of pre-reading activities as having high importance. One example she offers is the use of a K-W-L chart that allows students to discuss what they know about a topic and what they would like to know prior to engaging in a text. In the during reading phase she

pointed out that partner reading, thinking aloud, stopping points, and summarization can help students continue to develop their reading comprehension skills. In the after reading phase she indicated activities that will help students construct and demonstrate the meaning of a text, suggesting, for example, that students teach a lesson, write a poem, or retell as demonstrations of their knowledge.

As students progress and leave the primary school years the purpose of reading changes (Fang, 2008). Fang (2008) cites some of these changes as students move from more of a learning to read mode into a reading to learn mode. He notes that students begin to experience expository, informational, texts which are different from the texts they have been used to reading. Fang noted that there are a variety of reasons that expository texts are more difficult for students to read and understand including a different language style than students have become used to and they have had very limited exposure to these texts in primary school grades. Fang believes that students need further instruction to develop the reading skills that are necessary for the reading of expository texts. He suggested that students be exposed to expository texts even in the primary grades through the use of quality expository texts that are designed for the students' age level, such as trade books.

Worthy (2001) demonstrated a principle similar to Fang (2008) by showing that the purpose of reading, and writing, changes as we age. She noted that she spends time reading e-mails, the newspaper, information texts including the use of the index, and several informational websites. Worthy indicated that these texts were different from those experienced in the primary grade levels. While she did not

recommend eliminating fiction she called upon teachers to help shift students to become more prepared for what they will experience as adults. While Fang (2008) elaborated on this concept in further discussing the non-familiarity of these texts, Worthy suggested some solutions when exposing students to expository, or informational, texts. Her primary suggestion was to consider the interests of the students when selecting the informational texts they will begin to read. The teacher can reflect the interests of the students through the content as well as the structure of the text. Worthy offered a list of possible types of texts that could be present in a classroom including but not limited to: reference books, student authored works, manuals, and school publications.

Practices for Readers who Struggle

High Interest Reading

Tankersley (2005) highlighted the importance of motivation when it comes to readers who struggle. She indicated the importance of helping students associate effort with achievement since individuals often connect success with three things: ability, effort, or luck. Students who struggle with reading need to feel that success is possible. Tankersley (2005) indicated that one way teachers can help students who struggle feel successful and motivated is by allowing them to have a stake in selecting the texts they read. She outlined the concept of high interest reading by which an adult takes a selected text and tape records, in five to ten minute segments. Once the

student has listened to the text enough to feel comfortable reading on his/her own, the teacher may pair the student with a partner to read the chosen text.

Intensive Reading and Writing Program

Yadegari and Ryan (2002) examined the effects of using the Intensive Reading and Writing (IRW) program with students in their New York City school who were reading significantly below grade level. They based their judgments of success on the California Achievement Tests (CAT). The goal of the IRW was to help these students begin to read at grade level and instill a love of reading within the readers who were struggling. There were several components of this program designed to help the students reach a new level of achievement. In order to be successful within this program, students needed to be immersed in authentic reading opportunities that employed several strategies. The authors begin by detailing the necessity of scaffolding in which teachers "bridge the gap between what students already know and already can do and what they need to accomplish" (p. 32). Yadegari and Ryan highlight the importance of modeling. Unlike Tankersley (2005) they do not note the importance of modeling fluency instead they see the benefit of modeling on helping students choose the texts that are just right for them to read. Similar to the concept behind guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006), IRW is centered on "needs based instruction" by which students are grouped in small groups that allows the teacher to target a specific skill with which the students are struggling. Other components of the IRW program include a book rich environment,

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home/school connection, cross-age reading, and motivation (Yadegari & Ryan, 2002). Over the course of two years, Yadegari and Ryan noted that students receiving this intensive program were able to score at or above grade level in reading.

Phonemic Awareness and Fluency Instruction

Reynolds, Wheldhall and Madelaine (2011) synthesized a variety of information to determine interventions that will best help readers who struggle to develop their comprehension strategies. They noted some of the National Reading Panel's (NRP) findings from 2000 in the instruction of phonemic awareness and phonics. Reynolds et al. pointed out that students who receive systematic instruction in phonics become better decoders and spellers, which ultimately lead to better reading comprehension. Not only was this evident in early readers but the trend was noted in students of higher grade levels. They cite the NRP as making the assertion that improved reading fluency helps students to better develop reading comprehension skills. Reynolds et al. also indicate the importance of explicit teaching when it comes to the concepts of vocabulary and comprehension.

Enhancing Scripted Reading Programs

Margolis and McCabe (2006) examined scripted lessons or specific programs as it applies to reading instruction. While they do note that they can be beneficial, especially for teachers who are not well versed in literacy education, they indicate that many teachers they have talked have expressed the desire to eliminate scripted

programs. If this is done Margolis and McCabe note the importance of professional development on literacy instruction. Although these teachers do not have the control to eliminate these scripted programs, Margolis and McCabe indicate that they *can* control the student's level of motivation.

Margolis and McCabe (2006) shared similar views to Tankersley (2005) as well as Yadegari and Ryan (2002) when it comes to the power of motivation. It is common that students who struggle will resist reading so it is imperative that teachers motivate these learners to become engaged in the process of reading (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Margolis and McCabe discuss five major research-based principles to developing reader motivation. Principle one promotes the use of materials that offer the opportunity for successful performance. The materials and assignments that students receive must allow for them to reach success with moderate effort; if a student feels they are likely to be successful, they are more likely to connect with the assignment or reading. This might mean making some alterations to assignments or readings to reach a students reading level. The second principle indicates that teachers need to increase their expectations by ensuring that students have accurate and appropriate background knowledge and vocabulary. Through this principle, Margolis and McCabe demonstrate that students who have some relevant background and knowledge of related vocabulary, to a specific topic, the more likely they are to be successful in regard to their assignments and readings. The third principle creates a link between student interests and goals to instruction by drawing the connection that if the students are working with materials that interest them, they are more likely

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to become motivated and engaged. The fourth principle offers the idea that teachers can temporarily use extrinsic motivation to inspire their students. Margolis and McCabe suggest that it can be appropriate to motivate a student with rewards however, must know when they are no longer a necessity. And the fifth principle indicates that we must teach struggling readers to make appropriate and facilitative contributions by meaningfully participating in class discussions. Applying these principles it is imperative to developing motivation but, it is just have integral to adapt these principles to suit the needs of the students who struggle with reading. It is important to recognize the importance of motivation when helping students develop reading strategies and these principles can be used to help supplement scripted reading programs in order to facilitate student learning.

Conclusion

My review of the literature related to read-alouds, intermediate literacy instruction, and strategies for instruction readers who struggle has indicated that there are some clear benefits to the use of read-aloud strategies. Through my research, I have noted that some read-aloud activities promote the use of explicit teaching, or modeling. Research, in regard to successful instructional practices, has shown that students benefit from those modeling practices. Read-aloud practices have been linked to promote higher level thinking through an interactive reading of a text in which discussions are prompted and facilitated.

There seems to be limited research that points to beneficial instructional methods for teaching readers who struggling in an Academic Intervention setting especially the use of read-alouds. This presents an interesting opportunity for my own research; studies are needed to illustrate beneficial practices for readers who struggling who receive Academic Intervention specifically around the intervention component of the Harcourt Trophies series.

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

Participants

Alan, Bill, and Callie were the three participants for this study. All participants are Caucasian, fifth graders. Bill is an eleven year old boy who scored 2 out of 4 on the New York State (NYS) English Language Arts (ELA) Assessment. In addition to receiving intervention for English Language Arts, Alan also receives support for math.

Alan is a eleven year old boy who also scored a 2 on the NYS ELA Assessment. While he received support for math last academic year, he no longer requires, as a result of his NYS Mathematics Assessment scores, Academic Intervention in the field of math.

Callie is a ten year old girl who scored a 2 on the NYS ELA Assessment. Like Alan, Callie received support for mathematics last academic year but no longer required continued support. As a result of these test scores and state mandates, all three of these students are required to receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS) for ELA.

Context of the Study

I conducted this study in a small rural school in which grades kindergarten through eighth are in the same building. The elementary portion (k-6) of the school contains approximately 270 students with two teachers per grade level, except sixth grade, which has one. The participants' general education classrooms contain 19 to 20 students with one classroom teacher, and are blended classrooms with students

receiving Special Education Services, English as a Second Language (ESL) services, and others who also receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Students in each classroom receive the services of a teaching assistant (TA) during either their English Language Arts or mathematics block. Most classrooms may also have a teacher's aide present during small portions of the day.

Alan, Bill, and Callie leave their classroom for one half hour on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to receive services in ELA from me in a room I share with the pre-k teacher. Because the pre-k program ends before the lunch hour begins the pre-k students are not a distraction to Alan, Bill and Callie.

In my room, the students sit at a horseshoe table in front of the whiteboard. I have filled the bulletin boards with informational posters that serve as helpful tips or reminders in addition to pieces of completed student work. I provided each student with a student reader, which is kept in the classroom, and on a weekly basis throughout the study, each student created vocabulary flashcards of the words targeted by the text. The weekly vocabulary words were visible to all in a pocket chart on the front whiteboard. I organized the room into individual baskets that accommodate the materials for the various grade levels that use this space in receiving their own intervention services. All of the everyday supplies were accessible to both me and the students.

Teachers in the school district use the Harcourt Program (2007) for their English Language Arts (ELA) instruction. The program is equipped with an intervention component that is designed to support what the teachers are doing within

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the classroom. The stories in the intervention's student reader are shorter than the general program but include similar characters, plot, vocabulary, and often a similar topic. Each story within the general program is designed to help target the development of a certain reading comprehension skill, such as making inferences; the intervention stories are also designed to target that same comprehension skill. The teacher's guide outlines how the teachers are to use the intervention readers in terms of correlation with the general stories and provides possible activities to support the development of students' reading comprehension skills.

Typically the general education teachers will read one story per week and therefore the student will focus on one story during all three days of the week in which they receive AIS. Since Alan, Bill, and Callie met with me on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, we typically followed this schedule:

Monday: I led the students through the development of their vocabulary

flashcards and introduced the skill designated for the week

Wednesday: students read the story as a whole group or independently

Friday: students completed an activity to demonstrate their knowledge of the

ELA skill that was the focus for the week

My Positionality as the Researcher

I am a 25 year old Caucasian female teacher's assistant (TA) living in a western New York town. Currently I work in the Literacy Lab of a small rural school, providing Academic Intervention Services (AIS) to individual students who

have been identified as struggling within the areas of ELA and/or math. After receiving my bachelor's degree and childhood teaching certificate to teach grades one through six, I immediately began substituting in the school district where I student taught.

I began my current position last school year as a long term substitute and was later offered the position, by the principal, as a permanent placement. Through this position I have had the opportunity to work with students from kindergarten to sixth grade. My schedule includes both push-in situations, in which I go into the general education classrooms to provide assistance as needed by the classroom teacher during their ELA or math block, and pull-out situations, in which the students come to my classroom to receive services. I have five, pull-out AIS groups: kindergarten, second grade, third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade; each of these groups contains one to four members. I also work with a variety of reading intervention programs such as Science Research Associates Corrective Reading Program (1999), Wilson (2006), and the Harcourt Intervention Program (2007).

My philosophy as an educator is centered on my belief that all students have the ability to learn. I hold the belief that all students learn through different methods and strategies and that instruction needs to be tailored to fit their needs. I find that this philosophy is what leads me through my instructional practices on a daily basis. I work primarily with students who have been identified as struggling so recognizing their unique needs and differences is imperative when providing their intervention. My goal is to help all students to reach their fullest potential.

I am also in the final year of my work as a graduate student at The College at Brockport, SUNY in the childhood literacy program. My work throughout the classes in the program and in addition to the observations I have made in my job, have led me to this topic of research. I had learned about the power of the read-alouds and wanted to investigate their use through my daily instruction. I believe that read-aloud situations typically engage the students in reading since it can be an enjoyable experience. I have not worked with many children who like being read to so I feel that if I embedded meaningful instruction in the process, such as demonstrative thinking aloud, read-alouds would have the potential to help my students develop the necessary skills to comprehend text.

Data Collection

I began the study by collecting benchmark data from the three students' New York State ELA exam, the AIMsweb benchmark assessment (2010) administered by the teacher and teaching assistants in the Literacy Lab at the beginning of the school year, and any progress monitoring assessments, which are given periodic assessments used to monitor any potential growth through AIS, administered prior to the start of the study. This information allowed me to construct a baseline of information for each student.

During the study, I continued to assess the students through periodic progress monitoring that was to be done weekly; as part of the progress monitoring process I administered a three minute MAZE Comprehension assessment and one minute oral

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fluency reading assessment. I also made regular observations by videotaping the weekly AIS lessons to watch afterward and record my notes. In addition, I collected work samples from each student as activities were completed as part of the interactive reading.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data I collected I began by reading the information, I then reread, and read once more. In chapter four, I have included a representation of the weekly lessons in which I detail the decisions I made related to instruction, the students' responses to the lessons, our interactions throughout the lessons, as well as the results of the weekly assessments. When viewed across the six weeks, this various components combine to reveal some of the benefits of using interactive read-alouds with students who struggle with reading comprehension.

Procedures

Each of the six weeks looked very similar in layout; the differences were in the stories, vocabulary and skill targeted for the week. Despite the fact that the six weeks are very similar it was imperative that I made sure to monitor and adjust my lessons as necessary to ensure that my lessons were the most meaningful for my students. This meant that I might have had to repeat or spend more time on a specific topic or skill. So, although the plan for the six weeks was strategically planned it was important that I monitor student progress and adjust my lessons when necessary.

Before I began the six weeks of data collection, I asked and received consent from each student's parents (see Appendices A and B). In addition, each student gave his or her assent (see Appendix C). The six weeks of the study unfolded as follows:

Week One

      I progress monitored the students using a MAZE Comprehension assessment and Oral Reading Fluency assessment from the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) system on Monday. Following their assessment I guided the students as they created their vocabulary flashcards for the week for the words: encourages, illustrating, series, charcoal, pastels. I also introduced the skill that will be the focus of the week which addresses word relationships, more specifically on synonyms. I lead a discussion that introduced the story that was read aloud from the Harcourt Student Reader (2007) called *My Imaginary World*, by Istvan Banyai. They were guided in noticing synonyms within the story in addition to synonyms for the focus and difficult vocabulary. On Wednesday the students listened to the story read aloud to them which included planned stops to identify a variety of words that would later be discussed to discover possible synonyms. A graphic organizer (see Appendix D) was introduced to help students keep these words organized. The reading and discussion of the story had the potential to continue into the Friday lesson, which also included an activity allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge of this week's skill: synonyms. The activity for this week was for students to identify a variety of

synonyms for a variety of words, chosen from the story, using a thesaurus and the graphic organizer. I collected the final product.

Week Two

I progress monitored the students using a MAZE Comprehension assessment and Oral Reading Fluency assessment from the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) system on Monday. Following their assessment I guided the students as they created their vocabulary flashcards for the week for the words: pawn shop, produce, errands, numerous, international, gravelly. I also introduced the skill that was the focus which, for this week, was fact vs. opinion. I briefly introduced the story that was read aloud from the Harcourt Student Reader (2007) called *With Love from Ella* by Susan M. Fischer. On Wednesday the students had the story read to them. I planned to stop on various pages to illustrate the difference between facts and opinions. I used that information to demonstrate how I can use facts to formulate my own opinion about a person or thing. The reading and discussion of the story had the potential to continue into the Friday lesson, which also included an activity allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge of this week's skill. However, extenuating circumstances prevented the group from meeting Friday so the lesson came to a close on the following Monday. The activity for this week was a worksheet (see Appendix E) in which the students identified whether a statement was a fact or an opinion; they were also asked to write two statements that were fact and two statements that were opinion. I collected the final product.

Week Three

I progress monitored the students using a MAZE Comprehension assessment and Oral Reading Fluency assessment from the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) system on Monday. Since the group was unable to meet on the previous Friday the students were asked to complete the Fact vs. Opinion worksheet (see Appendix E) as a demonstration of the knowledge they developed regarding facts and opinions. Following the abbreviated activity I guided the students as they created their vocabulary flashcards for the week for the words: flexibility, migrant, timid, thrived, scholarship, devote, apprentice. On Wednesday I introduced the focus skill for this week which addressed the identification of main idea and details. I read aloud, from the Harcourt Student Reader (2007), *Lourdes Lopez: Ballet Star* by Doris Licameli. The students had the story read to them with planned stops on several pages supporting the identification of the main idea and supporting details. The reading and discussion of the story had the potential to continue into the Friday lesson, which also included an activity allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge of this week's skill. The activity for this week would be to read a familiar story from the Harcourt Student reader (2007) entitled *A Fish Tale* by Sydnie Meltzer Kleinheimer and identify the main idea of the story complete with supporting details. I introduced a graphic organizer (see Appendix F) that would help the student organizer their thoughts as they completed this assignment. I collected the graphic organizer.

Week Four

I progress monitored the students using a MAZE Comprehension assessment and Oral Reading Fluency assessment from the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) system on Monday. Following their assessment I guided the students as they created their vocabulary flashcards for the week for the words: campaign, residence, obnoxious, endorse, and graffiti. I also introduced the skill that was the focus for the week which addressed comparing and contrasting. I briefly introduced the story that would be read aloud this week, from the Harcourt Student Reader (2007), called *Certain Steps* by Charlene Norman. I would be guiding the students in noticing similarities and differences between the main characters Al and Murphy who are both students with very different priorities in regard to school issue. On Wednesday the students listened to the majority of the story as I stopped on several pages that highlight the similarities and/or differences character traits of the main characters. This activity required the students to synthesize actions into character traits. I introduced a Venn Diagram to develop organization of the similarities and differences. An author visit prevented the students from meeting on Friday this week so, I asked the students to read the final two pages independently and add addition character traits to the Venn Diagram based on the information they gathered from the character's actions. I collected each of the Venn Diagrams at the end of the session for further review.

Week Five

I progress monitored the students using a MAZE Comprehension assessment and Oral Reading Fluency assessment from the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) system on Monday. Following their assessment I guided the students as they created their vocabulary flashcards for the week for the words: polio, decipher, astonished, immobility, dismay, and despised. I also introduced the skill that will be the focus for the week which was identifying the author's purpose; the students were asked to share their previous knowledge about author's purpose. I briefly introduced the story that was read aloud this week, from the Harcourt student reader (2007), called *Quest for a Better World* by Carol Storment. On Wednesday the students listened to the story being read to them with planned to stops to support the identification of the author's purpose. The reading and discussion of the story had the potential to continue into the Friday lesson, which also included an activity allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge of this week's skill. The activity for this week allowed the students to demonstrate their knowledge by reading a familiar story from the student reader called *An Encounter with Space People* by Jeanette Mara and complete a journal entry to detail what they felt the author's purpose was and why. I collected these journal entries.

Week Six

I progress monitored the students using a MAZE Comprehension assessment and Oral Reading Fluency assessment from the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) system on

Monday. Following their assessment I guided the students as they created their vocabulary flashcards for the week for the words: submitted, refinery, grade, partition, insulated, prowls, and muffle. I also introduced the skill that will be the focus which is comparing and contrasting; this discussion was somewhat of a review since we practiced this skill in earlier weeks. I briefly introduced the story that was read aloud, from the Harcourt student reader (2007), this week called *Pete's Great Invention* by Linda Lott. On Wednesday the students listened to the story read aloud including planned to stops that allowed for me to help gather information that would be used later for a comparison of the "super alarm clock" and a regular alarm clock. The reading and discussion of the story had the potential to continue into the Friday lesson, which also included an activity allowing the students to demonstrate their knowledge of this week's skill. The activity the students completed was a comparison of two characters, using a Venn Diagram. The students were to list similarities and differences between the main character in this week's story and the main character from last week's story. I collected the finished Venn Diagrams for further assessment.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

As the teacher-researcher, it was my intent to maintain an ethical and unbiased study. I was committed to conducting observations and gathering benchmark and progress monitoring data without bias by being aware of my personal philosophies and my personal relationships with each of the students. I was an objective teacher-

researcher who analyzed and reported the students' behaviors and their performance as observed and assessed during the course of the study. Since the results of this study had the potential to alter my instructional practices it was vital that I took careful and deliberate measures to ensure authenticity, accuracy, validity and reliability. To ensure the trustworthiness of my findings I collected data through a variety of methods. I used video-taped observations, anecdotal notes, benchmark scores, progress monitoring scores, and student work samples. I engaged in persistent observation of my students by video recording each of the read-aloud lessons. I ensured transferability by detailing the descriptions of my students and the research context. These detailed descriptions also ensure the dependability of the findings.

Limitations

One limitation of this study may have been the six week time frame. Because I attempted to test the benefits of a specific instructional method for students who typically struggle reading this may not have been enough time to truly notice any potential improvement in the reading comprehension of my students. Another limitation of this study was the amount of participants. Because I work with small groups of students, three was the largest amount of participants I had the potential to use in this study. This may not have been a large enough number students to be representative of the benefits read-alouds could have for all students receiving AIS; however, I believe the findings are significant and I am refraining from generalizing to all AIS contexts.

Also, the process the school district requires me to use in order progress monitor my students may serve as a limitation. The AIMsweb MAZE assessment (Pearson, 2010) is a cloze style procedure and is not designed to match the skill focused upon within the Harcourt Intervention series (2007). I did not generate these assessments and as a result I did not directly assess the students' abilities with the weekly skill, instead I used a much more general assessment.

Summary

Three participants, who receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS) as a result of state assessment scores, participated in this study in which I examined the potential benefits of the read-aloud instructional practice within the AIS setting. I aligned the design of this study with my own personal beliefs of literacy education. While the study had a few limitations such as the time frame and amount of participants, my goal was to reveal the potential benefits of using read-alouds in intervention situations. Through my collection of data such as progress monitoring, observations, and work samples I began to see patterns that demonstrated some of the benefits of using the interactive read-aloud instructional practice with students who receive Academic Intervention Services.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter provides a summary of the lesson plan and experiences that the students and I underwent as we worked through the six weeks of interactive read-aloud lessons. Each week details the specific focus skill, targeted vocabulary and lesson plan content that each of the three students experienced. The six weeks are presented by the three days that I met with the group for approximately thirty minutes at a time. On Monday, I assessed the students using the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) fluency and comprehension probes. Each student responded differently to each assessment, each week, which is reflected through a thorough description of the students' scores and observe reading behaviors. While the AIMsweb assessment is not designed to measure specific aspects of a reader's fluency other than words that can be read correct in one minute, I took notes to indicate how the students sounded during their oral reading. On Wednesday the students participated in the interactive read-aloud lesson. I designed this differently to target each focus skill; this took on a different format each week. On Friday the students took part in an activity that I designed to help them demonstrate their developing knowledge of the focus skill we had worked on earlier in the week. Again, this activity was different each week.

Week One

Week one began on Monday January 30, 2012 and ended on Friday February 3, 2012.

Monday

On Monday, I assessed each participant using AIMsweb probe for fluency (Pearson, 2010) and the Maze for comprehension (Pearson, 2010). Tables 4.1 and 4.2 summarize the results.

Table 4.1: Fluency Probe for Week One

	Words Read Correct	**Errors**
Bill	146	2
Alan	168	3
Callie	102	0

Figure 4.1 is an excerpt from the passage that I used to assess each student on his or her fluency.

Figure 4.1: Probe 11

Kirby never had any money for candy, but his friends always did.

Every afternoon on his walk home from school, Kirby would follow his

friends down the sidewalk and across the street to the candy shop.

There were trays of candy set up in rows in the front display window.

There were chocolate kisses and licorice sticks. There were jelly

beans, salted peanuts, and candy corn. There was so much candy, but

Kirby could never afford anything.

Sometimes his friends would give him a piece of candy corn or a chunk of chocolate, but most of the time they forgot to share.

During the assessment, each student read for one minute, each reaching a different point in the passage and with a different level of fluency. In the context of this assessment fluency was determined primarily based on how many words the student read correct in one minute. However, I listened to the rate at which the student read in addition to how properly they phrase sentences and read with expression. While only the number of words correct and incorrect is formally recorded in the AIMsweb system, I made notes as to the other aspects I was looking for. Bill read very quickly and often ignored the punctuation such as commas and period, reading through the text as if it were one run-on sentence. He would pause in inappropriate places which caused his phrasing of the passage to sound awkward and forced. He would read with expression but often in inappropriate places, such as in places where the punctuation did not indicate a question. He made two errors by misreading or ignoring "licorice" and "counter."

Alan also read as if he were trying to "beat the clock." He began reading the passage with appropriate expression, by placing emphasis on appropriate words, which promptly disappeared as he began to read at a quicker pace. Similar to Bill, Alan ignored the punctuation, such as commas and periods, seemingly in an effort to

read as fast as possible and made the most errors of the three students. He made three errors by misreading or ignoring the words "when," "counter," and "home."

Callie read the passage with no errors, meaning she did not incorrectly identify or ignore any of the words, and paid more attention to the punctuation by pausing for commas and periods. Callie read much more smoothly, paying careful attention to the punctuation by pausing for commas and periods; her reading did not make the passage seem as though it were one, long run-on sentence. While at the beginning of the passage, she attempted to read with expression, her tone reverted back to monotone as she progressed.

I used the results from this assessment to help determine what aspects I would target in my own modeling.

Table 4.2: MAZE Comprehension for Week One

	Words Correct	**Errors**
Bill	23	2
Alan	19	0
Callie	12	3

In order to assess comprehension, I used the AIMsweb MAZE (Pearson, 2010). Figure 4.2 is an excerpt from the assessment in which, upon reaching the bolded words, the students would circle the word that made the most sense within the passage.

Figure 4.2: Probe 26

*There was a creek that ran through the bottom of Susan's family's pasture. The creek was filled with frogs, **(one, pins, fish)**, and flowers. It was shallow, shady **(pet, and, or)** very inviting on hot summer days **(for, was, with)** the weeping willows growing along the **(feet, edge, young)** of it, hanging their branches down **(over, out, with)** the water.*

*Susan and her sisters **(clear, soak, spent)** a lot of time down at **(long, the, an)** creek during the summer. They would **(run, bare, pack)** picnic lunches and eat them on **(an, the, will)** banks of the creek as they **(watched, willow, summer)** the cows in the pasture and **(don't, they, their)** father on his tractor.*

I administered this assessment in a three minute time frame; each student completed the assessment independently. Each student used all three minutes and displayed several actions of an active reader. For example, I observed their eyes moving across the page from left to right and at times each student used his or her pencil to indicate where he or she was in the passage. While none of them finished the entire passage, they all ended in different points of the passage.

Alan made no errors in the reading of this passage. Bill made errors by not circling answers for two sets of bolded parenthesis. It appears as though he skipped a line in his reading since both of these errors were made on the same line. Callie made

three errors by circling incorrect words for the passage. Her first error was circling "for" instead of "was." Her consecutive errors were circling "feet" instead of "edge" and "run" instead of "back." None of these errors would have made sense in the context of the passage. She may have been rushing in order to get farther in the passage.

Vocabulary Flashcards

After the students finished the assessments, I asked them to participate in the activity of making vocabulary flashcards. The words were indicated by the Harcourt program (Beck et. al, 2007) as being target words to review before reading the story of the week. The words for this week were: encourages, illustrating, series, charcoal, and pastels. The students had already reviewed the definitions of the words with their general education teachers; however, I was reviewing the words with the students to offer them additional exposure and opportunity for practice. This was a typical routine for Monday in AIS; the students were accustomed to this procedure.

On this day, I noticed that Alan made several attempts at sidetracking this activity by bringing up a variety of non-academically related topics such as football or recent movies. He seemed to use any opportunity to change the subject, especially if the word or definition would allow for it. For example, he used the word series to begin talking about the *Twilight* movie series. Callie was quick to begin to participate in his conversations and become sidetracked. I reminded them both of the task and they both quickly returned to it.

Once the students had completed their flashcards, I asked them to lay their flashcards out in front of them for a review of pronunciation and definition. I give them a word and they repeated it back to me, on the third repetition instead of the word they offer the definition of the word. Below is a sample of this interaction:

Teacher: Mrs. Boyst: Series

Students: Alan, Bill, and Callie: Series

T: Series

S: Series

T: Series

S: A number of things coming one after another.

It is my expectation that students will complete this task in unison. Bill and Callie were able to adjust their pace so they were reading along with one another but Alan at a very quick pace that did not allow the others to read in time with him. When I reminded to slow down and to stay in unison with his group mates, his tone of voice became very irritated. My goal by doing this is to familiarize the students with words that might present them with some difficulty so when they are encountered within the text they are able to successfully read them and make sense of what the author is saying.

Introduction of Focus Skill

The final aspect of Monday's plan included a brief introduction into the skill for the week: word relationships – synonyms. To begin, I asked the students, "What

is a synonym?" I did not get a response from any of the students. At that reaction, I then prompted with "They are two words with a certain type of relationship to one another." Immediately following the prompt Callie's eyes widened as if a light bulb had come on above her head and she said, "Two words that …." but was unable to complete her thought. Looking a bit deflated she gave up.

I then told the group that synonyms are words that have a similar meaning. At this Bill said, "Like car and motorcycle." He was heading into the right direction so to further the lesson and solidify our thoughts of synonyms we created a list on the whiteboard (see Figure 4.3). I began by adding the example *large* and *big* to the list it seemed as though the students had a breakthrough as they became very active in constructing the list. After several examples, I presented each of the students with a thesaurus. I then asked what this "book" was I was immediately presented with the unison response "A thesaurus." I asked the students to consider "how we could use the thesaurus," to which Alan responded with "it's like a dictionary." He further explained that you would look alphabetically to find the word you are looking for. Satisfied with their knowledge of how to use a thesaurus, I began to use it to contribute to the list on the whiteboard. Figure 4.3 is our list.

Figure 4.3: Synonyms
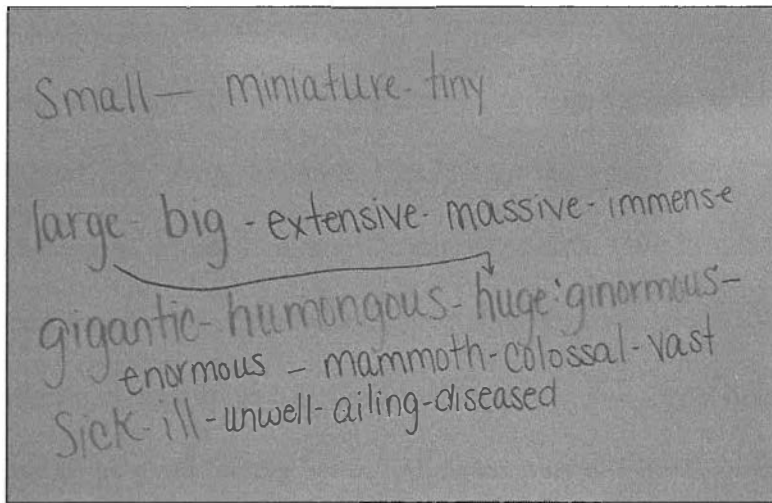
Our lesson ended as we ran out of time so, I closed with a brief explanation of Wednesday's task.

Wednesday

On Wednesday, I conducted interactive read-aloud activity with Alan and Bill. Callie was absent. Because the focus for the week was on synonyms, I chose to stop during the reading and discuss some of the words that I thought might be less familiar. I began to build a list of words we would then search for synonyms using the thesaurus. I read *My Imaginary World,* by Istvan Banyai from the Harcourt student reader (2007) aloud to the students. This story was a short autobiographical tale of how Istvan Banyai became an artist. He discussed the factors that helped develop his creativity and what he was able to accomplish as an artist/illustrator.

During the reading, Alan and Bill appeared as though they were actively listening despite their relaxed posture in their chairs. As I read they nodded to indicate they were listening and when I stopped and asked a question they were able to contribute to the discussion with appropriate comments. For example, the first word I stopped to discuss was "vivid":

> Mrs. Boyst: Where might you hear this word?
>
> Alan offered the following synonyms as an explanation "creative, color"
>
> Mrs. Boyst: Those are some possible synonyms but where might you hear this word?
>
> Bill: In art class.

From this brief interaction it was obvious to me that Bill had paid careful attention to my question. I also adjusted my teaching based on Alan's answer, which I interpreted as either a misunderstanding of the meaning for the word "vivid" or a misunderstanding of the definition of synonym, which we had very briefly reviewed prior to beginning reading. I noticed that Alan instead of offering synonyms he was offering examples of the words.

As I continued reading, I stopped at a short passage that contained the words "old' and "ancient." I asked the students, 'do you think these words are synonyms?" Each of them shook their heads to indicate 'yes' without further discussion. Although, we decided that these words could be synonyms I wanted them to consider the different connotation these words may have. So, I asked, "do you get the same

feeling from each of these words?" Callie said "No," but could not elaborate why. I prompted them by asking, "What do you think of something when it is "old" and what do you think when you hear "ancient?" Alan said, "Ancient means something is really, really old." By the end of the discussion I felt the students understood what I had aimed for them to. I further stopped at words such as 'scary," "funny," "finally," and "start." I chose these words because I felt they would be good words to find and discuss synonyms for. They were familiar to the students and may lend themselves to developing our knowledge of synonyms. The discussions for these words were either brief or did not exist at all. We added all of these words to the list that we would later use a thesaurus in order to further elaborate.

We began to discuss the words on the list in context of the text, at first; however, when broadening the discussion we began to look at other possible synonyms. In order to alleviate confusion during the discussion, I reminded the two boys that synonyms are two words that have similar meanings. Bill was able to demonstrate his knowledge of synonyms through the word "imaginary" to which he offered the idea of "fake." However, Alan offered an example with the word "fib." In order to redirect Alan's example, I asked "Is that an example of something imaginary or a word that means something similar." To which he responded, "An example," at this time he was unable to offer a synonym. I noticed that Alan tended to provide examples rather than words that were similar in meaning. I felt that it would be a good time to move on to using the thesaurus so he could see examples of synonyms.

Before beginning our activity with the thesaurus, we answered the comprehension questions at the end of the text. Question one was "Which parts of Istvan Banyai's childhood helped him become an illustrator?" To which the students responded:

Alan: Glass slides

Bill: Teacher

Mrs. Boyst: Think about the conditions or activities he had at home.

Alan: No T.V.

Bill: Taking bike rides

Mrs. Boyst: Good, you both gave specific examples from the story.

Question two: How does Istvan Banyai feel about his work as an illustrator? How can you tell? The following demonstrates the students' responses.

Bill: Happy

Mrs. Boyst: *prompted to continue his thought,* Why?

Bill: He wrote a story to tell us he was happy. *Referencing the story we read.*

Mrs. Boyst: *prompted* Think about the story. Are there specific examples that show how he feels about his work?

Bill: He wrote this whole story about how it makes him happy.

At this point it was obvious to me that Bill was becoming frustrated since his tone of voice became much more agitated. Alan did not offer a contribution. I cited some of the points in the story that would support an answer to this question. I cited that on page 146 Istvan Banyai makes the statement that "I burn my toast, and the

crumbs on the counter remind me o the dots my pencil makes." I noted that this tells

me he thinks about drawing and illustrating all of the time, no matter what he is

doing. I said, "This would tell me he is passionate about his job." I also cite that on

page 147 he says that he moves from the "real world to a wondrous imaginary place."

I explained that the word "wondrous" is important since it describes his feeling when

he is in his own imaginary world. Both students were nodding along in agreement

with me to show what appeared to be their understanding. Since it appeared all

avenues of discussion were exhausted, I moved on.

We then moved to answer question three: "If you had the chance to meet

Istvan Banyai, what would you want to know about his work as an illustrator?" Since

there was a long pause before either of the boys offered a response to the question, I

shared my own personal thought prior to looking for their responses. I expected Alan

and Bill to offer similar responses. Below are their responses: (see earlier note about

presentation)

Mrs. Boyst: I would ask, what was your favorite story to illustrate?

Alan: Have you been arrested?

Mrs. Boyst: Why?

Alan: I don't know. *And although asked to propose another question he*

indicated he could not think of another response.
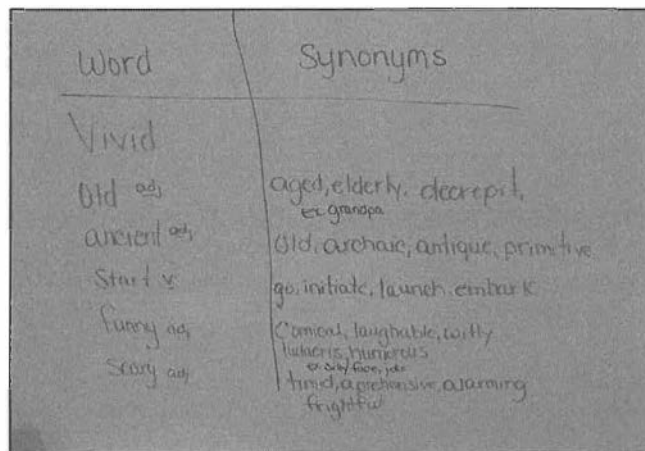
Bill: What was your favorite picture?

At this point it became obvious to me that Alan was choosing to not take this

activity seriously. I offered another opportunity to explain his choice or create

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another question. He grinned and brushed off the opportunity. At this point we moved on to our thesaurus activity.

I drew the students' attention to the list of words on the whiteboard, all from our text (see Figure 4.4). As an example, I looked for the words "old," "ancient," and "start" in the thesaurus. I read including the part of speech. We then briefly discussed the variety of parts of speech and their abbreviations. Each student then had the opportunity to look up one word in the thesaurus. Bill chose to look up and read synonyms for the word "funny" and Alan chose to read synonyms for the word "scary." Each did so successfully and at this point our lesson ended. Before ending the lesson I quickly reiterated what a synonym was and briefly explained what the task would be for Friday. The students were then dismissed to their classrooms.

Figure 4.4: Synonyms Part 2

Friday

I designed Friday's lesson to offer the students a chance to independently display their understanding of the skill for the week: synonyms. To enhance their interest in the activity I redistributed the student reader containing the story and asked them to open to the appropriate page. I then asked them to generate a list of words that they would be interested in looking at much more deeply. The students did this on a separate sheet of paper first to be written on the whiteboard.

We created a list on the whiteboard. Callie was the first to contribute. She was quick and extremely eager to build a list: "photos," "wonderful," "raised," "beautiful," "images," and "wondrous." Bill did not display the same enthusiasm as Callie but he still offered: "flash," "sketched," "experimented," "developed," and "complete." Alan's body language indicated that he was not interested in the activity as he was slouched in his seat, flipping very hastily through the pages. He randomly chose two words. His words included: "suddenly" and "mess."

Most of the words chosen by these students had word endings that indicate tense. For example, the words "experimented" and "developed" both had the –ed ending to indicate past tense. We had a brief discussion to talk about how these words can still be found in the thesaurus but they may need to look for the root word. As the students began to look for these words independently it became apparent the words were not in this thesaurus. In order to successfully complete this activity we completed the assignment together; each student chose one word they would like to look up in a more comprehensive thesaurus and read the synonyms aloud for us to

add to our individual charts. It was important that I modified and adjusted this lesson to ensure the students were able to demonstrate their knowledge.

Callie immediately volunteered to go first. She chose a word from Wednesday's list that we did not get a chance to examine: "real." She was able to successfully locate the word in the thesaurus and read the list for the rest of us to record on our worksheets. She read this clearly and slowly enough for all students to have a chance to write before reading the next word.

Bill chose to examine the word "experiment." As he began to read the synonyms it became clear to me that he had looked up and started to read the synonyms from the incorrect word. I quickly prompted him to double check the word in the thesaurus. He immediately noticed the error and corrected himself. After locating the correct word he slowly and clearly read the synonyms for all students to record on their own worksheets.

Alan chose the word "image." He flipped through the pages of the thesaurus, seemingly not paying close attention, and began to read the synonyms for the incorrect word. I prompted him by asking him to think about if those synonyms sounded right. He responded with "Image is not in the thesaurus." I prompted him to use his finger to track where he was in order to follow along until he found it but was reluctant to do so insisting that he was right and that "image" was not in the thesaurus. With clear frustration, demonstrated through facial expressions and audible sighs, he found "image" and read the correct synonyms to add to our lists.

We ended the lesson with a brief discussion, or review, of this particular word relationship. Once again to reiterate what synonyms were I asked one of the students to, in their own words, provide a definition. Callie was immediately willing to do this by stating, "Synonyms are words that mean the same thing." I then asked if the other two group mates had anything to add to which they both shook their heads to indicate no. In order to further develop their thinking I asked them to consider what antonyms would be given the definition for synonyms. Alan quickly responded with "Opposites." To which I responded by confirming his thought and providing a quick example using the word "large." Alan responded to me by saying, "The antonym is 'small'" To end the lesson, I collected the work samples and dismissed to their classrooms.

In reviewing the final products I noticed that each student had taken a different organizational approach. Despite the fact that I had instructed the students to create a simple T chart by folding their paper in half, each of the students had their own way to organize his/her thoughts and the difference between new words. Callie chose to use different colored pencils to organize her chart; Bill chose to draw lines to distinguish different words; Alan started to use different colors but stopped and only used lines as a border once. Each of the students was successful in recording the appropriate information, despite the method they used to delineate different words.

Week two began Monday February 6, 2012 and ended on Friday February 10, 2012.

Monday

On Monday I assessed the three students using the AIMsweb probe for fluency (see Table 4.3) and the AIMsweb MAZE for comprehension (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.3: Fluency Probe for Week Two

	Words Read Correct	**Errors**
Bill	Absent	Absent
Alan	157	2
Callie	86	3

Figure 4.5 is an excerpt from the passage that I used to assess each student's fluency.

Figure 4.5: Probe 12

Maria made beautiful clay pots. Her pots were big and round and smooth. She glazed them with a black glaze to show off their perfection. Maria liked that her pots were perfect, but she cared more that they were useful. She made her pots for cooking and carrying

water. She made them for everyday use and was pleased to see people

eat and drink out of them.

Maria worked with clay every day. She saved a special time in the

afternoon each day just for working. During this time, she sat in the

cool shadows of her house and rolled the damp clay in her hands.

During the assessment, each student read for one minute, each stopping at a different point in the passage. Just as in week one, each read with a different level of fluency. Bill was absent on Monday and so I was not able to assess him.

Alan began to read the passage with accuracy and good expression however, as he continued through the passage his pace began to accelerate, which could have led to his two errors. Alan made one fewer error than week one and read eleven less words correct. He made errors by misreading the words "made" and "working." When his pace began to increase he stopped pausing for commas or periods, which made the passage sound as if it were one long sentence.

Callie read through the passage with much more attention to the commas and periods, than she had done with earlier passages, being sure to briefly pause which allowed her to read the passage in appropriate phrases. Again, she made an attempt to read with some expression however, shortly after beginning to read the passage her voice became monotone. There were some instances throughout the text where she would attempt to correct her expression; some sentences were much more animated

than others. Callie read with more errors this week; she made errors by misreading the words "each," "day," and "time." She also read fewer words correct this week.

I used the information from this assessment to determine what aspects of fluency I will model for the students, through my own reading.

Table 4.4: MAZE Comprehension for Week Two

	Words Correct	**Errors**
Bill	Absent	Absent
Alan	29	0
Callie	21	0

In order to assess the students' comprehension I administered the AIMsweb MAZE (Pearson, 2010). Figure 4.6 is an excerpt from the assessment. When the student reached the bolded words, he or she   circled the word that made the most sense within the passage.

Figure 4.6: Probe 25

*Susanna was the happiest girl in her whole town. She had long, pretty hair, a **(addresses, sparkling, considered)** smile, and twinkling eyes. She loved **(to, as, be)** venture outside on sunny days. On **(lemon, wouldn't, cloudy)** days, Susanna would telephone her best **(sparkle, pretty, friends)** to join her for a delightful **(flowering, afternoon,**

*statement) tea party inside the house. They **(would, over, went)** set a table with their best **(teach, always, china)** and invite some of their dolls **(girl, but, and)** teddy bears to be their guests. **(Play, They, Them)** would act like ladies and pretend **(at, to, as)** sip their tea and have a **(guests, bother, clever)** discussion. Having guests at her tea **(people, party, little)** pleased Susanna.*

I administered this assessment in a three minute time frame; each student completed the assessment independently. Each student used all three minutes and displayed several actions of an active reader. For example, I could observe each student's eyes moving across the page and at times each student used his or her pencil to indicate where he or she was in the passage. While neither student finished the entire passage, they both ended in different points of the passage. Both students were able complete more of the passage than last week, and neither student made any errors.

Vocabulary Flashcards

Once I had administered the assessments I ask the students to obtain the supplies necessary to create their vocabulary flashcards, a routine of Monday. There were six words, indicated by the Harcourt Reading Series (2007), being targeted this week: "pawn shop," "produce," "errands," "numerous," "international," and "gravelly." Just as in week one, the students had been introduced to the words in

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their general education classroom so this was a review of the words and their definitions. This experience provided the students an opportunity to practice.

The first word I reviewed with the students was "pawn shop." Callie was immediately able to make a connection to something she was familiar with from her own life, a television show called *Pawn Stars*. Through this connection she was able to create a visual picture of what a pawn shop is and could look like. This television show was also familiar to Alan so he was also able to develop a visual picture to help strengthen his definition of the vocabulary word. One word that was important to discuss was "produce" due to the fact that this word may have different connotation based on its use. In the context of this story, the word was used as a noun referring to food found in a market which is different than if it were being used as a verb. I recognized that it was imperative, to the students' understanding, to ensure they knew the different between "produce" as a noun and a verb, especially in the context of this story.

After the students completed their vocabulary cards I asked them to lay the cards in front of them for the review of pronunciation and definition. Just as in week one, this activity is done through a series of repetitions of the word and its definition. Below is the repetition for the word "produce:"

Teacher/Mrs. Boyst: "Produce"

Students: Alan and Callie: "Produce"

T: "Produce"

S: "Produce"

T: "Produce"

S: "Vegetables and fruit grown for market"

We used the same method of practice for all of the vocabulary words.

Both students were able to successfully complete this activity, staying in unison with one another. I expect that by reviewing the vocabulary words with students before reading the story that they would be able to listen to the text with a greater understanding than if they had no previous knowledge of the words.

Introduction of the Focus Skill

The final item on Monday's agenda was to provide a brief introduction of the targeted focus skill for this week's lesson. This week's focus was the difference between facts and opinions. As with the vocabulary words, the students have been exposed to this focus in their general education classrooms so, this was an opportunity to reinforce their previous knowledge. I began by asking the students, "What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?" To which, neither student attempted an answering. I attempted to prompt a conversation by asking "What is a fact?" Callie responded by sharing that her class had developed a "brain train" to help remember the difference between a fact and opinion. When I asked her to share it she would start by making a musical beat on the table with her hands but could not remember the words. I then told the students to think of facts as something they could prove and an opinion usually is person's feeling about something. I knew that both students were studying Martin Luther King's speech so I connected the concepts

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of fact and opinion to this speech. I shared the example that I could prove Martin Luther King Jr. give a speech in Washington; however, I formed an opinion by saying that "it was the best speech ever made." I reinforced that the second statement was an opinion by asking if we could prove that this was indeed the best speech that has been made. Both students shook their heads "No."

To close the discussion and the lesson, I asked the students to make a factual statement about the classroom as well as an opinion statement about the classroom. I provided the following examples:

Fact: "This room has a rock wall in it."

Opinion: "This room is very colorful."

Again, to reinforce the difference I asked the students if I could prove that there was a rock wall in the classroom? The students collectively decided "Yes" since they could see it. I then asked if we could prove the classroom was colorful to which, Callie responded, "Depends on what you think is colorful." After these examples I felt confident that the students were able to complete the task so, I asked them to develop their own statements and write them on a small whiteboard. Alan's responses were:

Fact: "There are three kids in this classroom."

Opinion: "Mrs. Boyst is old."

Callie's responses were:

Fact: "There is an alphabet strip on the wall."

Opinion: "There are too many people in here."

To bring closure to the activity, I once again reinforced that I could prove each one of their facts while, their opinion statements expressed their own personal feeling. I then dismissed the students were to return to their general education classrooms.

Wednesday

On Wednesday I conducted an interactive read-aloud activity with the students in which I asked them to use facts to formulate their own opinion of Ella Fitzgerald. The story, from the Harcourt Intervention Series (2007), the students were reading this week was *With Love from Ella* by Susan M. Fischer. It was an imaginary letter written from Ella Fitzgerald to a fan describing her journey to becoming a famous icon in the world of jazz music.

Before beginning to read the text I led the students in a brief discussion of the difference between fact and opinion by revisiting the statements they made at the end of Monday's class. This review was especially important for Bill since he was absent on Monday. Once we completed this review I gave the students a brief description of their task: to consider the facts provided from the text and use them to formulate their own opinion about Ella Fitzgerald.

Before beginning to read the text aloud, I drew the students' attention to the structure of this text, a letter. I also told the students that this letter was not an actual replica of one that Ella Fitzgerald had written but the information in the letter was real. I addressed the genre as realistic fiction. I then began to read the text aloud to the students using my planned pauses to discuss the text at the end of each page.

The first pause for conversation was on page 150. I wanted the students to direct their attention to the line, "I had to pause to smile when you called me your hero." In this line Ms. Fitzgerald was responding to her fan's opinion that she was a hero. I indicated that I knew this was an opinion since I could not prove that Ella Fitzgerald was or was not a hero. I said, "Ella Fitzgerald might be my hero but not Bill's hero." All three students nodded in agreement. I also made sure to explain to the students that they would form their own opinion, if she is a hero to you or not, by considering some of the facts from the story. I then continued to read the text.

My next pause was on the bottom of page 152 where I highlighted an important fact from this page. I wrote this fact on the whiteboard in order for us to refer back to it when formulating our own opinions. I cited the following fact: Ella sang in front of a crowd at the Harlem Opera House despite the fact that she was very scared to do so. I indicated that this was an important milestone for her since she began her career by thinking she would actually rather be a dancer but could not perform in front of a crowd, except for to sing. Callie made a connection to music class where they were learning about Ella Fitzgerald as a famous singer. I was excited to hear this and I pointed out that they had some background knowledge of this singer.

I continued to read the text aloud to the students and again paused on page 153 to cite the following fact: she competed in several contests and was approached to begin singing with a band. I discussed what an important milestone this was for her career since it brought her into fame. I stopped on page 154 to cite the fact: Ella

made the difficult decision to leave the band that she started out performing with in order to further pursue her dreams. I added my own perspective here by discussing how brave I thought this decision was because she left a band she was comfortable with in order to pursue the unknown. Callie nodded in agreement but the boys' facial expressions indicated they were not as convinced as she was.

I read the final page of the letter and stopped to cite the fact: she developed her own type of music called 'scat.' Since Callie made the connection to music class I asked if they had been able to hear some of this type of music. All three indicated they had not listened to some of her music because they just started learning about her. Following the story there was a brief synopsis of Ella's career. I read this to the students noting that she became a member of the National Women's Hall of Fame known as the first lady of song. I explained that I felt this was am important fact since it was a very prestigious honor. "Prestigious" was not a familiar word to the three students so we briefly discussed its meaning.

Now that I had finished reading the text and I had generated a list of facts for the students to return to, it was time to think about the task that I shared with them at the beginning of the lesson. Before I asked the students to answer whether or not they thought she was a hero, I walked them through my own thoughts. I indicated that I was going to bring some of my own "background knowledge" to the story. I said "think about the time period factors and how they affected her career." To this the students nodded. I referred back to the list of facts I developed as I read and made the statement: "I think from the information that she was a strong, independent

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woman who was a good role model to other young women. I feel she is a hero to young women."

I then asked the students to consider the information gathered and form their own opinion. I asked them to record their opinion on a separate sheet of paper for submission. Alan finished this assignment very quickly and I noticed that he had simply developed another list of facts generated from the story. He had not developed his own opinion of Ms. Fitzgerald. I gave him positive reinforcement to show my delight at his list of facts and prompted him for an opinion by saying, "Great!, you identified some important facts but now can you use them to tell me whether or not you feel she was a hero." Alan went back to his list and began to write his opinion. By the time the students completed the activity there was no time left for discussion so they handed in their sheets and returned to their general education classrooms.

This week's reading did not have as many opportunities for the students to have in depth discussions. The purpose of this lesson was to model for the students how I would identify important information and use it to formulate an opinion. I asked them to complete the final task as a demonstration of their understanding.

When I reviewed the students' final product, I noticed each student approached the task differently. Alan needed the redirection, as stated above, to formulate an opinion instead of just a list of facts. His opinion was based solely on the fact that Ella was inducted in to the Women's Hall of Fame. He made the assertion that she is a hero because of that. Bill listed a variety of statements that

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support his thought that she is not a hero, including "No, because I do not like music at all. Plus I do not know her personally. She doesn't know me....I do not like her personality." Most of his assertions were personal as opposed to be based upon the facts that we learned by reading the text.

Callie made a list of facts, similar to Bill's. Using this list she made the statement: "Yes, she is my hero because I love to sing and dance like Ella created 'scat.'" While it is evident to me that Callie was making an attempt to use the factual evidence to form an opinion based on the facts she did use all of the facts to back up her statement.

I would use the information that I gathered from this assignment to inform the lesson I would use to bring closure to the focus skill.

Friday

Extenuating circumstances prevented the group from meeting on Friday. I then made a plan to bring closure to the focus skill on Monday of the following week.

Week Three

Week three began on Monday February 13, 2012 and ended on Friday February 17, 2012.

Monday

On Monday I assessed the students using the AIMsweb probe for fluency (see Table 4.5) and the AIMsweb MAZE for comprehension (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.5: Fluency Probe for Week Three

	Words Read Correct	**Errors**
Bill	139	1
Alan	141	3
Callie	76	0

Figure 4.5 is an excerpt from the passage that I used to assess each student's fluency.

Figure 4.7: Probe 13

My best friend Jeff and I decided to explore my attic one afternoon. We used to go up there when we were younger and pretend to be soldiers or cowboys. The attic is a creepy place. There's a bookshelf, a bunch of old junk, and tons of spider webs.

When we got up there, Jeff bumped the bookshelf, and a stone hallway came into view. I couldn't believe it. It was a trap door! Jeff went in and motioned for me to follow. It was very dark, and as we walked along the hallway, it got darker and darker. We came to a large room

with a golden chair in it. We continued exploring and suddenly

bumped into something. Again, I couldn't believe it. It was two other

kids about our age.

Bill read the passage similar to the way he read in Week One. He read at an accelerated pace as if he were trying to ensure he could read as much of the passage as possible in one minute. He read with no expression. He ignored all punctuation - commas, periods and exclamation points - and read the passage as if it were one long sentence. He would often pause in the middle of a sentence to take a breath and regain the momentum he had begun to read with. He read 139 words correctly, slightly less than week one. He made one error by misreading the word "other."

Alan began the passage by trying to read with expression. His expression became monotone as he began to pick up speed toward the end of the first paragraph. Alan began to ignore the punctuation as he began to speed up, which made the passage seem like one long sentence. He read until he ran out of breath and then would pause for a quick breath before breathing once again. He read 141 words correctly, which was fewer than he read in both week one and week two. He made errors by misreading or ignoring the words "and," "and," and "large."

Callie tried to read the passage with expression. During the past two weeks Callie's attempts at expression would turn to a monotone voice; however, this week she was able to maintain animation while reading. There were some points where she was able to do this appropriately, for example when she approached an exclamation point she was able to infuse excitement. At other times she inappropriately stressed

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words or syllables. She read 76 words correctly, which was ten words less that week two. However, she read the passage much more attentively with no errors.

I used the results of this assessment to craft my instruction for the week. For example, based on the results, I recognized that it would be important to stress that it is *not* the purpose to read as fast as possible but three are other aspects of how to read fluently. I also recognized that it would be important for me to offer some direct instruction and modeling, through my read-aloud, to show the students what fluent reading sounds like. I decided to focus on reading while paying attention to punctuation and expression.

Table 4.6: MAZE Comprehension for Week Three

	Words Correct	**Errors**
Bill	24	1
Alan	20	1
Callie	8	1

In order to assess the students' comprehension I administered the AIMsweb MAZE (Pearson, 2010). Figure 4.8 is an excerpt from the assessment. When the student reached the bolded words, he or she circled the word that made the most sense within the passage.

Figure 4.8: Probe 24

*Santo and his family lived at the base of a great mountain. The top of
the mountain was (**talking, ringed, inside**) with clouds. Its flanks were
covered (**in, but, as**) tall trees and grasses. The mountain (**construct,
protected, objection**) them from the fierce winds that (**swept, woke,
told**) the land. The lake in the (**greatness, qualities, mountain's**)
shadow provided them with fresh water (**he, and, or**) fish. Santo, his
family, and the (**moments, feeling, people**) of the village believed there
was (**not, no, as**) better place in the world to (**was, live, laugh**). The
mountain was their protector, and (**it, has, him**) would stand forever.*

*Every year the (**things, imagine, village**) had a great feast to celebrate
(**an, the, from**) mountain and give thanks. People ate (**still, until,
when**) their stomachs were full and danced (**knew, took, until**) their
feet ached. Everyone went to (**bed, get, tree**) happy and slept well into
the (**next, more, lake**) day. At least, that's what they'd (**saw, the, done**)
every other year.*

I gave each student three minutes to complete this assessment independently.
Bill and Alan used the full three minutes paying attention to the text. I observed that
they displayed signs of active reading such as following along with their pencils,
ready to circle the appropriate word, and tracking with their eyes from left to right
across the page. I noticed that Callie appeared much more distracted, often looking

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around the room. I had to redirect her attention by pointing to the text where she appeared to fumble looking for her spot by scanning the passage with her finger. Upon collection and scoring of these assessments, I noticed that each student finished the passage in a different place earning three different scores. Each of the three students made one errors within the passage.

Bill circled two choices for the first set of bolded parenthesis; there is only one correct response so he should have only circled one answer. Perhaps he meant to erase one of the choices but forgot to do so. Alan circled "can't" instead of "had;" this choice would not have made sense in the context of the passage. It seems as though he were rushing through the passage as his, pencil-drawn, circles were not very neat. Callie made her error by circling "qualities" instead of "mountain;" while "mountain" is the only word that could have made sense within the context of the sentence, the passage was discussing the qualities of the land. Perhaps she did not read within the context of the sentence.

Finalizing the Focus Skill from the Previous Week

Since the group was unable to meet on Friday of week two, we continued with an abbreviated final lesson. I asked the students to demonstrate their knowledge of facts and opinions by indentifying a variety of statements as either fact or opinion. I also asked them to write two opinions and two facts, on their own. The students completed the entire activity independently. .

I began the lesson by leading the students in a discussion of the difference between fact and opinion. I asked them to think about the assignment they completed in regard to Ella Fitzgerald. I gave them some example of several facts and opinions from the story. I reminded them to think about facts and provable statements. I then handed out the worksheet they would complete (see Appendix E).

Bill and Alan correctly identified statement number one as a fact. Callie identified statement one as an opinion. All three students correctly indentified statement two and three as opinions. Callie and Alan correctly indentified statement four as a fact. Bill identified statement four as an opinion. All three students correctly indentified statement number five as an opinion. Bill correctly identified statement six as an opinion; however, Alan identified the statement as a fact. Callie did not circle an answer. Each student made at least one error.

On the second part of the worksheet, I allotted room for the students to write their own fact and opinion statements. All three students wrote statements related directly to themselves or the surroundings of the room. For example, one of Callie's facts was that "We have reading rings." This is indeed a fact since we use rings as an organizer for our vocabulary words. Alan's fact was that "The room is white." This is truly a fact since you can see that our classroom walls are painted white. Bill addressed himself in making the statement, "I Bill weigh 84 pounds." Bill's opinion statement read, "The best kind of dog is the Basset Hound. They are awesome." He was able to successfully form an opinion. Bill and Callie were also able to

successfully form their own opinions by making the statements, "I can make the best cookies." and "The room color is beautiful."

Overall, I was pleased with the outcome of the students' work. . It seemed that they were able to form acceptable knowledge of the difference between fact and opinion.

Vocabulary Flashcards

Once all three students had completed the worksheet activity, I asked them to get the materials needed to make vocabulary cards for the week. All three got the required materials: index cards, pencil, and their card ring with previous vocabulary cards. As in weeks past, the students had already been exposed to the vocabulary words in their classroom so our activity was primarily a review. The words identified by the Harcourt Reading Series (2007) as key words for the week were: "migrant," "devote," 'scholarship," "apprentice," "timid," "thrived," and "flexibility."

After the students finished writing the seven words and their definitions, I asked them to lay their cards out in front of them so we could practice the words' pronunciations and definitions. It is my hope that by doing this activity that the students would be able to successfully read and understand the words when in the text we would read on Wednesday. Below is our interaction:

Teacher/Mrs. Boyst: "Migrant"

Students: Alan, Bill, and Callie: "Migrant"

T: "Migrant"

S: "Migrant"

T: "Migrant"

S: "moving around to find work, especially in harvesting crops"

We used this same method of practice for all of the seven words. I noticed that Bill and Callie adjusted their rate to complete this task in unison with one another while Alan tended to speak very quickly and did not adjust his rate of speed in order to allow his classmates to keep up with him nor did he adjust his rate to keep time with them. I asked him to consider his pace so that he would be in unison with his classmates by reminding him to slow down. This was the final activity of the day.

After the students had put away their supplies, I dismissed them back to their general education classrooms.

Wednesday

The focus skill for this week was identifying the main idea and details. Today would be the day that I read the story aloud to the students. I planned to stop at the end of each page, just as I had for *With Love From Ella* in order to find the main idea from the page. This week we would be reading another realistic fiction text called *Lourdes Lopez: Ballet Star* by Doris Licomeli from the Harcourt student reader (2007). This story was about the life of Lourdes Lopez as she grew up, found her interest in ballet and became a ballet star.

I started the lesson with a brief description of main idea and the task that we would be completing as I read the story aloud. I told the students that we would be

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looking for the main idea from the page. Confident that they had receive instruction about these skills in their classrooms that would have described main idea in detail I made the statement, "The main idea is what the page is *mostly* about." I made sure to stress the word *mostly* since it is important to the concept of main idea.

I began to read the story to the students and stopped on page 158 to cite what I felt was the main idea: "Lourdes discovered ballet shoes at a shoe store, which inspired her love of ballet." I explained that this was my choice because it is what all of the details talk about. For example, the fact that she was order special shoes at age five lead up to the idea that she had to go to the shoe store where she found the ballet shoes. The students nodded in agreement and I continued with the story.

Again I read and stopped on page 159 to cite the following main idea: "Lourdes begins ballet dance class." To reinforce my thoughts I gave another brief description of why I chose this as the main idea of the page. I then continued with the story and paused on page 160 to cite the main idea: "Lourdes goes to New York City to join the American Ballet."

As I provided a brief description of my choice I noticed the body language of the students. Alan was very passively listening to the story. He was slouched in his chair and not making any eye contact with me or his peers. I noticed that Callie was sitting straight up in her chair and nodding along as I read. Bill was sitting in a similarly passive stance to Alan, however he frequently made contact with me and nodded as I read. I quickly prompted everyone to sit up in their seats and continue

listening. In order to engage all three listeners, I indicated that there would be a task for them to complete at the end of the story so to make sure they were listening.

I then continued with the text and stopped on the next page to cite the main idea: "Lourdes becomes a ballet star." I did not offer much of an explanation of my choice since I would be asking the students to find the details that support the main idea at the end of the reading. I finished the last page164 and stopped again at the bottom to cite the main idea: "After her career as a ballerina, Lourdes begins to mentor young dancers." As I had done with previous ideas I offered a brief explanation of my choice.

The explanation for the final main idea on page 164 served as a brief discussion of what a detail is. Instead of just simply explaining my choice I was careful to use the word detail in my explanation. I said "I chose this as the main idea because of the *detail* that said she 'stopped dancing with the New York City Ballet in 1997.'' Again, it was my expectation that they had already been exposed to details in their general education classrooms.

After the discussion of detail I provided a brief explanation of the next task, which was for the students to find details on page 163 that support the main idea I had already cited during the read-aloud. This was to be a guided practice activity. I distributed a text to each student and instructed each to turn to page 163 and reread the page independently. As the students read I wrote on the whiteboard the main idea: Lourdes becomes a ballet star. I took responses on a volunteer basis from the students and asked that they offer the details in the order they appeared in the text, so

they may need to find several examples. Callie was the first to raise her hand. She offered the detail, "Her confidence and popularity grew as she worked hard." She was able to synthesize some of the information found in the second paragraph. Bill offered the detail, "In 1981 Lourdes became a soloist." He pulled a specific detail directly from the beginning of the third paragraph. I noticed that Alan was extremely hesitant and unsure of what detail to offer. He offered the excuse that the other students "took his idea." In order to help prompt a response we examined where Callie and Bill found their details. This helped him to make the response, "A critic calls her a ballet star." Like Bill, he took this detail directly from the last paragraph of the page. I used the students' responses to determine if further instruction would be needed in regard to finding main idea or details; I decided that the students did not need any further instruction at this time.

We moved on to answer the discussion questions at the end of the text. Question one asked: How did Lourdes Lopez's dancing career develop in New York City? Callie quickly responded by pointing to page 160, which was the page that discussed her move to NYC and shows a variety of illustrations that are meant to show the move. She offered no words to support her thoughts. When I asked why she chose this page she did not offer a response and instead shut down; she out her down and did not add comments even when prompted. Alan offered the idea that it progressed "really well." When prompted to think about how the story progressed, Bill immediately responded by summarizing all of the main ideas that I had cited

through my read-aloud. He added that it "took many years" to get to the end point. Callie and Alan responded by nodding to Bill's answer.

Question two posed the question: Do you think Lourdes Lopez would have become a ballet star even if the doctor had not ordered dance lessons for her? Tell why you think as you do. There was no right or wrong answer to this question so I was eager to hear their opinions and why the students felt as they did. Alan was the first to offer a response. He said, "No, since the doctor did not prescribe them her mother may not have wanted to pay for them." I was satisfied with his answer since he was able to explain his rationale. Bill was next to offer an opinion. He began by saying "No, because she may not have thought of them." At this I wanted to offer a prompt that may add another perspective and have the potential change the students' minds. I prompted them by saying "Remember that she saw the shoes in the shoe store." I could see that both boys considered this thought and Bill changed his mind offering a new opinion. He said, "Yes, because she had it in mind since she had seen the shoes." Alan chose not to alter his opinion. I was satisfied with both outcomes. Callie then offered her opinion by making the statement, "Yes, because she showed her mom the shoes and maybe she begged." She continued her explanation saying, "Maybe her sister dances too since she went to NYC with her and maybe her mom would like her to do a sport." I was very pleased with Callie's response since she was able to use facts from the text and draw upon her own knowledge. I brought the lesson to an end after we had discussed the two questions. The students then returned to their classrooms.

Friday

The task for today's lesson was for the students to read a familiar text and choose the main idea and details for the entire story. To begin the lesson we reviewed the main ideas from *Lourdes Lopez: Ballet Star*. I asked the students to consider what the main idea of the entire story would be. Callie was quick to respond. She said, "One girl had her dreams come true." I asked the students to consider what that could mean for everyone, not just Lourdes Lopez, to which Callie adapted her thought and said, "Dreams can come true." Satisfied with the comment I moved on to explain the task.

I asked the students to turn to page six in their student reader (Harcourt, 2007). I then asked the students to read *A Fish Tale* by Sydnie Meltzer Kleinhenz and determine the main idea of the story. I explained that they would also need to cite various details that support their choice. I handed out a graphic organizer for them to use as they completed this task. Once the explanation of the task was complete I invited the students were then to choose a comfortable place to read the story independently. Each of the students finished reading the text in less than five minutes and returned to the table to complete the graphic organizer. This was meant to be an independent activity so the students worked alone to complete their own graphic organizer. The activity took the rest of the thirty minute time period.

Each of the students displayed different behaviors as they completed the task. I noticed that Alan returned to the table and closed his book. He did not refer back to

the text at all during the completion of his organizer. Bill asked if he was able to use the story to help him finish his organizer. When I told him he could, he actively reviewed the pages to help him find the main idea and details. Callie also chose to use the text to help her fill in the organizer.

While reviewing the final product of each student I noticed that each student chose a variety of responses. Callie and Bill were much more detailed than Alan. Callie and Bill chose much more complex details; however, none of the details contributed to the main idea that they chose. Alan chose much simpler details and provided much more of a summary of the story. Like his classmates none of his details contributed to the main idea of the story.

In future lessons I would use this information to help inform my instruction. I noticed that the students seemed to have a firm grasp on identifying details in a story but had some trouble finding the main idea. In a future lesson, I would scaffold the students differently. For example, I may ask the students to find the main idea from each page, as I had done in the read-aloud, and then use those as the details to help determine the main idea of the whole story. I may also ask them to look first at the details rather than the main idea.

We did not have time to discuss their answers so I collected the worksheets and dismissed the students to their general education classrooms.

Week Four

Week four began Monday February 27, 2012 and ended on Friday March 1, 2012.

Monday

On Monday I assessed the three participants using the AIMsweb probe for fluency (see Table 4.7 for results) and the AIMsweb MAZE for comprehension (see Table 4.8 for results).

Table 4.7: Fluency Probe for Week Four

	Words Read Correct	Errors
Bill	155	0
Alan	126	1
Callie	112	1

Figure 4.9 is an excerpt from the AIMsweb (Pearson, 2010) fluency probe that I used to assess each student's fluency.

Figure 4.9: Probe 14

On cold winter mornings, Jane would get up at 4:30 a.m. when it was still very dark. She was always still sleepy, but she knew what was waiting for her was worth it.

After Jane dressed in her warmest shirt and wool sweater, she would tiptoe into the kitchen where she would find her dad sitting at the table. He would be reading the morning paper and eating breakfast. Jane would have her breakfast too, and they'd linger in the warm kitchen for a few extra minutes.

Then Jane would pull on her red snowsuit, and her dad would button up his heavy jacket. They would walk outside together into the crisp morning air. It was often so chilly that Jane could see her breath in clouds in front of her. It was usually so chilly that a sparkling layer of frost would cover the fence posts and her dad's tractor.

During the assessment each student read for one minute, each stopping at a different point in the passage. Just as in past weeks, each read with a different level of fluency. Bill read the passage with no expression, in a monotone voice. As he has in the past, he read at an accelerated pace seemingly try to beat his score from previous weeks. He did read further this week than he did last week. Again, he did not pause to acknowledge any of the punctuation such as periods or commas, which resulted in awkwardly phrased sentences. In regard to his accuracy, he read with no errors.

Alan approached the passage as he had during the earlier weeks. As he began to read, he made an attempt to read the passage with expression and emotion. However, his attempts subsided after the first few sentences as he was trying to read as quickly as possible. He did pay much more attention to the punctuation in this passage; he paused for periods and commas which made the phrasing of sentences sound much more smooth and fluid. He read 126 words correct, making one error. He misread the word "often."

Callie was able to read further in this passage than she had in past weeks. She read 112 words correctly, making only one error, the word "paper." However, she did not stumble with this error and continued to read on without disruption. She read with a pace similar to the one she has read previously. She was careful to pay attention to the punctuation such as periods and commas. However, she did not read the passage with any expression or emotion; she read in a low, monotone voice.

I used the results from this week's fluency assessment to determine what aspects of fluency I would model for the students while I read aloud to them.

Table 4.8: MAZE Comprehension for Week Four

	Words Correct	Errors
Bill	31	0
Alan	27	0
Callie	17	1

In order to assess the students' comprehension, I administered the AIMsweb MAZE (Pearson, 2010). Figure 4.10 is an excerpt from the assessment in which, upon reaching the bolded words, the students would circle the word that made the most sense within the passage.

Figure 4.10: Probe 22

Oscar loved waking up on mornings when snow was falling steadily.

*He would hurry through breakfast and **(quickly, single, waking)** brush*

*his teeth so he could **(fly, for, go)** outside. Oscar would walk to school*

***(but, and, on)** try to catch snowflakes in his **(have, card, mouth)**.*

*Oscar wasn't a very graceful boy. **(It, He, May)** was hard enough for*

*him to **(they, snow, walk)** down the sidewalk without tripping when*

***(so, it, did)** wasn't snowing. But when he tipped **(with, self, his)** head*

*back and held his mouth **(was, open, other)**, Oscar was a walking*

*disaster. He **(steady, middle, would)** run into light posts and parked*

***(cars, fast, nose)**. He would run into fire hydrants **(but, on, and)** other*

*kids walking to school. So **(the, far, long)**, Oscar had not managed to*

*catch **(so, by, a)** single snowflake in his mouth.*

I administered this assessment in a three minute time frame; each student completed the assessment independently. Each student used all of the three minutes and displayed several actions of an active reader. For example, I observed their eyes moving across the page from left to right and at times each student used his or her pencil to indicate where he or she was in the passage. While none of them finished the entire passage, they all ended in different points of the passage. Again, each student made improvement on his or her previous week's scores.

Callie made the only error this week by circling "flakes" instead of "coughed." "Coughed" was the only correct choice within the context of the sentence. Just as she had in past weeks, it seems as though she chose a word based on the content of the passage. The passage was discussing winter and therefore "flakes" could have been chosen in regard to snowflakes however, this was not appropriate choice.

Vocabulary Flashcards

Once I had administered the assessments I asked the students to obtain the supplies necessary to create their vocabulary flashcards, a routine of Monday. There were five words, indicated by the Harcourt Reading Series (Beck et. al, 2007), targeted for this week: campaign, endorse, obnoxious, residences, and graffiti. As in previous weeks, the students had been introduced to these words in their general education classroom so this was a review of the words and their definitions. I view

this experience as important as it provides the students with an opportunity to practice.

As I reviewed the words, the students were able to make several connections to their classrooms or home lives. For example, in reviewing the word "graffiti," Callie was able to make a connection to an example that she sees in her own community. She makes the comment, "Like the mural in Oakfield." To which Alan adds his own experiences with graffiti, which he has seen in movies, noting that they can often indicate gangs and makes the comment, "It marks territory." I recognized these two, good vivid examples that will help the students remember the meaning of graffiti.

In reviewing the word "campaign," all three of the students made connections to the current presidential campaign they have seen on television. Each student named a candidate and recalled something they may have learned about the candidate. I used this time to provide a brief introduction of the text since the story was about a class president campaign. I knew that the presidential campaign would be an easy connection for the students since it is currently in the news but I wanted to ensure that the students realized that there *are* other types of campaigns such as one for class president. This text put the campaign within the context of the school and it was my goal to make this concept accessible to the students through this brief introduction.

After the students completed their vocabulary cards I asked them to lay the cards in front of them for the review of pronunciation and definition. As in the other

weeks, this activity is done as series of call and response repetitions of the word and its definition. Below is a partial repetition for the word 'obnoxious:'

Teacher/Mrs. Boyst: "Obnoxious"

Students: Bill, Alan and Callie: "Obnoxious"

T: "Obnoxious"

S: "Obnoxious"

T: "Obnoxious"

S: "Annoying; Bothersome"

The students and I followed the same method for the other four vocabulary words.

While Bill and Callie were able to successfully complete this activity, staying in unison with one another, Alan read his cards at an extremely quick pace to ensure he was finished before the others. I perceived that he did not appear to be invested in the activity. In order to guide him back on track I offered an explanation of the purpose of this activity and asked that he adjust his reading rate to stay in unison with his peers. He continued to defy the instruction and tried to cause his peers to become off-track by starting other conversations. None of his peers became involved in his behavior so, defeated, he began to read in unison with his group mates. He had very little expression in his voice.

I expect that exposing students to vocabulary words before reading a story will enable to listen to the text with a greater understanding than if they had no previous knowledge of the words.

Introduction of the Focus Skill

The final task for this lesson was to introduce the Venn Diagram that the students would use on Wednesday to compare and contrast the two characters in the story. In order to do this I drew the diagram on the whiteboard and asked the students if they could identify it. No one could. I knew that the students had been exposed to this diagram in their general education since it has been used to compare novels in the past. So, I asked if anyone knew what I would use this diagram for. Bill raised his hand and said "To compare." I asked his to elaborate by explaining what it meant to compare. He responded with "Finding things that are the same." I then posed the question, "What does it mean to contrast?" Perhaps in an attempt to make a joke, Callie said, "That's a good question." Bill offered the explanation once again noting that, "You look for things that are different." Satisfied with Bill's explanations, I offered the name of this diagram.

To end this very brief introduction, more a review, of the Venn Diagram, I provided a brief preview of the story line and the activity that the students would complete on Wednesday. I introduced the two characters and the plot line of the story. I set up the Venn Diagram to mimic what it would look like on Wednesday. I then asked the students if they had any questions and once satisfied that there were none, I dismissed them to their classrooms.

Wednesday

On Wednesday I conducted a read-aloud activity in which I read the story entitled *Certain Steps* by Charlene Norman from the Harcourt Student Reader (2007). As I read the story I guided the students through beginning of the completion of a Venn Diagram, stopping on page 170 to have the students finish on their own. The story is about a school's student council election in which Al runs for class president. He may not be the most desirable candidate and does not show much passion for his school. This contrasts his campaign manager, Murphy, who consistently shows true love for his school yet never considered running for class president. I set the Venn Diagram up to compare and contrast these two characters.

Before beginning to read the text aloud to the students I conducted a brief discussion to review the definitions of compare and contrast as well as what a Venn Diagram is and how it should be used. I showed the students a blank diagram and asked them to identify it. No one could. I gave them the letter it began with as a quick prompt, which 1 elicited no response from any of the students although Bill and Callie both widened their eyes as if they new the answer but could not verbalize it. Alan remained passive, slouching in his seat displaying no true effort to solve this apparent puzzle. I then told the students what the diagram was called and received nods from all three students to indicate that they knew what I was talking about.

I continued the discussion by asking students, "Where do I put things that are similar?" Alan quickly responded without raising his hand, "On the outside circles." Due to the incorrect answer I prompted him to think about the structure of the

diagram to which Callie responded "No, inside!" I then asked Alan, "What are you doing when you are looking for things that are similar between two characters, comparing or contrasting?" He responded with "Comparing." I then gave a brief description of contrasting before we moved on to the story and our Venn Diagram.

I distributed a blank copy of the diagram to each student and drew my own on the whiteboard. I labeled each circle with the names of the characters we would be comparing and contrasting. One circle was labeled Al and the other was labeled Murphy. As I have done with some of the stories in the past weeks, I stopped at the end of each page to discuss the actions of these two characters and what those actions tell us about their personality. As I wrote on the whiteboard students were asked to fill in their own diagram so they may complete it on their own.

At the end of reading the first page I used the think aloud practice to guide the students in synthesizing the superficial actions of the characters. For example, Al said, "I plan to take certain steps so all the kids will know who I am." I choose this quote as a focus to determine what personality traits I can see in Al. I noted that Al is concerned with all students knowing who he is and being in the spotlight. The word I chose to write on the Venn Diagram to describe Al was conceded, meaning that he is worried about himself and his image. On the other hand, Murphy asks Al, "What's your platform?" At this point we stopped to discuss the word platform. Alan immediately said, "A voting booth," to which no one was able to refute or concur. I then compared the election in the story to the current presidential campaign and how each candidate stands for something and has certain beliefs. This is what is known as

a platform. I indicate that Murphy seems concerned with what beliefs Al stands for in this election showing and seems troubled when Al is only concerned with his fame. Murphy shakes his head when Al simply replies with, "Maybe I will stand on a chair when I give my speech." I discussed how I would interpret this concern for a platform as showing concern and compassion for his school.

On the next page, Al displayed some of the similar actions as he had on the first page. He showed a disregard for a platform by simply laughing as Murphy addressed the issue again and replied with "cut out all homework..." He also was concerned with his lot of pencils that had his name on them and acquiring endorsements from school staff members. Again I discussed how this behavior shows that Al truly his worried only about himself and not the general well being of the school. We added the word 'selfish' to Al's side of the diagram. Since this page did not directly discuss Murphy I led the students in a brief discussion to determine what we could assume about his personality. I posed the following question to the students, "If Murphy shows that he values his school, how do think he feels about Al's idea for a platform?" Callie felt that he would not agree with it. But to further the discussion I asked her why; however, she was unable to articulate her thoughts. I reworded the question and asked, "Do you think that Murphy values homework or agrees with Al?" All three students felt that he would probably value homework. I then made the connection that if Murphy cares about school and learning he would most likely care about homework as well. We wrote "values homework" on Murphy's side of the diagram.

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I stopped at the end of the next page to discuss the events on the page and how I would interpret them. This was mainly about Murphy as he commits himself to ensuring Al runs a good campaign. He also notices some graffiti on the wall and quickly erases it. I discuss what this tells the reader about Murphy's love for his school and draw their attention back to the items we have already written on the diagram that say: "cares for his school; values his school." This page just confirms that thought and so I mark the page number next to these two items on the diagram.

After reading the next page aloud, I noted that we have gathered some more information that confirms some of the character traits we have already assigned these characters. For example, after Murphy gave Al several ideas to help improve things for the students Al said, "Those ideas sound like too much work." I asked the students to indicate what character trait that supports? Callie immediately raised her hand and responded with "Conceded and selfish." I prompted her to explain why she felt that way. To which she replied, "Because he is not thinking of other students."

I then moved on to cite some of Murphy's behavior that would confirm my thoughts that he felt homework was important. Murphy stated, "I'm sorry, but I just can't work on a campaign that promises no homework." I asked the students to note this page on their diagrams. I also made note of the fact that Murphy began picking up trash and other students quickly began to pitch in. I told the students, "This action tells us a lot about Murphy's character and what other students think of him." I explained how this shows that Murphy has the respect of the other students. Callie

made the comment, "He should be class president." The two boys nodded in agreement.

This was the last page that I walked the students through developing character traits for the Venn Diagram. At this point, we had not listed any similarities between these two characters so, before the students worked independently, we looked for some similarities between the characters. All three of the students first felt that there were no similarities since these characters displayed such different personalities. In order to prompt a response I asked them to think about the fact that Al and Murphy were friends so what could that say about their age. Callie quickly raised her hand and before I could call on her shouted out, "that they are the same age or in the same grade." I asked the boys if they could agree, to which they simply nodded their heads. We added this to the center of the Venn Diagram. Alan added, "Both are boys," which led us to add that both characters are male to our diagram. After we began this short list I gave the students the task of finishing the last two pages of the story and filling in more information on the Venn Diagram. I offered them the option to put page numbers next to anything that supported one of the ideas already on the diagram. Each of the students completed the task within five minutes.

Once the students all completed the task we rejoined together to discuss our findings. Bill was the first to share what he learned. He was referring to Al when he said, "He spread rumors about Murphy being mean and disrespectful." I noticed that this was a superficial action that was committed by Al, so I asked Bill what this might say about Al's personality? Bill responded, "He is mean and doesn't care about

others feelings." I added this information to the Venn Diagram on the whiteboard. Alan was next to offer something he learned. He spoke in reference to Murphy when he said, "He reads with first graders." Again, I noticed that this was a superficial action instead of a character trait. I was beginning to notice a pattern that the students were not synthesizing the information as I had in the examples provided. So, I prompted Alan to explain what this could mean about who Murphy is as a person? Alan seemed somewhat stumped at the question, but after a short period of wait time to consider personality traits he indicated, "He was caring and appreciates younger children." Callie was last to add her piece of information. She did not have anything new to add since she had written down the same superficial actions as the boys. So, I prompted her to think about how the younger kids might think of him when he reads to them. To which she responded, "They respect him." None of the students found any more similarities. Figure 4.11 shows the group Venn Diagram as seen on the whiteboard.

Figure 4.11: Venn Diagram Comparing Al and Murphy

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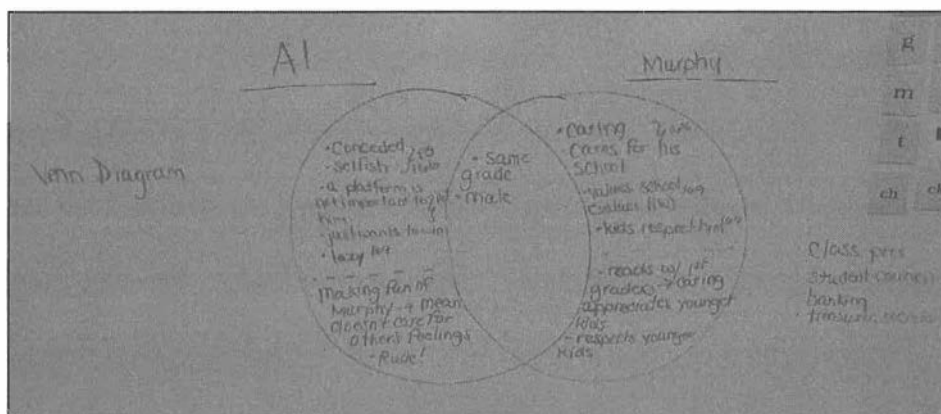
I collected the students' finished products for further review. Noticing that each only indicated one more piece of information for each character and it was all superficial actions that were carried out. I would use this information to help me develop my instruction for the future as we will be using Venn Diagrams to compare and contrast in week six.

Friday

We were unable to meet due to an author visiting the school.

Week Five

Week five began Monday March 5, 2012 and ended on Friday March 9, 2012.

Monday

On Monday I assessed the three participants using the AIMsweb probe for fluency (see Table 4.9) and the AIMsweb MAZE for comprehension (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.9: Fluency Probe for Week Five

	Words Read Correct	**Errors**
Bill	103	1
Alan	116	6
Callie	86	0

Figure 4.12 is an excerpt from the passage that I used to assess each student on his or her fluency.

Figure 4.12: Probe 16

One morning June was certain she'd seen a unicorn outside her bedroom window. She had just woken up from a deep sleep and was on her way down to the kitchen when she saw a streak of silver and white whiz through her backyard.

She hadn't been dreaming. Oh no, June Joy Jones didn't just dream things up. She was a very practical little girl. She was extremely smart and clear-headed.

Throughout all her grade-school career, s he'd gotten all As and never a B. She was a good student, but what she didn't have was a very keen imagination. She never made stuff up. She didn't believe in magic, make-believe, or luck. That's how she knew she wasn't imagining the horned horse. June Joy Jones wouldn't have seen a live unicorn if a live unicorn hadn't really been there. Still, June didn't tell her parents about the unicorn over breakfast.

During the assessment each student read for one minute, each stopping at a different point in the passage. Just as in past weeks, each read with a different level of fluency. Bill read at a pace that did not allow him to read with expression or attend to the punctuation such as commas or periods. This is not a demonstration of what his regular reading is like. There has been constant modeling and reinforcement to help him develop these qualities of his fluency however, it does not transfer into this assessment. He often finds himself losing his place and rereading to gather information. He did not get as far this week as he had in past weeks and slowed down at the line "she's gotten all A's and never a B." He lost his momentum on this line. He misread the word "As" which result in one error.

Alan seemed to struggle somewhat with this passage. He did not get as far as he had in past weeks and made several more errors as well. He approached this passage with good expression and fluency which diminished as he began to lose momentum with the text. He misread the words "window," "her," "Joy," "throughout," "all," and "As." This resulted in 116 words read correct and six errors.

Callie approached this text similarly to the ways she has approached the passages from past weeks. She made an attempt to read this passage with proper expression however, this is something that she continues to struggle with which seemed to result in her not being able to read as far as she has in past weeks. This passage proved to be difficult for each member of the group. In regard to her accuracy she was able to read 86 words correct with no errors.

Table 4.10: MAZE Comprehension for Week Five

	Words Correct	Errors
Bill	24	0
Alan	36	0
Callie	18	0

In order to assess comprehension the AIMsweb MAZE (Pearson, 2010) was administered. Figure 4.13 is an excerpt from the assessment in which, upon reaching the bolded words, the students would circle the word that made the most sense within the passage.

Figure 4.13: Probe 21

*Leo went to the forest every day to gather firewood. He would collect the wood, tie (**and, a, it**) into small bundles, and carry the (**life, with, bundles**) home each day. He would pack (**than, this, his**) lunch and stay in the forest (**until, and, from**) sunset. At noon he would have (**his, shared, to**) lunch, and at noon a bird (**the, box, would**) visit him. It was white with (**ash, a, bird,**)-colored wings and was larger than (**lunch, a, visit**) dove but smaller than an eagle. (**The, Leo, Dove**) always shared a morsel of his (**larger, lived, food**) with the bird. Leo called it (**was, Jayto, bird**) and would talk to it from (**time, but, suddenly**) to time.*

*One very hot summer (**treasure, gather, day**), Leo began to eat his*

*lunch (**and, it, wings**) Jayto arrived right on time. Leo (**gave, always,***

***eagle**) him some of his lunch, and (**the, with, it**) bird eagerly pecked at*

*it. It (**with, was, a**) so hot; Leo decided to take (**with, it, a**) nap. As he*

*lay down, the (**business, with, bird**) began to peck and caw at (**and,***

***him, possible**). The bird was able to convince (**Leo, mangoes, and**) to*

*follow him. Jayto kept flying (**it, small, than**) distances waiting for Leo*

*to catch (**up, the, smaller**). Finally they came upon a broken (**stone,***

***flew, morsel**) wall. Leo had once heard that (**wall, of, a**) rich*

businessman.

This assessment is administered in a three minute time frame, each student completed the assessment independently. Each of the students used all of the three minutes and displayed several actions of an active reader for example, I could observe their eyes moving across the page and at times each student used their pencil to indicate where they were in the passage. While none of them finished the entire passage, they all ended in different points of the passage. Alan and Callie were able to make gains on their scores from previous weeks. However, none of the students made errors in the reading of this passage.

Vocabulary Flashcards

As is the Monday routine, I asked the students to gather the materials necessary to complete their vocabulary cards for the story we would be reading on Wednesday. The story we would be reading from the Harcourt Intervention Student Reader (2007) would be *Quest for a Healthy World* by Carol Storment. The vocabulary words that the program targeted as important key words for this story were: polio, immobility, decipher, astonished, dismayed, and despised. The students are exposed to these words in their general education classroom so this routine acts as a review of information they have already been introduced to.

I began with the word polio. Bill interrupted by indicating that the vaccine came about in 1957 which he had learned from a recent research project they had been conducting in class; 1957 was the year he was assigned to. The definition offered by the Harcourt program was: an infectious disease that often causes paralysis, which contained some difficult words that needed further discussion. For example, the word paralysis was difficult for the students to immediately understand. Alan drew attention to the fact that it sounded like paralyzed which allowed for the other students to infer that it must mean that it causes you to be unable to move. Alan added, "it freezes your body." The rest of the definitions were easy to understand and the students already had some exposure to them so, we progressed through the rest of the vocabulary words with little elaboration.

Once the students had finished filling out the vocabulary cards I asked them to lay each of the cards out on the table with the word facing up. We then continued on

to practice the pronunciations and definitions of the words. This is also a routine during the vocabulary lesson with the goal that the students will be much more likely to recognize, read, and understand the words with ease. Below is the interaction for the word 'polio.

Teacher/Mrs. Boyst: "Polio"

Students: Bill, Alan and Callie: "Polio"

T: "Polio"

S: "Polio"

T: "Polio"

S: "An infectious disease that often causes paralysis"

This practice is used for all of the vocabulary words.

Alan was more invested in the activity this week, more so than last week, however, Callie was often very off track. She would take any pause or moment of silence to begin talking about a topic completely unrelated to the task as hand. For example, she referenced a television show or the fact that she might be moving out of her house. While these topics hold some importance to her, I had to remind her that this was not the best time to discuss them further. It took longer to get through this activity as a result of her lack of focus. Some words needed to go through the procedure more than once since she had distracted the group with one of her stories.

Introduction of the Focus Skill

The final task on the agenda for the day was to begin discussing the focus skill of the week. This week we would be discussing the author's purpose. To begin to activate their prior knowledge of the subject, which they have discussed in units both within this school year as well as those in the past, I asked, "what are some of the reasons an author may choose to write something?" Callie was the first to respond with, "to like something and tell about it." I further prompted by asking, "what we might call this?" All three of the students responded with blank expressions on their faces so I began to say the word (inform) by offering one of the syllables, "in-," to which Callie shouted out, "to inform!" She drew attention to an acronym that they were taught to use in third grade: PIE. Each of these three letters stands for one of the reasons that an author may write something. We had already covered the 'I' so I looked to the other students to help fill in the other two. Alan raised his hand to discuss the 'E' in which he made the statement, "to tell a story," and after a brief pause, "entertain!" I asked Alan to see if he could remember what the 'P' stood for. He was unsure so I prompted him by asking him to "convince me of something." This seemed to appeal to his memory because he immediately shouted, "to persuade!"

To further activate their prior knowledge we talked about some of the materials that we know carry out one of these functions. We generated a list, below is the list we created:

Persuade: newspaper, articles about the president, editorials

Inform: non-fiction, newspapers, magazines

Entertain: Sunday comics

In order to close the lesson I asked the students to consider the text we read in the previous week, *Certain Steps*. What was the author's purpose for writing the story. I gave each student a whiteboard and marker to record their answer before revealing it to me. Once they flipped their boards so they were visible I noted the following responses:

Alan: Inform

Callie: Persuade

Bill: Entertain

Both Alan and Callie quickly wrote their responses very quickly, seemingly very confident in their choices. Bill took much longer to decide which purpose he was going to choose. I asked him to explain his thinking to which he replied, "I don't think any of them are right." When I asked him to elaborate he decided the purpose was to entertain, his face lit up as if he had finally figured it out. Since I would be discussing everyone's reasoning, I did not have him explain his choice at than moment. I asked everyone to briefly tell us why they chose the purpose that they did. Alan felt that the story was informing us about each character; Callie felt we were being persuaded to choose one character for class president; and Bill thought the author was telling us a story. I reminded them to think of the author, specifically, and what the author would be trying to do. I asked the following questions, emphasizing the word author:

"Is the *author* trying to convince us of anything?'

"Is the *author* trying to give us information about something?"

"Is the *author* telling us an interesting or funny story?"

After hearing these questions and my emphasis on the author, all three students came to the consensus that the author was trying to entertain us with the story *Certain Steps*. After this task the students were dismissed to return to their classrooms.

Wednesday

To begin this lesson, I decided to review the three main purposes for an author to write. I wrote the acronym PIE on the whiteboard and asked the students to identify the three purposes. Instead of taking volunteers I went around the table one student at a time, Alan was first. He correctly indentified the 'P' as persuade. Next was Bill who correctly identified the 'I' as inform. And last was Callie who correctly identified the 'E' as entertain. I referred the students back to the list we had generated that described some of the things we might read with each of these purposes. I reviewed one example from each purpose; I reminded them that editorials might persuade us to think about something, newspapers or magazines might inform us about something, and comics might entertain us.

The story we would be reading this week, from the Harcourt Intervention Student Reader, was *Quest for a Healthy World* by Carol Storment. It is a brief life story of Jonas Salk, the man who created the polio vaccine. The story walks through the important events of his life that led to this incredible discovery. It is complete with a timeline spanning the entire length of the text that sums up those important

events. The task at the end of this story will be to determine what the author's purpose for writing this story was and to explain why. I explained this task before we began to read the story. I reminded the students to pay attention to the text features, in an attempt to help them notice the timeline, as they may help him make the final decision. I planned to stop on the bottom of each page to discuss what I was reading. I guided them through my own thinking that would help me decide what the author's purpose is.

At the bottom of page 174 I began to detail what I felt I was reading about on the page. The text began by telling somewhat of a story about Jonas Salk, so I guided the students through my interpretation of it being an entertaining story or gaining information about something or someone. I described that I felt it could be a story since this page did not provide me with specific pieces of information so this page might lead me to think the author wanted to entertain me.

On the next page, I was able to cite more specific details. For example, Jonas Salk did not intend to become a doctor. Also, that while he was a student he helped work on a vaccine that prevented influenza. I also drew the student's attention to the real-life picture in the corner of the text and the caption below it. It was a photograph of Dr. Salk in his laboratory. I then described that because this page was more detailed from the first and gave me some specific information I determined the author wanted to *inform* me about Jonas Salk. On page 176 I discussed the same idea from the previous page. I was being given specific details about Jonas Salk's life. For example, he suspected that a killed-virus vaccine had the potential to succeed so he

tried it. I also drew their attention to the timeline that began on this page. It noted the date he was born in New York City. I described how these specific details were giving me information about Jonas Salk so the author must be trying to *inform* me.

Again, I stopped on the bottom of the next page to discuss some of the features I was noticing. They were similar to those from the previous pages. I was noticing some specific details that detail the process of developing the polio vaccine. Also, the timeline continued along this page so in an attempt to the draw the student's attention to that timeline we read the information from it together. Again, I noted that given this information I felt the author was trying to *inform* me. I noted the fact that I was starting to see a pattern develop.

On the next few pages I wanted the students to have the opportunity to offer their opinion about what we were reading. So, instead of me finishing the entire story I turned the reading over to the students. They each we charged with reading one page and leading a discussion similar to mine in which they identify what the author's purpose seemed to be on that page and why they felt that way. Alan read page 178. He began to read the pace at a quick rate that was difficult to understand. I asked him to slow down, which he did. However, he read the page with very little expression. At the end of the page he said, "did not persuade or entertain me." When I asked him why he responded with, "it was a lot of information." I then prompted him to tell me what the author's purpose seemed to be to which he indicated to inform.

Bill was to read page 179. He read the page with a good general pace that was understandable to all listeners. Often he would lose his momentum while reading so

he would reread a sentence or phrase to regain that momentum. Once he completed the page I asked him to offer his opinion of the author's purpose. He responded with, "to inform how life went, who inspired him." For clarification I asked him the following questions: "are you being persuaded or are you being entertained?" To which he responded no. This was a confirmation of his opinion that the page was designed to inform the reader about Jonas Salk.

Callie was designated the last page of the text. She read at an understandable rate but with no true expression or emotion. This page served as a summary for the great discovery Dr. Jonas Salk made to the medical community. When she was asked to offer an opinion she said, "it has a lot of information like that he helped the health of the entire world because he made the vaccine." I then prompted her to tell us what the author's purpose must be then. She decided that it was to inform the reader.

Once the story was complete and an opinion was formed of each page, we examined the pattern we saw in what was being written about in this text. We reviewed the text features such as the photographs and the timeline. We then came to a final conclusion about what the author's purpose for this text must be: to inform us! After this final conclusion I provided a brief description of the task that the students would complete on Friday. It would be similar to the one we have just completed. The students were then dismissed to their own classrooms.

Friday

I gave the students the task of determining the author's purpose for writing a story, independently. The format of the task was similar to what we had done as a group on Wednesday. The students were assigned to read a familiar story from the Harcourt student reader (2007), called *An Encounter with Space People* by Jeanette Mara. Once they finished they would complete a journal entry detailing what the author's purpose was and why they felt this was so. Before I allowed them to begin working on their own, I asked them to recall the three main purposes for writing, which they did almost immediately. I then asked them to open the student reader to page 118 and begin rereading the story. I allowed them to leave the table and return once they completed the story. Each student began reading in various comfortable locations around the room.

Each student returned to the table five to ten minutes from beginning to read the story. By the time they had settled at the table to begin writing their journal entries, they had about ten minutes to complete the task. As all three approaching the table and preparing for the task I reminded them to use information from the story to back up their opinion just as we did on Wednesday. A collective "OK" was heard from all three. Bill finished his entry very quickly, within a few minutes of beginning. Looking over his shoulder, I could see that he had only written one sentence describing what the purpose was. He had not used any details from the text that would support his feeling. I instructed him to add more to his response which elicited the appearance of frustration. He returned to the entry to add more

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information to support his answer. I collected the final products and dismissed the students to their classrooms.

I reviewed the final products to gain a picture of the student's understanding of the task. Bill's entry showed that he understood what was being asked of him. It also showed me that he had an understanding of what it meant to be entertained by a story. He indicated that this author's purpose was to entertain with the story. He then went on to say "Because to make us think or laugh and it really entertained me because when the space people came they looked funny..." He also cited that "It was fun to uncode the codes that the space people gave." While this was not a demonstration of proficient writing he showed that he understood that the story was designed to entertain him. He also detailed his idea of entertainment is something that makes him think or laugh and provided a satisfactory examples.

Callie's entry was not as detailed as Bill's. She did take the longest of each of the three students and I noticed her looking back at the text several times as she constructed her response. She began by making the assertion that this text is entertaining. She further explains, "because it has monsters and riddles like V.8.4.NRG and V.R.MT..." While she did indicate the correct purpose, her explanation did not fully support the answer by explaining what made those components entertaining or what it is meant for something to be entertaining. Her entry continued as she provides a brief synopsis of the story and then poses the question, "Wonder what space monsters are doing on earth?" Again, these did not provide adequate examples for me to fully believe that she understands what it means

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for a text to be entertaining because she did not demonstrate an understanding of the word.

Alan's opinion was that they story was entertaining. His entry was written much more complete with proper sentence structure. He further explained by saying, "…because the space people didn't speak and they made funny faces…It was pretty cool." Although he was able to correctly identify the author's purpose, he did not provide enough information for me to comfortably feel that he has a complete understanding of what an entertaining text it. He chose examples from the text that are indeed entertaining, such as the aliens making funny faces, however did not connect them to what makes something entertaining. Because of this, I feel he has a basic understanding but perhaps was unable to put it in to writing.

The final products will guide my future instruction. For example, I may need to revisit using details to back up your response. I may also need to revisit the author's purpose one more time to ensure the students' understanding of the concept.

Week Six

Week six began Monday March 12, 2012 and ended on Friday March 16, 2012.

Monday

On Monday I assessed the three participants using the AIMsweb probe for fluency (see Table 4.11) and the AIMsweb MAZE for comprehension (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.11: Fluency Probe for Week Six

	Words Read Correct	**Errors**
Bill	101	1
Alan	145	2
Callie	68	3

Figure 4.13 is an excerpt from the passage that I used to assess each student on his or her fluency.

Figure 4.14: Probe 17

"I cannot fall asleep," Ned said to himself quietly. The stars outside were shining brightly through his window, and the starlight pooled on his bedspread, giving off a silver glare against his shut eyelids. Ned pressed his eyes closed very tightly, but that didn't seem to help.

Finally Ned sat up and peered out his window. The stars were gorgeous tonight. Ned was sure he could see just about every constellation in the universe. He knew from school that a constellation was a group of stars that formed a picture in the sky. Out of all the

constellations that were out tonight, the Big Dipper glowed the

brightest. It was so bright, its light made Ned squint.

During the assessment each student read for one minute, each stopping at a different point in the passage. Just as in past weeks, each read with a different level of fluency. Despite constant modeling and reinforcing reading with expression, Bill read this passage in a monotone voice. He had adopted the "beat the clock" mentality that he had in previous weeks and read at a very quick pace. He did not read as far in this passage as he had in some of the past weeks. This was due to his use of word solving behaviors to help him solve the word "constellations." He spent more time working on decoding this word that he had in past reading passages. He did read this word incorrectly and was told the correct pronunciation, which was his only error in the passage. Again, he did not pause to acknowledge any of the punctuation such as periods or commas, which resulted in a portion of the passage seeming like one run-on sentence.

Alan made growth in this week's passage. He was able to read much further in the passage that he had last week. He did not appear to have the same struggles with this passage however, his reading sounded similar to that of past weeks. The attitude he displayed while reading indicated that he just wanted to be finished with the task as soon as possible. I noticed how this type of attitude was becoming a progressing behavior that at times has impeded his growth. This resulted in fast paced reading in which he ignored all punctuation such as commas and periods. The

passage sounded as if it was one sentence and he often had to stop and take a breath. He misread the words "quietly" and "all" which resulted in 2 errors for this reading.

Callie had some difficulty with this text. She too was stuck on decoding the word "constellations." She used a variety of methods to solve the word such as chunking in different ways and rereading to gather contextual information. She was not able to correctly identify the word, resulting in one of her three errors. Since this is a timed assessment she was told the pronunciation. She also misread the words "on" and "his" resulting in two errors. She read this with almost no expression at all, ignoring any of the quotations that indicated dialogue. She did attend to the commas and periods which resulted in smooth phrasing of the passage.

The information I gathered from this assessment will be used to determine what aspects of fluency I will model for the students, through my own reading.

Table 4.12: MAZE Comprehension for Week Six

	Words Correct	Errors
Bill	28	1
Alan	20	2
Callie	13	1

In order to assess comprehension the AIMsweb MAZE (Pearson, 2010) was administered. Figure 4.14 is an excerpt from the assessment in which, upon reaching

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the bolded words, the students would circle the word that made the most sense within the passage.

Figure 4.15: Probe 20

*It was an especially hard winter in Alvin's village. The only wood the village people (**anything, collected, gigantic**) that fall was wet and moldy, (**it, day, so**) their fires were halfhearted and (**forget, smoky, when**).*

*Alvin's uncle was feeling the strain (**for, was, of**) having an extra mouth to feed. (**Since, With, Have**) Alvin was that extra mouth, he (**gathered, especially, sometimes**) went without breakfast or dinner.*

*"Go (**out, and, or**) find some firewood for us," Alvin's (**then, many, uncle**) would command. "Then maybe I'll let (**make, you, my**) eat."*

*Alvin made his way deep (**those, but, into**) the forest in search of wood. (**His, Bit, He**) walked for many miles. Sadly, there (**was, ever, were**) no dry timber on the ground, (**try, so, and**) he had forgotten his uncle's axe.*

This assessment is administered in a three minute time frame, each student completed the assessment independently. Each student used all of the three minutes

and displayed several actions of an active reader for example, I could observe their eyes moving across the page and at times each student used their pencil to indicate where they were in the passage. While none of them finished the entire passage, they all ended in different points of the passage. Bill was able to make a gain from his previous score however, this passage proved to be somewhat difficult for Alan and Callie.

Bill made one error by circling the word "so" instead of the word "and." Alan made this exact mistake himself. Although, "so" could make sense in the sentence, it does not make the best sense and was therefore deemed incorrect. The goal for the student is to choose the most correct option. Callie also made one error by not circling a choice for one of the bolded sets of parenthesis. This was towards the end of the passage so I feel that she was rushing to complete as much as she could and as a result may have accidentally skipped a line in the text.

Vocabulary Flashcards

The plan continued with vocabulary flashcards, which is the normal routine for Monday. The words indicated as being target words were: refinery, muffle, grades, insulated, prowls, partition, and submitted. I asked the students to gather the necessary supplies and return to the table to make the flashcards. I expected that this activity would serve as a review for these students since they are exposed to the words in their general education classroom. I moved somewhat quickly through the activity for this reason.

I began with the word "refinery." The definition provided was: a place where crude material, such as sugar or petroleum, is made fine or pure. I felt that in order to build the appropriate knowledge of this word, for further application, I would need to explain the word "crude." I chose to use an example that I felt they could be familiar with. We discussed crude through the lens of sugar and sugar refineries. Again, because the students should have prior knowledge related to these vocabulary words, I did not hold an in depth discussion in regard to the rest of them.

Once the students had finished filling out the vocabulary cards I asked them to lay each of the cards out on the table with the word facing up. We then continued on to practice the pronunciations and definitions of the words. This is also a routine during the vocabulary lesson with the goal that the students will be much more likely to recognize, read, and understand the words with ease. Below is the interaction for the word "refinery."

Teacher/Mrs. Boyst: "Refinery"

Students: Bill, Alan and Callie: "Refinery"

T: "Refinery"

S: "Refinery"

T: "Refinery"

S: "A place where some crude material, such as sugar or petroleum, is made fine or pure."

This practice is used for all of the vocabulary words.

All students read at various speeds, finishing the task at a variety of times. As a result of not being in unison the volume became louder and louder. I had to remind the students repeatedly to adjust their pace to read with one another. There were several times we started the entire interaction over in order to allow the students to adjust their reading.

Introduction of the Focus Skill

The final item on the agenda was to review comparing and contrasting. I felt that this review was necessary, given that we had practiced this skill in the earlier weeks, because some of the students demonstrated a literal and superficial understanding of this action. My goal for this week was to help them delve deeper into comparing and contrasting to things or people. I began by asking the students, "When I am comparing and contrasting, what exactly am I doing?" I did not get one single response but instead each of the students began yelling over one another to have their opinions heard. All had the same general idea: looking for things that are the same and different. I had to ask several times that only one student speak at a time. This quieted them down so, I reiterated the concept one more time.

To continue activating their prior knowledge of comparing and contrasting I asked, "What can I use to help me organize these ideas?" Callie immediately shouted, "A Venn Diagram!" This is exactly the organizer I planned on using again this week. In order to provide a visual aide I drew a Venn Diagram on the whiteboard.

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To finalize the review and bring the lesson to a close we began to compare and contrast a Dry Erase Expo marker and a Crayola marker. This review was not designed to help the students think deeply about a piece of information, or a text, but instead practice the use of a Venn Diagram and solidify their knowledge about classifying the information. The first set of the activity was to create a list of all the characteristics that describe each type of marker to later add to the Venn Diagram. I used a physical example of each marker in order to help prompt the student responses. Because of time, I ended the lesson after the lists were created.

Wednesday

The first task of the day was to finish the Venn Diagram review. I drew the students' attention back to the list of characteristics that described the two different types of markers, Expo and Crayola. Together we took the information and transferred it to the appropriate sections on the Venn Diagram. Figure 4.15 is an image of the completed Venn Diagram with all of the information from the characteristic lists.

Figure 4.16: Crayola vs. Expo Marker
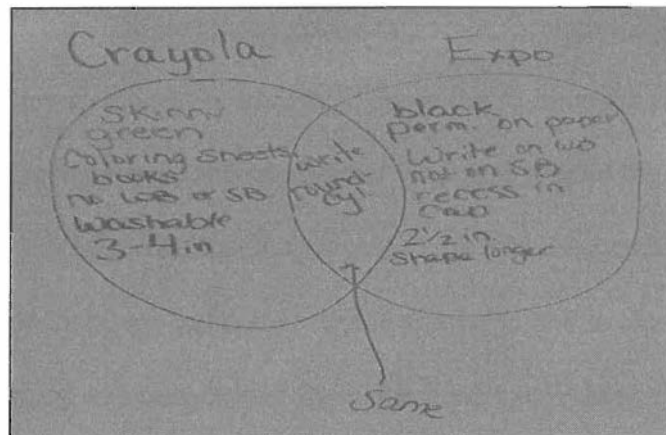
The next task for the day would be to read the story, from the Harcourt student reader (2007), *Pete's Great Invention* by Linda Lott. This is the story of a boy who is always late for school because his ordinary alarm clock does not wake him up so he creates a "super alarm" that will cause a loud noise to ensure he wakes up for school. He displays this invention at the classroom's invention fair. After completing the story we would be making lists of characteristics for a regular alarm clock and the "super alarm" to be entered into a Venn Diagram.

As I read this text I stopped at the end of each page, not to discuss the differences, but instead to discuss the events in the story. As a paused at the end of each page I noted the main idea of event from the page. For example, on page 183 I discussed the fact that Pete was very difficult to wake from sleep. To support myself I drew their attention to the line that stated, "The loud noise of the refinery starting up for the day didn't wake him." I deliberately chose this line to reinforce their knowledge of this vocabulary word, refinery. I also explained that I felt it was

important to note because refineries are so loud. I also wanted to connect the concept of a refinery by asking, "Do you think you would sleep through such a loud noise?" All three agreed they would not be able to. I chose not to draw the students' attention to only the differences between the two alarms because I wanted them to focus on the story as a whole. My hope was that they would be able to independently search the text for information since we had done a lesson similar to this in the past.

Once the story was completed I wrote the headings "Alarm Clock" and "Super Alarm Clock' on the whiteboard and distributed the students each a reader to refer back to. I then asked them to start offering idea to add to the lists. I did not need to call on each student individually instead they took turns adding to the list. I noticed Callie referring back to the text for information about the "super alarm." Alan and Bill repeatedly used the information they already knew about alarm clocks to generate the list by incorporating information about the mechanics of an alarm clock. Figure 4.16 is a visual of the list of characteristics we created.

Figure 4.17: Venn Diagram – "Alarm Clock" vs. "Super Alarm Clock"
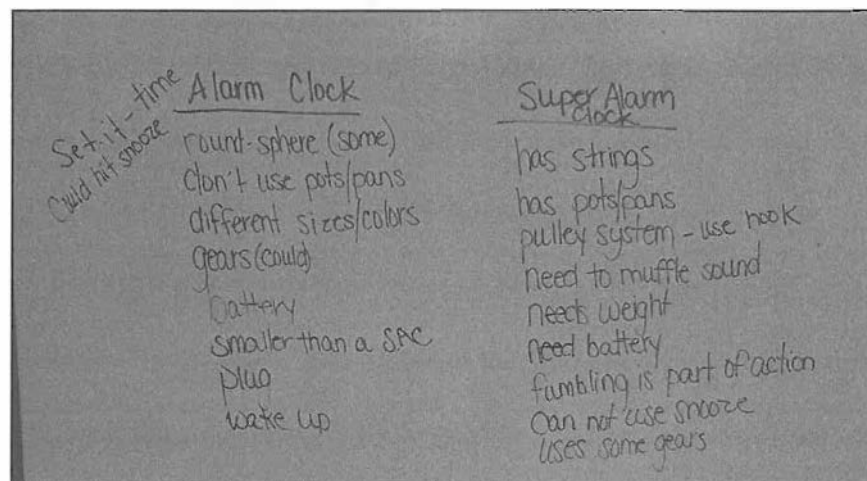
After the list was finished the students were each given a blank sheet of paper to develop their own Venn Diagram and fill in the information from the chart. When reviewing their final product it was noticed that all students correctly arranged the information into their Venn Diagram.

Friday

In order to demonstrate a developing knowledge of comparing and contrasting the students were asked to reread a familiar story and compare that main character to the one from this week's story. I would ask them to create a list of character/personality traits that describe each character and then arrange them into a Venn diagram (see earlier note). This activity was completed independently and took the full 30 minutes for each student to complete. They were asked to reread, from the Harcourt student reader (2007), the story from the previous week, *Quest for a Healthy World* by Carol Storment and the story from this week, *Pete's Great Invention* by Linda Lott. In each story the main character was an inventor; the previous week's story was non-fiction whereas this week's story was fiction. I expected that the students should be able to find several similarities and differences between these characters. I collected the final product to assess their knowledge.

Bill's responses were very short, one word answers. For example some of the characteristics he chose for Pete (from *Pete's Great Invention*) include: kid, clock, student, and trouble waking. Some of these responses do not fully describe what he

means for example, he did not provide enough information to indicate why he chose to put "clock" on his list. Many of the things he chose to add to his list were superficial actions or characteristics. When describing Jonas Salk (from *Quest for a Healthy World*) he sites information including: adult, Medicare, doctor, and is a real person. He inaccurately lists that he has trouble with polio. This character invents a successful polio vaccine but does not have trouble with it himself. He listed one piece of information for the similarities section which was "invented an object." I felt that Bill demonstrated how to use a Venn Diagram to site information that was similar between the characters and different. However, I felt that he did not thoroughly explain his choices or address the broad range of similarities and differences between the characters. He only scratched the surface and did not think at a deeper level, which was modeled in the past.

Alan made similar citations to Bill. Many of his characteristics for both characters were superficial. For Pete he cited some things such as: young, in elementary, and lives at home. On his title for Jonas Salk he incorrectly identified his name as John. Some of the things he listed for Jonas Salk included: older, died, graduated, and vaccine. For similarities he listed "inventors" and "boys." While most of the characteristics he listed were superficial he did make some inferences. For example, he noted that Jonas Salk worked with chemicals. This was not directly stated in the story but implied through his invention and the photographs used to enhance the story. He also made some unnecessary assumptions, seemingly to fill in his diagram. For example, he noted that Pete was not married and lived at home.

This would be true of any young child such as Pete. He also stated that Pete was still alive whereas Jonas Salk was not but failed to realize the true difference was that one was a non-fiction character whereas the other was a fiction character. While I was satisfied that he could successfully compare and contrast two characters, I was concerned with the level of thinking and understanding that he took away from each story. I felt this will need to be addressed in further lessons.

Just like her group mates, Callie cited some of the same superficial information about the characters. Some of the characteristics she cited for Pete included: normal kid, clock, helped in wake up. These were the only things she cited as specific to Pete. It seemed as though she began to describe the invention rather than the person. For Jonas Salk she cited characteristics that included: Dr., made medicines and other vaccines, tried difference vaccines and medicines. She cited a few similarities which included: invented, they both needed help, and both came up with ideas. Similar to her group mates, I noticed that Callie only cited basic information and did not synthesize any of the actions to interpret a character trait that is specific for each character. It was my hope that she would have been able to find more differences and similarities to discuss within the time frame she was given. While she did demonstrate an understanding of comparing and contrasting, it was my hope that she would be able to think about the text at a deeper level and interpret some of each character's actions. I will take this into account for further lessons.

Conclusion

I feel that this was a successful learning experience for myself and can be used to further inform my future instruction. I also feel that the students were able to successfully practice some of the focus skills presented in the Harcourt Program (2007) through my modeling within the interactive read aloud model. The students were able to take a break from focusing on the words and decoding a text to develop their own skills as readers. The students received developmentally and grade level appropriate exposure to the texts and reading skills. I believe that interactive read aloud has a place within the classroom and that I can implement it successfully within a structured framework. While I will not incorporate this instructional practice into my daily routine, I will continue to use this practice. I will carefully choose skills that this instructional practice will most effectively model for my students. Through this study I have become accustomed to the planning process necessary for this to become a successful instructional practice. I felt my students enjoyed the process and will look forward to using it in the future.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Through the experience of conducting this research, I have found that through interactive read-alouds I can provide the instruction necessary for students to developing good reading behaviors and skills. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) describe the interactive read-aloud as a process by which the teacher reads a text to the students and in conjunction with the students, discusses that text together. During the read aloud, the teacher has the opportunity to model fluent reading behaviors as well as his/her own personal use of a variety of reading skills and strategies that will help students become better readers.

Throughout this research study, I developed and conducted a series of meaningful, interactive read-aloud lessons with my three students receiving Academic Intervention Services (AIS) in the area of ELA. The purpose of this study was to examine the potential benefits of using the interactive read-aloud instructional method in a setting where Academic Intervention Services are begin provided. I researched the question:

> What happens when I incorporate read-aloud activities including explicit instruction of reading comprehension into the instruction of students who receive Academic Intervention Services?

In order to discover what could happen when incorporating interactive read-aloud activities into my teaching of three students who receive AIS, I invited them to take part in a weekly interactive reading of a story from their student reader. I then

designed a series of discussion questions that would help enhance their knowledge of a certain reading skill.

In this chapter I present the conclusions, implications for student learning, implications for teaching and suggest areas of further research based on the information presented in chapter four.

Conclusions

Interactive Read-Aloud Activities Stimulated Students to Engage with Texts through Discussion

The interactive read-aloud is designed to allow both the teacher and the students to discuss a story, such as those from the Harcourt student reader (2007). There were several opportunities for this interactive style discussion to take place throughout the lessons each week. Often, the three students participated in the discussion without needing to be called upon to contribute. For example, during the compare and contrast lesson, the students each rotated through contributing to the list of attributes about two different types of markers. I did not need to prompt them to do so, nor did I need to call upon them individually, instead they took cues from one another to continue the discussion.

In addition to being able to take discussion cues from one another, the students often added their own ideas and made connections to information that they had learned in the past. Callie was able to frequently recall her knowledge to make connections, for example, when discussing the author's purpose, she remembered information that helped her remember the primary purposes for writing. The two

boys were also able to recall background knowledge to compare and contrast a regular alarm clock with the "super alarm clock" found in one our student reader stories.

In most of the lessons, the majority of the students actively listened to the story and contributed meaningfully to the discussion that followed. They each were able to successfully complete assignments that demonstrated their developing knowledge of the focus skill for the week. Although there were some instances of distraction or lack of willingness, the majority of the time the students were able to participate meaningfully in the activities.

Being able to hold meaningful discussions about the stories seemed to enable to the students to further develop their knowledge of comprehension skills and strategies. I was able to lead the students through my own thought process, for example, during the main idea and details lesson I selected what I felt were the details of the story's main idea and demonstrated this process to the students. The students then took   my example and applied it to their own reading process of a familiar text.

A similar process took place during the reading from the Harcourt student reader (2007) of *With Love from Ella* in which I offered the students facts from the story and guided them in creating their own opinion of Ella Fitzgerald. This helped strengthen the students' knowledge of facts versus opinions and enabled them to practice synthesizing information to formulate their own thoughts and understandings. Over the course of the six weeks, I was able to see this progression

throughout the students' contributions to our daily discussions and in the final assignments they completed each Friday.

Interactive Read Aloud Activities Enabled Students to Demonstrate an Understanding of a Specific Reading Skill

Throughout the six weeks the three students regularly took part in an interactive read-aloud lesson that was accompanied by a discussion and activity designed to help them focus on a specific reading skill. It became evident to me, through their comments during our student discussions, that the students were able to apply the skill during the reading process. For example, Callie was able to articulate the main idea of *Lourdes Lopez: Ballet Star* during our follow-up discussion. Since I had designed the activity to correlate with the reading skill targeted by the reading program, I made sure the students had the opportunity to apply their developing knowledge.

In the majority of instances, the students were able to successfully demonstrate their knowledge and application of the reading skill through the final activity. Often this demonstration did not display the students' ability to think critically about the text, the students were able to show that they could only superficially apply their developing knowledge of the skill discussed. For example, during the compare and contrast lesson from Week Six, Alan correctly cited information that compared Jonas Salk from *Quest for a Healthy World* and Pete from *Pete's Great Invention*; however, his information was often superficial and did not reflect deeper level thinking. Alan was unable to interpret each character's actions to

determine a character trait, instead he referred to physical characteristics or the simply the action that the character took. This was a similar situation for Bill during the fact and opinion lesson that was designed to accompany *With Love from Ella*. In that lesson, I asked the three students to use the facts we discussed to formulate their own opinions of Ella Fitzgerald. While I did provide an example, Bill's final product demonstrated his knowledge of facts and opinions however it did not show evidence of his ability to synthesize the information. While there was a successful demonstration of developing knowledge, further lessons could be done to ensure that they continue this thinking but on a deeper level.

The Students' Use of Graphic Organizers Helped Them Organize Their Ideas

I engaged students in a series of lessons in which they used graphic organizers to help them organize and demonstrate their understanding of the story's content. In Week Three the focus skill was to indentify the main idea and details of a story. In order to organize the main idea and details of a text I presented a flow chart, which the students then used to organize and record what they felt, were the main idea and details of the text. . During the final activity, I gave each student a graphic organizer to fill in independently. Each student was able to correctly put the information into the appropriate boxes labeled main idea and details. The flow chart offered the students a place to organize their thoughts in a limited space, which required them to determine the most important information.

In Weeks Four and Six, the students used a Venn Diagram when discussing similarities and differences of characters from stories s *Certain Steps, Pete's Great Invention,* and *Quest for a Healthy World.* Not only did we compare characters, such as Al and Murphy from *Certain Steps* in Week Four, but we collectively compared objects such as a "super alarm clock" and a regular alarm clock. The students were able to list similarities and differences and sort them into the appropriate categories, such as those labeled per character within the graphic organizer. The completed graphic organizer helped the students easily see what made two characters or two objects the same or different.

Implications for Student Learning

Interactive Read-Alouds have the Potential to Focus Students' Attention Away from Decoding Words

The interactive read alouds did not require the students to read the text independently and as a result created the opportunity for them to focus less on decoding words and more on the literacy skill at the heart of the lesson and the enjoyment of the listening to a story. Because I was reading the text, the students were not distracted by reading words that might have been difficult for them to figure out how and as a result they could participate easily in any of the discussions that took place during and after the reading. Because the focus of the lessons was not on decoding, the students were able to develop their listening and reading comprehension skills such as acknowledging word relationships, identifying main idea and details, understanding the difference between facts and opinions,

understanding the author's purpose, and being able to compare and contrast two characters or objects.

For each of my lessons, I provided the students with an overview of the skill we would be working with during that week. . Each time I introduced a skill, I did so with the goal of activating the students' knowledge to focus on the skill for the week. I did this each Monday so the students had a specific lens through which to examine the story during the rest of the week's lessons. During the reading of *With Love from Ella*, I asked the students to focus on finding facts through my guidance, and later I had them use those facts to formulate their own opinion of Ella Fitzgerald. Since I read the text aloud to the students and did not provide them with their own copy, their task was to focus solely on the facts and opinions presented in the story. They did not need to focus on decoding words within the text. As part of this lesson, I also indentified several facts for them to use so they could observe my own thought process. In the end, each student was able to demonstrate his or her developing knowledge of facts and opinions.

My Modeling of a Comprehension Skill through an Interactive Read-Aloud Allowed Students to Gain Insight as to What Comprehension Strategies Look Like

Through the interactive read-alouds I was able to model a variety of comprehension strategies for the students by offering a discussion of my own personal thought processes and a thorough explanation of the strategy. The interactive read-aloud instructional model   provided me with the opportunity to

explicitly demonstrate comprehension strategies such as comparing and contrasting character's behaviors or character traits, using facts to develop opinions, or understanding word relationships. I was able to directly demonstrate how I interpreted a text based on the focus skill for the week. Through this instructional practice, I was able to lead a discussion that enabled the students to later demonstrate their own developing knowledge as part of the Friday activity. For example during Week Three, our focus was indentifying main idea and supporting details, I was able to model this skill by explaining my thought process as I selected what I felt was the main idea of the story followed by the supporting details. The students were then able to use my thought process to help guide their own as they read a story independently later in the week. During the Friday activity I required the students to read a familiar text and identify the main idea and supporting details and complete a graphic organizer. Each student completed this task differently. Callie followed my example and referred to her text much more frequently while completing the graphic organizer, while the boys followed my example by selecting an important detail from each page of the text. Although the students struggled to independently identify an appropriate main idea, they were able to follow the process I modeled to help them identify the main idea.

Students May Benefit From Engaging in Multiple Interactive Read Aloud Activities as a Way to Develop Comprehension Skills and Demonstrate Higher Level Thinking Skills

I focused on a different comprehension skill during each week of the study. For example, in Week One I focused on word relationships: synonyms, and during Week Six I focused on the skill of comparing and contrasting. Each week I read one story that provided students with an opportunity to develop the comprehension skill further. While the students seemed to display a general understanding of each focus skill, they did not always achieve the higher order thinking that was the intent of each lesson. For example, during Weeks Four and Six, my goal was to have the students to compare and contrast two characters based on the characters' actions, and then synthesize the information to make assumptions about those characters' traits. During my demonstration and discussion of my own thinking I interpreted an action, such as cleaning up litter at school, to show how the character was caring. During Weeks Four and Six comparing and contrasting was the focus skill that I used my discussions to demonstrate how I might interpret information about a character. I then asked the students to demonstrate their understanding of this concept during their Friday activity in which I asked them to compare and contrast the same two characters I used during my discussion. All three students were able to correctly identify similarities and differences between these two characters; however, they did not interpret the characters' actions to develop similarities or differences in character traits.

Because the students were not able to successful synthesize the information I believe they would have benefited from additional lessons with a variety of texts that helped to support their ability to interpret and synthesize information. The students did demonstrate a basic, knowledge of comparing and contrasting information about the two characters, which leads me to believe further instruction with explicit discussion and demonstration could help them increase their ability in the future. The majority of the time, each student demonstrated the ability and enthusiasm to successfully participate in the interactive style of read-aloud, which also leads me to believe that they would benefit from similar lessons with a variety of texts. While students may develop a basic knowledge through the first lesson, I could conduct further lessons to help them further develop their comprehension skills. .

Implications for My Teaching

Use of Interactive Read-Aloud Activities Enables Explicit Teaching

Modeling, think alouds, and discussions and demonstrations of a specific comprehension strategy were some of the most important aspects of my interactive read-aloud instructional practice. I discovered that I could explicitly teach one skill or a set of skills to a student or group of students through careful, thoughtful, purposeful modeling. I designed each lesson specifically to target a certain skill that I believed would help students improve either their reading fluency or reading comprehension. As the teacher, I had the opportunity to design those lesson to target that goal by choosing the aspects of the text that I felt best supported that skill. For

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example, in Week Two during my reading of *With Love from Ella,* I pre-selected facts from each page of the text to support my discussion of the fact and opinion focus skill. I was able to design and guide a discussion, about how to use facts to help develop my personal opinion that then helped the students develop their knowledge of that particular skill. I will continue to use interactive read-alouds to help students continue to develop their comprehension strategies that will allow them to successfully read and interpret a text. Through modeling, I can execute deliberate instruction in the development of reading comprehension strategies. As I continue to employ this instructional practice, with explicit modeling, I can ensure that students are gaining insight into how to use comprehension strategies that will enable them to become successful readers.

All of the comprehension strategies that I modeled, for the purpose of this study, were used in conjunction with instruction from the Harcourt (2007) reading program. I believe that I can now develop an interactive read aloud lesson to help my students utilizing a variety of skills. For example, I could put more emphasis on fluency and select a text to help support my students' fluent reading skills. I could model reading behaviors that acknowledge punctuation such as commas and periods, since I recognize that my students struggle with this aspect of reading with fluency. As I continue, I anticipate that I will explore use of a variety of texts to supplement the student reader required through the school's reading program.

Text Selection is an Important Component of an Interactive Read-Aloud Activity

During this study I read selections from the student reader that was matched with reading program mandated by the school district. The reading selections followed the designated pathway of the program and therefore I did not have a choice in regard to what text I could use. Often I noticed that some of the students displaying what appeared to be behaviors of boredom such as slouching in the seat or not paying attention to me or the story. I suspect that perhaps the story selections during these weeks were not particularly interesting for the two boys as the focus was primarily on female dancers or female singers. I believe that had I used a variety of other texts that were designed to spark the interest of all of my students I may have been able to hold their attention. The boys' reactions make it clear to me that story selection is important to the success of each lesson. I recognize that the story or text selection should be careful and calculated to help reach as many of the students as possible. I believe that it is important for me to know my students and their interests in order to tailor the types of texts selected to meet those interests. In order to do this I will conduct discussions with my students to learn more about their specific interests. I could also conduct an interest survey with each of them. I would then use this information to select texts that would spark their interest, which I anticipate would inspire them to become more active and engage during the interactive read-alouds.

Detailed Planning is a Necessity for Creating a Meaningful Interactive Read-Aloud Experience

Because the interactive read-aloud model provided an opportunity for me to explicitly teach a certain reading aspect or skill such as word relationships or main idea and supporting details, I found that it was imperative for me to use detailed planning in order to be successful. It was essential for me to pre-plan my lesson including the places in the story where I would pause to reference or to reiterate the focus skill in order to ensure that I was supporting the students through a meaningful experience. My detailed planning ensured that I would be successfully and meaningfully lead the students in constructing their understanding about a specific comprehension strategy.

In order to successfully complete a detailed plan, I felt that it was also essential that I familiarized myself with the text before reading it to my students. I needed to pre-read to ensure I was comfortable with the structure and the language of the text so that I was able to successfully read the text to the students. This planning was evident during Week Four in the reading of *Certain Steps*. The focus skill for the week was comparing and contrasting two characters. In order to guide the students through a meaningful learning experience, my pre-planning included pre-reading the text to ensure I was comfortable reading it aloud and selecting character actions that I would interpret with the students to determine how the actions revealed the character's traits. I see now how this pre-planning was one of the most important implications to successfully facilitate the students' learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research the Use of Interactive Read- Aloud for an Extended Period of Time

I conducted this study over a six week time frame. I do not believe that I had enough time to accurately demonstrate the potential benefits of using interactive read-alouds in an Academic Intervention Services setting. Not only is six weeks a short amount of time, the students only met three times a week and twice that was reduced to twice a week for extenuating circumstances. I devoted one of these three days solely to the read-aloud activity in order to keep within the confines of the AIS program. Because I was required to administered progress monitoring checks once a week, I collected six assessments over this period of time, which negatively impacted the amount of time I could devote to my research. If I had conducted this study over a longer period of time I may have been able to conduct more read-aloud activities over a longer duration. I may have also been able to gather more observational data or interview the students at the beginning and end of the study to obtain their view of the instructional practice. With this information I may have been able to determine additional benefits of using the interactive read-aloud model.

Research the Benefit on Student Reading Comprehension Using a Measure More Closely Aligned to the Reading Program's Targeted Comprehension Skill

As I conducted this study I was required to ask the students to complete a Cloze style comprehension assessment from the AIMsweb Benchmark and Progress Monitoring system (Pearson, 2010). I did not create the Cloze passage and therefore it did not align directly with the focus skill I was targeting nor did it relate to the story

of the week. In addition to the fact that I did not design this assessment, I did not formulate the regulations in regard to the administration of this assessment. I also did not design the other required assessment, the MAZE comprehension assessment nor did it correlate to the Harcourt Reading Program (2007). I feel that it would be important to conduct a study in which I or another researcher used a more authentic form of assessment that would gauge the impact of the interactive read-aloud experiences and the students' learning of a targeted skill. I believe such a study has the potential to more accurately capture the overall impact of interactive read-aloud instruction practice on students' development as readers.

Research a Potential Relationship Between Text Complexity and Effective Interactive Read-Aloud

After completing this study, I believe that using the interactive read-aloud method would enable me to select and read texts that are slightly above the average reading level of a class or a small group of students. During the study, I noticed that the students were able to concentrate on the story I was reading without having to worry about decoding or negotiating any other potential challenges. Not only could the students listen and focus on the content, but they were focused on practicing a specific comprehension strategy such as those from within the study such as comparing and contrasting or others such as questioning or interpreting information.

The interactive read-alouds also provided the students with an opportunity to hear me read fluently, pausing for commas or applying the appropriate inflections to delineate expressions, like excitement. In addition to these skills and strategies, I

demonstrated self-monitoring strategies that helped students develop their word-decoding strategies. There were many opportunities for an interactive read-aloud to be used to guide student learning.

I found little research that discusses the complexity or difficulty in terms of levels of a text in relation to the use of the interactive read-aloud process. I believe that it would be interesting to explore the range of text complexity that might enable students to be successful in achieving the goals of an interactive read-aloud lesson. A study could be launched using a variety of texts at a variety of text levels to support the development of one particular skill or strategy. I believe it would be beneficial to find out what text level range best supports the students in developing their knowledge of that skill or strategy.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to examine what could happen when I incorporate interactive read-aloud activities into my literacy instruction of students who receive Academic Intervention Services. The findings show that during the interactive read alouds, I invited Callie, Allan and Bill to take part in a variety of discussions and activities. These teacher led discussions help the students continue to develop reading behaviors and strategies that they need to ensure their comprehension of a text. The students' use of graphic organizers helped them put their thoughts down on paper, which also helped them comprehend a text. As a result of my explicit teaching, the students were able to display a general understanding of a reading skill.

During this study I was able to observe my students as I read to them and tailor the instruction through our discussions and interactions. I was able to see their application of the skill that we discussed as a group and identify areas for future instruction to support their continued growth. Not only did the students benefit from their experience with the interactive read alouds, but I, as their teacher, was able to find areas to help them to continue to grow. I believe that as teachers we must not underestimate the power of a read-aloud especially when it is incorporated with meaningful discussion and extension activities.

Using the interactive read-aloud model enabled for me to recall some of by favorite memories as a student. I particularly enjoyed being read to as a student so I wanted to incorporate an instructional practice that would enable the student and me to participate in the active reading and discussion of a story (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). The interactive read aloud method enabled me to develop detailed read-aloud lessons, which aligned to the school's reading program and that inspired my students to participate in meaningful discussions and facilitated their learning of a variety of comprehension skills.

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Appendix A: Parent/Guardian Letter

PARENT/GUARDIAN LETTER FOR RECRUITMENT TO PARTICIPATE

November 16, 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In addition to being your child's teacher, I am also a graduate student in the department of Education and Human Development at The College at Brockport, SUNY. I am conducting a research study that examines the effects of read-aloud instructional practices on reading comprehension for students who receive Academic Intervention Services. As part of my study, with your consent, I will observe your child to understand how he/she is growing in regard to their reading comprehension.

If you grant consent for your child to participate in this study, I will observe him/her during our 30 minute meetings three times a week. My observations will focus on your child's application of skills and strategies that build reading comprehension. I will use the read-aloud practices to help your instruct your child's developing skills and strategies for reading comprehension.

I will be collecting data through the use of periodic assessments, note taking and video taping. I will take notes each day that we meet for approximately six weeks. I will video tape the lessons to refer back to.

The enclosed observation consent form include information about your child's rights as a study participant, including how I will protect his/her privacy. Please read the forms carefully. If you are willing to allow your child's participation, please indicate your consent by signing the attached statements and returning them to me.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Abbey Boyst
Graduate Student
The College at Brockport, SUNY
abla0627@brockport.edu
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Dr. Don Halquist
Thesis Advisor
The College at Brockport, SUNY
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Appendix B: Parent Informed Consent

PARENT INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of this research study is to explore how the use of teacher read-alouds affects the reading comprehension of students who receive Academic Intervention Services. To do this, I will be observing your child by videotaping our sessions together and referring back to them for notes. This research is also being conducted in order for me to complete my master's thesis for the Department of Education and Human Development at the State University of New York College at Brockport.

In order for your child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in the study. If you would like for your child to participate, and agree with the statements below, please sign your name in the space provided at the end. You may change your mind at any time and your child may leave the study without penalty, even after the study has begun. Your child can decline participation in the study even with your consent to participate.

I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and has the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My child's confidentiality is guaranteed. My child's name will not be written on any notes taken by the primary researcher. If any publication results from this research, my child would not be identified by name.
3. The only anticipated personal risk because of my child's participation in this project is my child's personal time spent receiving the instructional method. The anticipated benefit because of my child's participation is an opportunity to contribute to the public discourse on the use of read-aloud strategies in conjunction with regular intervention programs.
4. My child's participation involves a pre-test and post-test assessment and participation in read-aloud activities used in conjunction with their regular intervention program.
5. Approximately 3 students will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a master's thesis by the primary researcher.
6. This signed informed consent document will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the investigator. Data will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been accepted and approved.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my

satisfaction. I agree to allow my child to participate in the study realizing I may withdraw without penalty at any time during the survey process.

Signature of participant   *Date*

If you have any questions you may contact:

Primary researcher: **Faculty Advisor**:
Abbey Boyst   Dr. Don Halquist
Researcher   Thesis Advisor
abla0627@brockport.edu   dhalquis@brockport.edu
(585) 507 - 8001   (585) 395 - 5550

Appendix C: Student Assent

Statement of Assent for Observation
To Be Read to Fifth Grade Students

I am your teacher, but I am also a student at The College at Brockport. I want to learn more about using read-alouds in AIS. I would like to find out how it helps you to make meaning from what we read. To learn about your thinking, I will videotape our meetings together. I will use your progress monitoring assessments to help me chart your development; I won't write down your name or let anyone else know who you are. When I write about you in my study, I will only say what you did and how you acted during our lessons.

Your parent or guardian has given permission for you to take part in this study, but it's up to you to decide if you would like to. If you would like to take part in my study, but change your mind later on, you can tell me that you have changed your mind. It is okay to change your mind at any time. If it is okay with you for me use read-alouds here in AIS and make observations about your thinking, you can write your name on the first line below. Under your name you can write today's date, which is _____.

Thank you very much,
Mrs. Boyst

Name: _____

Date: _____

Witness (over the age of 18):

_____

Please check one to indicate if you would allow me to video tape you in our lessons:

_____ I do not mind if I am video taped

_____ I do not wish to be video taped

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Vocabulary Word	Synonym(s)

Name _____

Fact vs. Opinion

Directions: indicate whether the statement is a fact or an opinion.

1. **You can find Niagara Falls in the state of New York as well as Canada.**

   FACT or   Opinion

2. **My mother makes the best chocolate cupcakes but my grandma makes the best banana bread.**

   FACT or   Opinion

3. **Having shorter hair is more convenient than having longer hair.**

   FACT or   Opinion

4. **In order to make a cake you will need flour, butter, oil, sugar, and vanilla.**

   FACT or   Opinion

5. **My cake is much tastier if I use a store bought batter.**

   FACT or   Opinion

6. **Short and fat pine trees make much better Christmas trees since you can fit more ornaments on them.**

   FACT or   Opinion

Directions: develop two statements that are facts and two statements that are opinions.

1. _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. _____

_____

_____

_____

3. _____

_____

_____

_____

4. _____

_____

_____

_____

Main Idea and Supporting Details

Directions: Identify the main idea and three supporting details.

Main Idea:

Supporting Detail #1:

Supporting Detail #2:

Supporting Detail #3: