

5-2001

# The Influence of Word Building Strategies on a Delayed Reader

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SUNY COLLEGE AT BROCKPORT

The Influence of Word Building Strategies on a Delayed Reader

by

Carolyn A. D'Angelo

A Thesis submitted to the  
Department of Education and Human Development  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of  
Master of Science in Education

Degree Awarded:  
Spring Semester, 2001

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## Abstract

This case study of one child was conducted during the school year when the child was a third grader. His reading ability was below grade level. He was unable to read fluently although he was able to speak fluently and articulate his thoughts. This study showed that, through word building using onset and rime patterns and analogies along with reading leveled and series books, reading ability could be improved. Metacognition played an important role in this study. The child was able to understand the need to think as he was reading and writing. This was probably the most significant aspect of this study.

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## CHAPTER I

### Statement of the Problem

#### Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how word building strategies in conjunction with reading leveled and series books would improve the reading ability of a delayed reader.

#### Introduction

Reading instruction for children who are having difficulties is a daily concern for educators (Bottomley & Osborn, 1992). Classroom teachers have first hand knowledge that there is no one panacea to help children who are delayed readers. Effective teachers must consider all they know about the reading process in order to create a suitable developmental reading program for each child (Caverly, 1997). According to Goodman (1986) language needs to be learned through real, purposeful teaching and experiences depending on the needs of the individual child. Educators need to address more than teaching reading through one particular method. It is through looking at the family history and background, educational history, personality, strengths and weaknesses of the whole child that teachers determine the strategies to use to develop reading ability.

Using a word building strategy (Gunning, 1995) for a child who is struggling to decode words so intensely that it impedes comprehension is a tried and accepted method of instruction. Word building seems to fit the way children

approach decoding words. But if educators are going to look at the whole person there needs to be more than teaching one sub-skill to enhance a child's learning (Goodman, 1986).

Along with the strategies of word building, the use of similar style books such as series books sometimes can enhance comprehension and interest according to Cunningham and Allington (1999). The reader is able to accumulate information about the characters in a story and thus become empowered with the desire to continue reading. Milobar (1991) discovered that although reading connected books might not increase comprehension, the use of this type of book will increase the desire to read and motivate the struggling reader to continue to read. Leveled books, which are usually taught sequentially, are also important for teaching children who are having difficulties with decoding words in context. Leveled books historically have been used by teachers because of the structure and order they provide to teach children the needed skills to read.

#### Need for the Study

Teaching reading using authentic and real literature and allowing for the interest of the reader while developing compatible instruction for word development will assist delayed readers (Goodman, 1986). Along with these approaches, it is essential that thinking and questioning strategies are also implemented. Isolating one skill and moving to another without practicing the application of that skill may not improve reading ability (Goodman, 1986).



Joining skill-based teaching through the additional use of leveled books rooted to the needs of the learner and using books that are interesting to the learner seems to be a more developmental approach to this researcher.

This project also underlines the need for reflection. Expert teachers continually reflect on their teaching to improve their ability to reach every student. The ongoing discussion of local, state and national government officials regarding teachers' ability to teach and students' ability to learn has given the profession the opportunity to reflect on its practices. In 1999 only 48% of all New York State public school 4<sup>th</sup> grade students met the standards of the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment. Of all the tested public school children in New York State only 48% passed in 1999 and 58% met the standards in 2000 (NYSED, 2001). Educators do not like to think these statistics are an indication of the failure to teach children what they need to know. Putting that aside, what teachers do need to do is to reflect on their teaching. Looking in depth at one child and learning about the needs of that child along with helping that child to succeed can and will increase the awareness of other children's needs. Rosaen and Lindquist (1992) state that looking at "the unique transformations" of one child can give us "rich insights" into the development of other children.

The purpose of this study was to investigate using word building strategies of onset and rime patterns along with analogies, thinking and questioning techniques and applying that knowledge while reading series and leveled books to

develop the fluency of a delayed reader. Following the development of one child can only enhance the teacher's understanding of the process of reading and instructional strategies. Taking into consideration the intellectual, emotional, physical and social aspects of a child and using those to develop an appropriate learning environment is the thrust of this case study.

### Definition of Terms

<b>Word building approach</b>	-Using onset and rime patterns to construct words.
<b>Leveled books</b>	-Sequential books based on skill learning.(e.g. Soar to Success-Houghton/Mifflin Series)
<b>Series books</b>	-Books based on the same character. (e.g. Curious George, Magic Tree House, Arthur series books)
<b>Onset</b>	-The beginning consonant or combination of consonants of a word.
<b>Rime</b>	-The end of the word or syllable that begins with a vowel (e.g. -at, -it)
<b>Analogy strategy</b>	-Using known words to work on the pronunciation of an unknown word.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

#### Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how word building strategies in conjunction with reading leveled and series books would improve the reading ability of a delayed reader.

#### Aspects of Literacy Instruction

The zone of proximal development is the "distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance..." (Vygotsky, cited in Palincsar, 1984, p. 3). That special "zone", although different for each child, is the place struggling readers need to reach in order to actuate their potential (Rosenblatt, 1976). The bridge at which any child requires scaffolding is where instruction needs to begin (Palincsar, 1984). We will gain insight and definitive knowledge and locate this "place" through teacher reflection, organized observations, interviews and conversations with parents and especially, listening to each child in order to direct instruction.

Good readers seem to have more strategies than poor readers. Children who have attained fluency seem to have inherent strategies for analyzing words,

whereas, children who are struggling to read do not seem to have these same strategies (Merrill, 2000; Olshavsky, 1976). Good readers use a variety of approaches in order to understand what they are reading. They are able to draw conclusions and delve below the surface of content (Olshavsky, 1976). They are also able to determine the appropriate strategy to solve a reading problem. They are interested and successful in reading. They are phonologically aware, have a very wide variety of strategies, use decoding skills automatically when needed, have background knowledge and know the purpose of their reading.

Contrarily, poor readers do not seem to have many of these techniques (Merrill, 2000). They sometimes do not know what they need to do in order to comprehend what they are reading (Cunningham & Allington, 1999).

According to whole language theorists, children need a rich literature environment providing authentic literature and plenty of opportunities to write and read (Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Goodman, 1986; Wang, 2000). These components of a whole language classroom should provide children with enough experience with literature to become fluent readers. This is not always the case (Gaskins, Gaskins & Gaskins, 1991). Some children may still not be able to decode words automatically or fast enough to maintain comprehension for long periods of time (Krause & Moore, 1997). Usually the strategies used by poor readers are mainly sounding out words, looking at pictures, context, skipping the word or asking someone. They do not seem to be able to find patterns in

language. For these children explicit teaching of phonics seems to be the bridge to learning to read (Gaskins, Gaskins & Gaskins, 1991). Research has shown, however, that explicit phonics instruction is not always successful for some children either. There is more success when skills are learned in the context of reading (Feitler & Hellekson, 1993). Cunningham & Allington (1999) state that phonics embedded in real literature may be the key to helping children who are delayed readers become fluent readers.

Through consistent and thorough observations and assessments, it is possible to determine the particular needs of delayed readers. Some children, depending on their schemata, are not successful with a bottom up approach (May 1990). According to May (1990) an interactive approach with skills embedded or taught directly may be what is needed for some delayed readers to be successful.

#### Schemata and Metacognition

Children with a wide vocabulary both expressive and receptive, having many life experiences should be able to learn to read easily. That is not always the case. Using metacognitive strategies, that is, pointing out the needs of the child to the child, showing the child the purposes of reading, directing the child's thinking to what he is reading is an approach that is research based (Krause & Moore, 1997). Poor readers just don't know that they need to think while they are reading. It is not that they can't, but that they have not thought to think (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). If children are given the opportunity to discuss what they are

reading, this may give them more confidence and success in their journey to fluent reading (Feitler & Hellekson, 1993).

Children who are not successful with phonics instruction need to be taught other ways to assist their development in reading. According to Dermody (1988) children who are taught decoding skills over metacognitive skills with little emphasis on meaning and thinking may not become successful readers.

Whatever method is used, it must be based on needs and ability and must begin where the child is. Success will come when we determine the zone of proximal development according to Vygotsky (cited in Palincsar, 1984). Showing a child with good overall mental reasoning what he needs to succeed, implementing instruction that makes sense to that child may be the bridge to success.

### Word Building Strategies

Word building strategies seem to be a natural way of constructing words for children. The purpose of word building is to begin instruction on what the child already knows (Gunning, 1998). In this method rime and onset patterns of words seem to be easier to learn (Goswami & Bryant, 1992). This approach fits how children naturally decipher words by seeking out pronounceable word parts. Being phonologically aware of phonemes (single sounds) and graphemes (one or more letters working as a unit) is also a necessary part of building words for understanding (Goswami & Mead, 1992). Once the child is aware of the

connection between phonemes and graphemes, focusing on onsets and rimes within syllables, will aid the child in noticing patterns within words (Rasinski & Padak, 2000).

Linked to word building is the analogy strategy. Proficiency in decoding skills is essential for reading by analogy (Ehri & Robbins (1992). The analogy strategy, used when the learner refers to a word already known to help learn an unknown word, is highly effective. Even if the learner arrives at an approximation of the word, this may trigger recognition of the new word. Using the analogy approach also seems to build confidence (Gaskins, Gaskins & Gaskins, 1991).

#### Leveled Books

Fountas and Pinnell (1999) state that matching books to the reader is of utmost importance for the child to feel and be successful in his endeavor to be a fluent reader. Leveled books have several advantages (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). Leveled books have been arranged to assist and provide challenges for readers. Leveled books usually have enough high frequency words, natural language and familiar content. Books that have natural language, some literary merit, increasing number of high frequency words, and are interesting to the reader and integrate an opportunity to notice patterns are the best books to use (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999).

### Series Books

When children are interested in the book they are reading, their attention increases and comprehension is aided (Dowart, 1976). Series books use the same main character(s) in each book (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Series books have usually been considered as supplemental to a reading program. Historically, they have been shown to maintain interest. In 1972, Spache stated that children's interests are the most important single influence on attitudes toward reading. In addition it has been shown that reading series books also promotes risk taking (Greenlee, Monson & Taylor, 1996). There has been much controversy regarding the use of series books in the classroom, however, using books such as Curious George for children to create interest and motivation seems to work for many children (Cunningham & Allington, 1999).

One of the goals in reading instruction is developing a love of reading. Independent reading also develops fluency and holds the interest of the reader (Greenlee, Monson & Taylor, 1996). In a study, which examined the validity of series books with a consistent main character, it was shown that they do not increase reading comprehension and word recognition over a literature-based program with no main recurring character. What was shown was interest and enthusiasm increased and children became "very interested in the adventures of the main character" (Milobar, 1991).



A unique reading program for each child can be overwhelming. Using books having gradient levels, series books of interest to the reader, and word building strategies to improve the fluency of a delayed reader who has strong listening and speaking abilities and weak writing and reading abilities can be challenging. The process of reflecting on one's pedagogy and particularly reflecting on the needs of children, is the means to success for helping children.

## CHAPTER III

### Design of the Study

#### Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how word building strategies in conjunction with reading leveled and series books would improve the reading ability of a delayed reader.

#### Research Question

How will word building strategies along with reading leveled books and series books improve the reading ability of a delayed reader?

#### Methodology

##### Subject

The subject was an eight year old, third grade male who was attending an urban school which promoted child centered learning using a literature based approach. He was a student in a multiage classroom of second and third graders. Fifty percent of the class spoke English as a second language. Although the subject's parents were Laotian and Hispanic and the subject was considered a Second Language learner at the advanced level, he had been exposed to English since birth. He did spend several hours every day with his Laotian grandparents who only spoke Laotian.

The subject completed a battery of tests conducted by the school district to determine what he needed specifically to improve his reading ability. Tests indicated that the subject had an oral receptive vocabulary of a 9.5 year-old. A high oral receptive vocabulary strongly correlates with high intelligence. He was at an instructional level of first grade at the beginning of this study.

### Materials

Soar To Success Leveled Books- Houghton Mifflin Series (Level 3-Categories I and II)

Magic Tree House Series Books - Random House

### Procedure

There were two types of instructional sessions; one was before school and the other after school. The subject was one of four children in the morning sessions. The Soar to Success leveled reading series (categories I and II) of Houghton Mifflin books were used. This series of leveled books consisted of four categories. The books used in this study were from category I and category II. In category I there was a small amount of print on each page and the pictures were clear and supportive of the text. Category II consisted of one to two paragraphs per page with supportive pictures or illustrations. The sessions were basically identical each day including rereading the previous day's story, word building strategies using rime and onset patterns and analogy strategies along with writing either in a journal or in the comprehension workbook that accompanied the series.

During the afternoon sessions when the subject was alone with the teacher-researcher the Magic Tree House Series books, published by Random House were used. During these sessions, the subject spent 15 minutes with word building strategies of rime and onset patterns or analogy patterns, 10 to 15 minutes writing and 30 minutes reading books from the Magic Tree House series in which he was very motivated to read.

The study lasted four months. There were two weeks in which there were no sessions because of holiday and winter breaks. There were a total of 18 morning sessions and 32 afternoon sessions. There were approximately ten sessions in which the student was unable to attend and two sessions when the student was with another teacher.

Data were collected through audio taping the sessions, audio taping readings of the subject, observations, writings of the subject, pre and post testing using the Phonics Assessment of Shanker and Ekwel.

#### Analysis of Data

Data analysis consisted of qualitative evaluation of the results of the pre- and posttests, written responses to reading, observations, field notes and tape recordings. Information was also drawn from the results of individualized tests, which were not administered by the teacher-researcher. The school district psychologist administered the individualized tests during the research period.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results of the Study

#### Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how word building strategies in conjunction with reading leveled and series books would improve the reading ability of a delayed reader.

#### Findings

##### History

Anthony (pseudonym) was born on October 14, 1992. At the time this research began he was 9 years and 1 month old. He was placed in an urban school, which was a school of choice, in October 1999. This study began on November 15, 2000 and concluded on March 15, 2001.

Anthony's parents were Laotian and Hispanic. He spent much time with his Laotian grandparents and learned to understand Laotian and is able to speak this language a little. Since birth, however, he has been exposed to English with both his parents speaking English at home. Anthony did take the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) test, which determined his ability in English. This test consisted of phonemic production, lexical recognition, syntactical ability and oral

language proficiency. This test gave a useful and detailed linguistic portrayal of a student's language skills. Anthony scored at the advanced level, which meant he was proficient in English comparable to a native speaker.

Overall, Anthony missed very few days of school. He had been a student of this teacher-researcher since October 1999 when he entered second grade coming from a neighborhood, urban school. Anthony had never been held back but had reading and writing difficulties since first grade. In first grade and prior to attending his current school, Anthony experienced difficulties completing tasks, reading at grade level and writing for any length of time.

### Background

"Good morning, Anthony," the classroom teacher said on a cold fall morning as the children begin to arrive. There was no response from Anthony who looked very upset and angry. He walked around the classroom without putting his coat and bag away. Eventually the teacher took him aside and said, "Anthony this is a terrible way to enter the classroom. Is there something wrong? Can I help you?" Anthony immediately told what occurred between him and another child. "...told me I was stupid and that I am not his friend anymore!" The teacher responded by saying, "Anthony, you and I both know that you are not stupid. You are a bright boy who has a great deal to give and you are friends. Don't you think that you should speak to him and ask him why he

said that to you? Now give me a hug and get ready for the day." Anthony says, "Ok!" He moved slowly to his friend and they talked a few moments and began to play. Anthony needed another reminder to put his coat and bag away. Slowly he prepared himself for another day in this second and third grade multiage classroom.

This behavior was typical for Anthony. He would become upset and pout and after a few words with an adult, who would give him emotional support and attention, he would proceed with his activities. He liked to express his opinion. He willingly and happily shared what he knew. He was articulate and able to express himself well beyond his peers. He loved to be the center of attention and would sometimes become uncooperative when he wasn't. There were times when Anthony cooperated with others. He loved to help others with their reading or math. He was always happy to do this. He used the words "I'm thinking" when he decided not to do anything. Anthony used many attention-seeking behaviors such as pouting, not doing his work, and interrupting a conversation among students and/or a teacher.

According to his parents, he often ignored their requests. If he was determined enough in a given situation, he would move to a corner and sit and pout.

## Tests

Anthony was tested by the school psychologist at the beginning of this study to determine his strengths and weaknesses. He took the following tests during the week of November 15th, 2000:

Wechsler Abbreviated Scales of Intelligence (WASI)

Woodcock-Johnson, Tests of Cognitive Ability

Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)

Bender Gestalt Test of Visual-Motor Integration

Draw a Person

Incomplete Sentence Blank

Roberts Apperception Test.

## Achievement, Cognitive and Visual-Motor Ability

Anthony possessed above average verbal communication skills. His listening comprehension skills and nonverbal reasoning skills were also within the above average range.

His basic reading skills, short-term auditory memory, auditory processing skills, and visual closure skills were within the average range.

His visual motor integration skills were a significant strength. His visual memory skills were within the high average range. He appeared to learn equally well through visual and auditory channels.



His reading comprehension and spelling skills were within the low average range for his age. Anthony did not demonstrate a specific learning disability.

#### Social and Emotional Stability

Anthony was also tested for his social and emotional stability. The responses to the Incomplete Sentence Blank indicated that he did not like getting "pestered" and that he wished he could spend more time with his father. The Roberts Apperception Test, a projective measure, highlighted Anthony's worry about his father not being available to him enough, worry over school work and a desire for attention from a father figure. He desired attention especially from his father and was anxious about his schoolwork and may have known that he was not doing as well as he would have liked. Anthony revealed a need to be a part of a group.

#### Physical Aspects

He had a physical examination in November, 2000 that indicated he was a very healthy and normal boy. His eyesight and hearing were normal.

Anthony was an unusual child. He was intelligent, articulate and had a very wide expressive and receptive vocabulary. When he arrived in my classroom in October of 1999, I was immediately impressed and very curious about him. He was reading and writing at a first grade level and hesitantly at that, and he appeared to be very knowledgeable. His parents were not too concerned at that

time since the father said that Anthony was just like him when he was his age. I also wasn't too concerned until his behaviors changed, he began to seek attention in negative ways and his reading simply did not improve. His parents were beginning to be concerned mainly because of his attitude. They could not understand his delayed progress in learning to read.

### Results

Anthony walked into the classroom, looked around and proceeded to the coat closet where he spent about 10 minutes. He was talking to other children and still had his coat on. He was once again not following the morning procedures.

His mother said that he was very slow and needed many reminders to complete tasks at home. He would hesitate and give excuses and finally, he would become upset when his parents persisted. Anthony also needed constant reminders to complete his work in the daily routines of the classroom.

In the study when Anthony was alone with the teacher-researcher he was attentive and appeared to love the individualized attention. He followed directions and completed his work in a timely manner.

When we began to meet with the other children, Anthony seemed to resent their being a part of the group. He would try to get my attention while I was working with another child. He would interrupt and cause the other child distress. As time passed in the study, however, he became more and more cooperative and

began to enjoy working with the other children. As his reading improved, he became more interested in cooperating with the other children.

Testing indicated that Anthony had few decoding skills. He spent too much time working on individual sounds and this prevented him from comprehending the text. His decoding skills were very basic. He sounded out letter by letter with words such as *bird, river, and home*. He did not look at pictures. His main decoding technique was sounding out words. He continually misread one syllable words confusing vowels. *Bat* became *bit*, *side* became *sid*, *made* became *mad*, *mad* became *mud*. Because of his struggle to decode and recognize words, his understanding of the text suffered. He was using letter by letter decoding and was obviously not attending to the meaning of the sentence or story. He was consistent, however, in correctly recognizing beginning and ending sounds along with digraphs. His confusion was mainly directed to medial vowel sounds and vowel combinations. As time progressed and the text increased in difficulty, he became less able to comprehend and it was obvious that he needed to develop more efficient skills for reading.

Anthony was given the Phonics Assessment Test (Shanker & Ekwall, 1998) as a pretest and posttest in the study. In the application of phonics skills, he scored below mastery. He was successful recognizing beginning and ending single consonants, beginning and ending consonant blends and beginning and ending digraphs. The major areas of weakness were medial vowel combinations.

At the beginning of the study he read word by word, spent an inordinate amount of time on decoding words, comprehension was poor, although his comprehension was higher when listening to stories. Anthony was not attending to the meaning of what he read. Even on easy text that he read independently, he read word by word. He would hesitate and repeat simple words thus obstructing his understanding.

#### A Job at the Zoo

Ron has a job. He will make the fur of the cat shine. He will use a brush. Ron can fix a cage. He can pat a wet nose. He may hug a cute cub.

Ron may perk up a sad bird with a nice word. Then Ron will clean dirt from the ground in the owl barn. He can see a fawn rest by a tree. He may bring a toy on a chain to a girl cub. The cub will make a strange noise. Ron will smile. He likes all the things he can do to work and play at the zoo.

This 107 word passage from Shanker and Ekwall (1998, p. 283) was used as the pretest and posttest to demonstrate Anthony's growth to apply phonics skills in context. In November Anthony had 12 repetitions/hesitations of words and phrases. He read extremely slowly and pausing at many words including sight words. Words such as *make, fur, cat, shine, fawn, chain, cub* were repeated at least once. When asked if the passage was easy or hard, Anthony said

that it was easy. He had no explanation why he was unable to read this passage fluently. He understood the passage, which was demonstrated through orally responding to comprehension questions.

**Table 1**  
**Subtest 1 of Phonics Assessment Test**  
 Reading passage: A Job at the Zoo

	<b>PRETEST</b>	<b>POSTTEST</b>
<b>hesitations/repetitions</b>	12/107 words	4/107 words
	make	make
	fur of the cat	use a brush
	shine	may perk up
	growth	
	fawn	fawn
	chair	
	cub	
	strange	
	fur	
	cat	
	girl	
	cage	

In the posttest (Shanker & Ekwall, 1998, p. 283) of this passage, administered on March 15, 2001, Anthony had four repetitions/hesitations of words and phrases. This was an improvement over the pretest.

In his pretest performance of the other subtests (Shanker & Ekwall, 1998, pp. 285-289) for initial consonants, blends, digraphs, ending sounds, sound symbol relationships and substitutions, Anthony demonstrated mastery.

One area that was difficult in the pretest (Shanker & Ekwall 1998, Subtest nine, p. 297)) was vowel combinations in the sound symbol relationships. This

test consisted of 15 words in which Anthony had to read independently. He made nine errors. Words, such as *pant* for *paint*, *hail* for *haul*, *sever* for *serve*, *steer* or *stir* and *dorn* for *born* and *born* for *burn*, were difficult for him to pronounce; a conclusive display of confusion for medial combinations of vowels.

**Table 2**  
**TOTAL MISCUES Subtest 9 of Phonics Assessment Test**

VOWEL COMBINATIONS	PRETEST	POSTTEST
ar (barn)		
er (serve)	sever	
er (perk)		
ir (stir)	steer	steer
or (word)		
ur (fur)		
ur (burn)	born	
au (haul)	hail	
ai (paint)	pant	point
ay (may)		
ay (play)		
aw (fawn)		
aw ( hawk)	haywich	awok
ea (clean		
oi(soil)		sill
oi (noise)		
oo (zoo)		
ou (trout)	tront	trot
ow (own)	on	
oy (coy)		ca...
oa (boat)		
or (born)	dorn	
TOTAL FOR SUBTEST 9	9	6

SHORT AND LONG VOWELS	PRETEST	POSTTEST
short a (pat, sad)	put, pet for pat	sigh for sad
short u (cub)		cab for cub
long - I	wet for white	loves for likes
long -u	cut for cute	cut for cute

BEGINNING SINGLE DIGRAPHS/consonant blends	PRETEST	POSTTEST
shine	shin	
strong	strange	

In the posttest Anthony made four errors in the vowel and sound symbol relationship sub-test substituting *point* for *paint*, *sill* for *soil*, *troll* for *trout*, *awok* for *hawk*, *steer* for *stir*. He confused *born* and *burn* but corrected that error. Therefore, there was a definite improvement in this category.

Anthony and I, as teacher/researcher, have had many conversations about his behavior in school and his reading and writing difficulties. When speaking to his mother, I learned when Anthony was a toddler he was very excitable and inquisitive. He was always questioning and investigating. He had many experiences as a child. This was demonstrated in his knowledge and expressive and receptive vocabulary. He was able to explain and understand nuances of the language and use similes and metaphors easily.

Anthony was an enthusiastic student when we met together. He eventually began followed directions and worked hard. By the middle of the study Anthony began to read with more interest. During our one on one sessions,

Anthony needed little prodding to work. He very much enjoyed the attention and flourished. He was proud of his progress in reading. When he was able to read with few errors, this milestone was evident on his face!

Anthony was weak in medial vowel combinations, as were the other children in the morning sessions. The first book in Soar to Success leveled series, Educating Arthur by Amanda Graham and Donna Gynell, gave us an opportunity to look at several words for using word building techniques for onset, rime and analogy strategies.

The first session began with rereading a favorite book called The Giraffe in the Hat by Shel Silverstein. I felt this was a good way to start considering the rhyming emphasis. It was an excellent segue to learning about rime patterns. After we read this book together, we proceeded with the lesson spending about 10 to 12 minutes on word building. Here is a dialogue that took place that first day.

Teacher: "Let's look at and repeat after me the words below."

Together: chew, bike, important, need, teach, properly, hug, tidy

Teacher: (writes on board) /ew/ and then writes the word chew.

Can you think of other words that have this sound of /ew/?

Anthony: screw

Teacher: good... V.. how about you?

V: new.

Teacher: Great. B. Can you think of another word?



B: flew

Teacher: Let's say these words together and tell me what you hear and see?

All together: chew, screw, new, flew

Teacher: What do these words have in common?

B: /Ew/ sound.

Teacher: Great! What else?

Anthony: They rhyme.

Teacher: Great, V., anything else?

V: They are short words.

Teacher: Great V., that's right. These are words that are one syllable words.

Let's say them together and clap as we say them. (Teacher proceeds with bike, need, teach and hug)

Teacher: Let's look at the next word. (Teacher writes and says the word *properly*) Are there any parts of that word that are familiar to you? No response.

B: I know the word.

Teacher: Great B, but can you wait before you say it?

B: Nods her head yes.

Anthony: Pro like in pro and con

Teacher: That is a great way to figure out part of the word. You thought of another part of a word that you know and used it to help you learn

this word. Very good. Let's see if you can do the same for another part of the word.

B: (Silence for a few moments)

Teacher: V do you want me to give you more time to think?

V: Nods head, yes.

Teacher: What do you see in this word?

Anthony: I see /ly/ like in *happily* and I see er like in *better*.

Teacher: That's good. Do you think you can put the word together now?

Anthony: Hesitating and silently sounding out the word in chunks: pro(long o sound) -per---ly. Says it several times and finally gets the correct pronunciation. Properly. Like I will dress *properly* for school.

B: I knew that word.

Teacher: I know that you did and I am proud of you because you were able to let Anthony and V figure it out for themselves. Let's do another word. This is an easy one, I think. The ending is -ike like in bike. Let's say it together.

The teacher continues using the word building techniques of rime and analogy for several more words. The children seemed to enjoy this activity of making words together and using the riming patterns. They also became enthused about using analogies for the next "big" word *important*. They were able to do the

steps in the analogy technique with very few prompts, even though this was the first time they used the analogy strategy.

It was obvious that Anthony showed a serious interest in these strategies. It appeared that they stimulated him into thinking about what he was doing. One outcome of the first lessons of the study was the fact that the children played off one another helped one another and encouraged one another.

In addition I saw an interest in Anthony that seemed to be inspired from his perception of attention given to one of the other children. This other child had been a student of the teacher-researcher for two and one half years. She had a high intelligence but struggled to remember simple words. One day about midway through the study she read several pages of a story fluently. I was so impressed I praised her highly. As her teacher, I was thrilled to see this and tears came to my eyes. Anthony noticed this and almost instantly his attitude changed. His body language changed, he sat up and became more active in his participation during future lessons. I wondered when he observed my reaction to the other child if it gave him the desire to please as well.

After shared reading and applying what we learned to the new words as well as other words, the children wrote in their journals about their feelings about the story. Anthony wrote:

EDUCATING ARTHUR is beking my favoit book. and win I git a wird rite.

It took him about 10 minutes to write these two sentences. When I pointed out the word "beking" to him, he told me it was becoming. He also knew that it was not spelled correctly. He was able to spell it after I said the word slowly to him, be-com(e)ing. He was also able to spell *get* and *word* correctly on his own. It seemed that when Anthony was prompted, he was able to spell words correctly. Again I wondered why he wasn't spelling words correctly when he worked on his own.

As the sessions progressed, I continued to see inconsistencies in Anthony's reading and writing. Words he knew one day he did not know another. Words such as *they*, *funny*, *teach*, *certain* he would forget, while multisyllabic words he remembered such as *important*, *joyfully* or *audience*.

About midway through the study, Anthony continued to make similar mistakes and continued to read word by word. He worked hard, it appeared, when we did the word building strategies. He enjoyed the analogy technique because I believe it was challenging. However, as challenging as it might have been and as much as he was enthused about it, he still used it minimally reverting often back to his sounding our letter by letter. It still was not "second nature" to him to use these new strategies.

There were times through the study that the teacher-researcher felt that Anthony could read well but was holding back. The fact that he was inconsistent with his knowledge of words, missing them sometimes and knowing them at other times was a quandary to the teacher-researcher. He would know *reach* but not

*teach*, the next day he might know *teach* but not *reach*. Sometimes it felt that he was saying what he thought I wanted to hear. For example in the second week of December during one of the one on one sessions Anthony wanted to read two books that were not a part of the series or leveled books chosen for the study. These books were leveled as beginning second grade. They were pair-it books published by Steck-Vaughn in which the topic was the same but one book was fiction and the other nonfiction. He was very interested in reading these so we did. The fiction book was Little Red and the Wolf by Gare Thompson and the nonfiction book was Wolves by Michael K Smith. He found the fiction book difficult but really enjoyed the non-fiction book and demonstrated prior knowledge about wolves. Here is a part of the conversation we had as we read.

Teacher: What are you thinking as you read? (the wolves book)

Anthony: I was thinking what would it sound like after I was done reading.

Teacher: What do you mean? Did it make sense?

Anthony: Uh, uh. (yes)

Teacher: Why did you hesitate on the word *white* when you just said the word *white*?

Anthony: I wasn't paying attention.

Teacher: How do you think you read?

Anthony: Uh.....not too well.

Teacher: Why do you say that?

Anthony: Because I made too many mistakes.

Teacher: Why do you think you made more mistakes at the end of the story?

Anthony: Because I didn't recognize their sounds because I have seen them before. I didn't remember the way it looked and pronounced.

The words are really small.

Teacher: What do you mean?

Anthony: They are tiny...tiny I can't really see them...I can see the periods but small.

I called Anthony's mother and discovered that Anthony recently had an eye examination and had excellent vision. Taking the whole conversation into account, I believed that these were more attention seeking behaviors.

About the same time, Anthony's sister who was in first grade began to read. At home according to his mother, she would ask Anthony frequently for help. His mother observed a change in his behavior while reading as well. It appeared that his reading began to improve at about the same time as his sister started asking for help with her reading. The confidence in his ability shown to Anthony by his sister seemed to spur him on to read more at home. It was also at this time that his reading began to improve in school. He started to read with less and less hesitation, fewer repetitions and recognized more medial vowel sounds.

Here is a sample that he wrote at this time:

The main idea of (page) six and sevin is that birds in the spring kum back to the north that's kalld migrateing. Migrateing means that birds chrevel frum the north to the south and back.

Words such as *main, birds, spring, back, that, means* are words that he was spelling incorrectly at the beginning of the study. This writing also indicated that Anthony was remembering his vowel sounds. The words he misspelled, *sevin, kum, frum*, appear to be indicative of his ability to remember these sounds. The inflected endings words (ing) and the cluster words (*spring, travel*) seem to be a matter of learning the rules. Even though there was still confusion with the hard /c/ (kalld) and inflected ending of /ed/ in the same word, it appeared that Anthony was finally applying and remembering what he was learning!

The next leveled series book we read was Arturo's Baton by Syd Hoff. The words for word building were *baton, famous, conductor, sigh, swarm, concert, touring, and drove*. We reviewed the book for proper nouns first. *Arturo, Toscanini, Felix*. Words such as *orchestra, trumpet and music* were recognizable to the children from their music classes.

In February during the word building portions of the lessons, the children began to use the analogy strategy on their own. For *baton* they thought of *cat* and they recognized /ba/ and /on/. With the word *famous* Anthony remembered the word *curious* as an analogous word. /Duc/ in *conductor* reminded Anthony of *duck*. With the prefix /con/ he remembered his previous reference to *pro* and *con*.

Anthony was able to come up with the word through using these analogous references as well as having looked at the pictures in the book. When Anthony attended to the reading, he was able to use schema, which gave him sufficient reference and thus the ability to comprehend what he was reading. He was able to read with understanding albeit slowly. As we progressed through the study, Anthony became more and more attentive, focussed and interested.

During our last sessions when Anthony was with me without the other children, he was talkative and cooperative. I presented Anthony with several books from the Magic Tree House series by Mary Pope Osbourne. Dinosaurs before Dark, Mummies in the Morning, Dolphins at Daybreak and Hour of the Olympics. Anthony chose Hour of the Olympics. This book was a chapter book leveled at mid second grade. According to the Fry readability scale this book was closer to a 3rd grade level. Anthony had background knowledge about the Olympics. He also was very familiar with this series of books. He had read several at home and was very excited about reading them with me.

We discussed the previous adventures of Jack and Annie, the main characters in the book and also did word building strategies as we read. These techniques were embedded in the reading of the story. I found that at times embedding word-building strategies while reading could be a distracting to Anthony. I read the prologue to the story out loud while Anthony followed. We discussed the familiar story line and he began to read Chapter one. Anthony read



slowly but had few repetitions. He hesitated at several words, such as *secret*, *downstairs*, *flashlight*, *thick*, *Plato* and *weaver*. He knew the words *Hercules*, *ancient*, *female* and *scenery*.

After several sessions and reading several chapters, I was unable to find a pattern in the words Anthony struggled with. The /se/ in *secret* was confusing because of the sound of soft /c/ and also the long /e/ sound. *Downstairs* and *flashlight* were compound words that he knew previously. The /ea/ sound in *weave* he should have known because of past sessions in which we studied the /ea/ sound and he demonstrated knowledge of this vowel combination previously. This was a problem we have experienced several times. Vowel combinations were a weakness for Anthony. I had used word building strategies using onset and rime patterns for /ee/, /ea/, /ai/, /ae/ sounds many times and still he was not remembering them. According to the testing, Anthony's ability in visual memory and auditory processing skills were within high average and average range for his age.

By the end of January, I still saw a minimal amount of development. He was not as repetitive in his reading, he remembered more words, his reading was becoming more smooth with less word by word reading, yet he still stumbled on words. He still was missing simple words as mentioned previously.

What was missing from this study of this very complex child? I spoke with his parents and they were as confused as I was. I decided to have a serious conversation with Anthony the next time we met alone.

Teacher: Anthony, how do you think your reading is progressing?

Anthony: Well, I think I am reading better. I read faster and understand more.

Teacher: That is true. You are reading better. But I am confused about one thing. Why do you think you still do not know some words that you have already learned? Words like *secret* and *weaver* and *downstairs* and *thick*. (Teacher wrote these words on the whiteboard.)

Anthony: I don't know. When I first see the word I don't know it. Then sometimes I do.

Teacher: When you read, do you know that you should listen to yourself read and listen to what you are reading just like you listen when someone else reads?

Anthony: (There was a long pause) I... am not... sure if I do listen to myself.

Teacher: Well, I think we should try it. We will start two new strategies today. One will be to listen to yourself read and the other will be

reading the page or chapter to yourself and then reading it out loud.

Are you agreeable to these two ideas?

Anthony: Yes.

Teacher: Do you think they might help you become a better reader?

Anthony: Yes, because I will be reading the story twice.

Teacher: Ok, Let's try it with the next chapter of Hour of the Olympics.

As our sessions progressed and we drew closer to the end of the study, I started to see more concentration and Anthony was understanding more of the text. He was not making as many mistakes of simple medial vowel sounds. He was reading slowly but not repeating nor hesitating as often.

We continued with word building strategies of onset and rime patterns but mainly Anthony chose the analogy strategy. His mother let me know that she and her husband were seeing a change in Anthony's reading. He was reading at home more often without prompting and he was even doing his homework without constant asking on the part of his parents.

I still wasn't sure why Anthony's reading was improving. I felt inadequate as a reading instructor. I didn't feel that my lessons were consistent enough and I felt that we did not read enough to apply the new skills I was teaching; yet his reading improved. I knew he was emotionally in great need for attention, which he was getting from me and from his parents and sister. Could these be reasons for his improvement in reading?

Anthony and I continued to have discussions about his reading. He and I talked about what it was like to think about reading as you read. "It helps me to think about what I am reading and then I remember it better." Anthony said this to me close to the end of the study.

As a prediction to the last story, The Paper Crane by Molly , Anthony wrote:

My perdicshun is that an old men how gave a  
boy a paper crain and the crane became a living crecher.

What is interesting about this sentence which was written to predict the Paper Crane by Molly Bang is that he spelled crane wrong the first time and correctly the second time it was in the sentence. With the word *prediction*, we repeatedly reviewed the suffix of /tion/ in our regular classroom setting. He often would write words ending with /tion/ correctly, so, why not now?

During one of our last sessions in the morning Anthony was unattentive and very distracted. He apparently did not want to work. He read as he had at the beginning of the study, word by word, repeating many words and hesitating. When I finally began to see an improvement, it seemed as if Anthony fell backwards. He had no explanation for this. I called his mother and she said that he was very tired and went to bed late. He had a busy weekend and so the conclusion was that he was tired. I still felt there something else that was bothering him. He had a restless day during school and was uncooperative. Through another

conversation with Anthony, I discovered that his father had been very busy over the weekend, and he did not see much of him. Could this be the reason that he was faltering in his reading?

To review the results of the four month period of this study, Anthony learned and applied word building strategies using rime and onset patterns and in particular analogies. He read using leveled books and progressed through them and read series books of which he was very interested. By late February he was reading more quickly, comprehending and had reduced the number repetitions and hesitations. In the posttest of applying phonics skills (Shanker & Elwell, 1998) Anthony reduced the number of hesitations and repetitions by eight. It appears that when he felt emotionally secure and confident, Anthony seemed to apply what he learned.

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Implications

It is time for the voice of the mother  
to be heard in education.

Nel Noddings  
*Caring*

#### Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how word building strategies in conjunction with reading leveled and series books will improve the reading ability of a delayed reader.

#### Conclusions

As a teacher, I knew that Anthony was a thinker and understood certain concepts well beyond his years. In working out the difficulties that we encountered together, I was able to grasp the depth of importance that metacognition played in learning. This was probably the most important aspect learned by this teacher-researcher. Anthony seemed to begin to improve with his reading when we discussed the importance of thinking about what he was reading. He was able to understand the importance this strategy. If we had discussed Anthony's thinking while reading at the beginning of the study and not near the end, would his reading have improved more? Once Anthony and I discussed what

he needed to do with his reading, there seemed to be an improvement in comprehension. Once he began his journey to believe in his own self worth, fragile though it was, he began to read with understanding.

Reading is not a matter of saying words written on a piece of paper. It is also not a matter of just understanding with our minds. Reading is involvement and immersion in what we read. He was able to monitor his own thinking and progress. Anthony began to see this and hopefully with nurturing will continue to grow.

With struggling readers, writing seemed to solidify their learning. Anthony was able to prove to himself he was progressing in his reading by his writing. He was able to write stories with fewer misspelled words at the end of the study, which demonstrated to him that he did make progress. With this self-monitoring came a motivation to read that seemed to have been missing from Anthony's repertoire of skills. In making this leap, Anthony was able to learn for himself that with effort he could be a fluent reader.

Anthony presented many challenges to this teacher-researcher. He continually challenged me in my teaching. He gave me many opportunities to think about my own learning as a reading teacher. Anthony insisted in his own way that I continually reflect on my teaching. He insisted through his personality that I reflect about the complexities of each child-learner.

### Implications for the Classroom

Using a case study format for this research project gave a deeper insight to this teacher-researcher that may never have been attained. Being consistently aware of the process of teaching reading with one child can strengthen one's knowledge, and deepen the understanding of the process and confidence to teach other children.

Another implication for the classroom is the fact that children need wide reading. Reading one type of genre may be acceptable some of the time but exposure to a wide variety of literature can only enhance interest and progress in reading. In a way the subject insisted on a variety of genre.

As educators, we know that we can no longer keep our thinking to ourselves. In order for children to learn we need to demonstrate the process of thinking about our learning. Modeling the steps in our thinking is the most direct way to instill and demonstrate this process. Paolo Friere (cited in Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) stated that we, as teachers, can no longer be "bankers in education" in which we deposit information into the minds of our children. We must be "midwives" drawing out what children already know.

I discovered that teaching phonics must be continually adjusted according to the growth of the child. Some children need direct, explicit instruction while others profit from embedding these skills within the context of reading. Some may need a combination. All need to practice and apply what they are learning.



As teachers, we must understand that adjusting our methods to the child is the only way for each child to become successful in reading or in whatever we are teaching.

### Implications for Future Research

One of the characteristics of this study was having two types of sessions, one type with only Anthony and the other type with several children including Anthony. It might be advantageous to conduct a case study with only one subject participating. It might also be interesting to conduct this study with the same number of children at each session.

Anthony might have made more progress in his reading if he was able to read any book he chose during the study. The possibility of not limiting genre may also bring about some interesting data.

It was decided to use leveled books and series books for this study in order to give the subject a variety of books to read. The Soar to Success series books were used because they were leveled and aided in the progression of skill learning. The series books with the consistent main character were used because of the interest of the subject. There were several problems using two different types of reading materials. There was not cohesiveness between the two types of sessions, thus, Anthony moved from one type of book to another depending on the session. It might be advantageous in a possible future study to use only one genre, either the leveled books or the series books.

Another important implication may be using only analogies for word building in a future study. Since Anthony and the other children chose this strategy more often than the onset and rime word building strategy to advance their reading skills, it might be advantageous to pursue this in a future study.

Through this study this teacher-researcher learned the importance of continually reflecting on the child. With reflection came a deeper understanding of the process of teaching reading. As reflective teachers, we must be prepared to adjust our strategies according to the needs of the child. Everything depends on the child and his learning and maybe more importantly, his interest. Learning this has greatly influenced my teaching all the children in my care.

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