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The Effects of Comprehension, Writing, Fluency, & Vocabulary Interventions on the Literacy of
an Eighth Grade Student with a Learning Disability

By

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Abstract

In this study, the effects of research based literacy interventions in the areas of comprehension, writing, fluency, and vocabulary were implemented on a struggling reader with a learning disability. The aim was to find out if these interventions would help to increase the student's overall literacy skills. A student, identified as having a Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) as well as Cognitive Disability (CD) who was transitioning into 9th grade was the center of this study. The student struggled with comprehension of expository texts, organized writing, sentence structure, fluency, and acquiring new vocabulary. Various interventions were examined, and then implemented based on the needs of this particular student. It was discovered, that a one on one intervention was successful based on the results of the data collection before, after, and during the implementation of these various intervention strategies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to design a research-based literacy intervention for a struggling reader with a learning disability. A case study is detailed information that is collected and presented about a particular individual or small group of people. (Becker et al., 2005) Case studies often serve as a method for researchers to develop ways to assess the needs of students, design interventions to address these needs, and determine whether these interventions were indeed successful. In this chapter, background information and key terms are presented, as well as an introduction to the student. Furthermore, an overview of how this study relates to special education law will be discussed and its alignment with common core standards.

The study began with an analysis of the student's needs based on current educational performance. The student is referred to as Andrea throughout the study to maintain confidentiality. She is a 15 year old female student who is transitioning into 9th grade. She attended a charter school in a large urban city in the Midwest.

In Kindergarten she was diagnosed with ADD and was referred to special education for Speech and Language Impairment (SPLI) and Cognitive Disability (CD) due to her difficulty retaining information and paying attention in class. However, the Individual Education Program (IEP) team determined that she did not meet criteria at that time. She was referred again in first grade at which time she met the established requirements for SPLI but not CD. At a reevaluation in 5th grade, she did meet the district established criteria for CD.

She is reading at approximately the 3rd grade level. She struggles with comprehension, and obtaining the main ideas when reading. Her sentence structure and thoughts when writing are often incomplete. Retaining the meaning of new vocabulary, and using it in different contexts

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presents Andrea with difficulty. When she reads aloud, she does not do so in a smooth manner, as she is not a fluent reader.

When a student meets the requirements for special education, their placement in the educational setting must be determined. Andrea's IEP indicated that she would participate in the regular education setting more than 80% with her regular education peers. Special education services were provided by pulling her out of the classroom to assist her speech and language skills and for testing support. Testing support took place with her IEP teacher in a one-on-one basis or in a small group with other students who received similar support. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 provides the basis of special education law and instructs that students should be instructed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to the maximum extent possible. A least restrictive environment means that students are with their peers as often as possible, as long as they can be successful. If a student can be with their peers in a regular education setting, with accommodations, then this placement is considered the most favorable. If a student is taken away from their regular education peers, it should be because they cannot be equally successful in that setting, even with accommodations and modifications.

According to Andrea's most recent IEP (April, 2012), she was successful in the LRE with these supports in place. On July 2nd, 2012 I reviewed her cumulative file, which indicated her progress in the regular education classroom. At the time of her last IEP it was reported that she was showing sufficient progress in writing simple and complex paragraphs, and using a graphic organizers prior to writing. Her last IEP also indicated that she can identify main ideas, problems and solutions when reading, and sequence events when writing with 80% accuracy. Also, she can

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understand and use grade level vocabulary with 70% accuracy. Her IEP indicated that she can perform these tasks when she receives one-on-one or help within a small group setting but that she continues to struggle with working on these skills independently.

Connection to Common Core Standards

The Common Core Standards for Language Arts help to emphasize the importance of comprehension, writing, fluency, and vocabulary in literacy (Public Instruction, 2011). While there are many standards, various strands relate more closely to this study in particular. These standards were taken from the 8th grade standards for English and Language Arts although the student is reading significantly below her grade level.

Standard RI.8.1 states that students should be able to, “Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text” (p. 39). Also, standard RI.8.2. states that students should be able to, “Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text” (p. 39). These two standards go hand in hand with the comprehension component of this case study.

Emphasis is placed on writing through standard W.8.2a-f. Students are expected to be able to, “Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen

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facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. e. Establish and maintain a formal style. f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented” (p. 42).

The importance of vocabulary is apparent through standard L.8.4, “Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies” (p 53). Vocabulary, as it relates to this study, is also pointed to within standard L.8.6., “Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression” (p. 53).

Lastly, standard RF.5.4a-c. touches on the importance of fluency. This standard states that students should be able to, “Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding. b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings. c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary” (p.17).

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 will outline research that demonstrates the importance of intervention for students, and ways that various interventions were successful for students in the past. Next, chapter 3 provides an overview of my case study, including; a detailed description of my student,

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the procedures that I used within my intervention, and the different methods of data collection that I used in my case study. Chapter 4 focuses on the actual results and effectiveness of the interventions that were used. Lastly, chapter 5 presents the results of the study and connects them to existing research while examining the strengths and limitations of the study. Chapter 5 also provides instructional recommendations for the student.

Chapter 2: A Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect intervention has on comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and fluency. Research within this chapter suggests that, for struggling students, acquiring these combined skills can substantially increase progress. These researchers have demonstrated the importance of intervention for students, and ways that various interventions might be most successful for students. The first section of this chapter focuses on the importance of one-on-one intervention and on different aspects of intervention that can make implementation more meaningful for students. The second section focuses on studies that involve explicit comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and fluency interventions that have proven effective for supporting the development of confidence and skills students need to tackle literacy.

Intervention as a Whole

Before implementation of any intervention, educators must first focus on the reason intervention is necessary and the reason it is used. When students have a learning disability it often means that they fall behind their peers academically. Therefore, these students require additional and differentiated support. This is the underlying reason that interventions exist.

Interventions are used to increase the performance of students who are not meeting benchmarks in a certain curricular area. Response to Intervention (RTI) is a process that aims at assisting students in achieving higher academic achievement through culturally responsive methods (Public Instruction, 2010). These methods include, high impact teaching, student monitoring, and collaboration. RTI's aim is to make sure that students are getting the support they need academically, as well as ensuring that they receive adequate preparation for long term success.

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RTI is centered around culturally responsive methods. It is believed that in order for any intervention to be successful, it must be culturally sensitive to the people which it is intended for. This means that prior to the intervention, demographics should be considered. The race, culture, background, socioeconomic status, and language are factors that, often times, indicate the success rate of students. Curriculum therefore must be inclusive of these various demographics so that educators are able to reach out to their students. Furthermore, RTI's purpose is to change the direction of student success. Therefore, the students who need RTI the most must have an intervention that is catered to them.

The first component of RTI is high quality instruction. This means that the educator is using common core standards to guide teaching, while engaging students in learning. Instruction is also driven by data collection so that there is evidence of student progress as well as areas in which each individual student needs additional instruction. This allows for differentiation for each student, whether struggling or excelling.

The second component of RTI is a continuous review of progress made by each student. This is a process that requires educators to consistently measure the skill level and growth of each student. This does not take place by using one test. It is instead implemented by taking various, ongoing data collections.

The final component of RTI is collaboration which is a partnership of people coming together to work toward common goals. This collaboration can take place between students, teachers, family members, and community members. The purpose behind collaboration is to build a support system for students. Students who are behind the most theoretically need a larger support system than a student who is successful academically.

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RTI has proven effective in Wisconsin's school district as well as districts nationwide. The components of RTI can therefore be looked after as a starting point for planning an intervention. It is crucial to start with making sure that, when planning an intervention it is culturally responsive to the student that is in need of the intervention. Keeping in mind that a successful intervention needs to involve impactful teaching strategies, progress monitoring, and collaboration, can maintain that an intervention is off to the right start.

In the research study conducted by Vaughn, Cirino, Wanzek, Wexler, Fletcher, and Denton (2010), the importance of one-on-one instruction when implementing an intervention was demonstrated. With so many students who need additional help, it may seem more beneficial to intervene on a large scale; however, the dangers of a large-scale intervention were also made evident in this study.

These researchers oversaw an investigation on the impact of researcher-provided secondary intervention also referred to as tier 2 intervention. They aimed to find out if a large-scale reading intervention would be able to help struggling readers. The researchers made the hypothesis that as the intervention was applied, there would be improvement in literacy development of tier 2 students, thereby closing the gap between student reading deficiencies with their typically developing peers over the course of instruction provided for a year. The independent variable was the tier 2 intervention itself while the dependent variable was the effects that the tier 2 intervention had on student progress in the area of literacy development.

The study consisted of 6th graders from 77 middle schools in southwestern United States who had been identified as struggling readers based on the state accountability test, meaning they scored below the proficiency level. Every student participating in the research was assigned to a

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teacher and received tier 1 instruction, while tier 2 instruction was strictly reserved for those students who scored below proficiency level on their state's accountability test.

The study consisted of three separate phases in which researchers implemented a different type of intervention in each phase. On average, students from all participating institutions received 99.2 hours of intervention. The first phase was structured to provide 25 lessons over a period of 7-8 weeks which focused on cultivating fluency and the increase of the students' bank of vocabulary words. Students were paired with other students based on their reading levels. For example, students with lower reading levels were partnered with those who were on a similar level. They were required to read daily to accomplish their goal of increasing fluency. Word study and comprehension were also included by teaching words through basic definitions, providing examples, and by engaging students in discussions that required them to answer comprehension questions. The second phase of intervention took place during a period of 17-18 weeks in which vocabulary use and word study were enforced through a daily review process. In this process, interventionists applied similar strategies based on interventions that were implemented during the first phase to help students learn even more new vocabulary. In addition, students learned more about synonyms, antonyms, and different parts of speech. The third and final phase took place over 8-10 weeks. Through careful coaching, students continued concentrating on vocabulary and comprehension. This differed from the previous phases in that interventionists introduced the use of social studies and science text to the realm of fluency and comprehension.

In evaluating the findings from the study, researchers found the effects were positive on students participating in the intervention. Students who participated in the tier 2 intervention

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performed better on word attack, spelling, comprehension, and phonemic decoding. However, gains were not significant, meaning they could not be directly attributed to the intervention. In comparing the pretests and posttests results in the sub-tests areas, an increase was only significant across all schools in one area: sight words. On the letter-word identification, word attack, spelling, reading comprehension, passage comprehension, sight word efficiency, phonemic decoding efficiency, sentence reading efficiency, and word list fluency and passage fluency, students did not show an increase from pretest to posttest. However, student progress varied on all the other tests. Students in smaller cities or smaller schools did tend to show more progress than students from larger schools and cities.

This study demonstrates that closing the gap between high performing readers and struggling readers is a difficult task. The intervention took place over a long period of time and aimed at reaching a large number of students but was not as successful as researchers thought it would be. Researchers stated that this study suggests that closing the achievement gap between struggling 6th grade readers and non struggling readers may be “overly ambitious” particularly when it is attempted on a large scale. In order to truly see exponential and significant growth, a one-on-one intervention, using high impact strategies could actually close that gap. When working with students one-on-one, educators are able to learn more about students’ specific needs. Learning about the specific needs of students is essential as the following researchers confirmed through this study. If teachers don’t know where their students struggle and how the students learn, an intervention will not be as impactful as it might otherwise be.

Lukin and Estraviz (2010) explored the relationship between severe oral language impairment and reading progress in response to implementation of a reading intervention. The independent variable was the Reading Recovery Program while the dependent variable in this

research study was the number of weeks the students took part in the reading intervention and the improvement seen when the intervention concluded.

The researchers worked with a total of 6 students in a reading program. All of these students were identified as having a specific language impairment (SLI) or as having a severe receptive language delay (SRLI). Each student demonstrated poor performance in either speech, language, or both. The students also took assessments that placed them at least 2 standard deviations below the mean when measuring expressive and/or receptive language development.

The researchers conducted a reading intervention using the Reading Recovery Program. Within this program, students were instructed (individually) 4 times a week by teachers who were trained on the intervention. The intervention focused on metacognitive strategies that students might need to read independently and to improve comprehension. They were also taught ways to self monitor reading, methods to check for understanding, how to predict, and how to confirm meaning. Students were instructed through the reading and writing of stories.

In analyzing the results of the study researchers found that some of the students showed insignificant improvement and that they were still not performing on the same level as their peers, despite the fact that the students were in the program for a longer time than general education students. The underlying finding was that students with SRLI experienced the most difficulty learning to read. They showed little improvement and overall the program was not effective because students with SRLI did not demonstrate mastery of even short-term learning goals, while students who had not been identified as having SRLI did show improvement.

While this study is very specific, it demonstrates something very broad. Not all intervention programs meet the needs of all students. It is easy for educators to put trust into reading interventions because they are research-based and they appear to be what students need.

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This case study demonstrates that even with a one-on-one intervention, educators need to accommodate specifically to the needs of students on an individual basis. A general intervention that is not providing for the individual needs of any one student cannot have guaranteed results. It is not enough to trust that students are being helped simply because they are receiving an intervention. In order for progress and gains to be made, interventions need to be specific and personalized for students.

Many students with learning disabilities are in need of reading interventions; however, these interventions could vary greatly from student to student. Educators must adapt to the specific needs of students in order for them to experience success. While it is important to learn about students' academic strengths and weaknesses, it is arguably, equally important to familiarize ourselves with students on a personal level. Getting to know students; where they come from, and what their interests are, is important for planning an intervention for them.

Having this background knowledge and learning about students makes it easier for teachers to engage them. This is an imperative tool for reaching students which is demonstrated by Lee (1995), a researcher who conducted a study that explored how the socioeconomic and educational infrastructure can impact underperforming African-American students in high school. Lee took into account these two variables when selecting what material would be used for the intervention.

This study was designed to discover whether certain strategies in reading comprehension could be coupled with students' existing cognitive understandings and background, to better prepare them for a more fulfilling reading and comprehension program. The underlying objective was to raise these students to adequate reading levels and to implement progressive and

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correctional strategies to push them forward socially, educationally, and in many other facets of life as well.

Lee's study aimed to answer the following four questions: (1) Does prior social knowledge and knowledge of signifying affect the range of skills in reading and interpreting fiction achieved by African-American adolescent novice readers? (2) Using their prior social knowledge and skills in signifying, how do students construct generalizations about African-American "speakerly" texts based on analysis of figurative language of such texts? (3) How do teachers support this scaffolding process? (4) What are the effects of instruction? Lee hypothesized that the prior knowledge and experiences of these students (and students like them) were shared facets of themes, values, and social conventions that could be used to produce progressive and truly helpful instructional strategies and techniques that would bring about better comprehension in literary texts.

Two high schools in the Midwestern United States, with a predominately African American student population, were at the center of this research. The sample pool consisted of African-American high school students, from six classes between these two high schools, who had been identified as underperforming according to the results of their functional literacy, reading levels, and standardized test scores that were lower than the national standard.

Researchers aimed to look into word and passage comprehension to understand the difficulties faced by these students and the possible growth these interventions could have on these students. The procedures were varied in intensity levels yet the reading material that was used was more parallel to the African-American experience, literature written by well-known, African American authors (such as Alice Walker or Toni Morrison). Strategies were taught and

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practiced to help students comprehend and use literacy skills. After using these texts, the implementation was extended to assist students with understanding texts that were not as relevant to the students. The interventionists emphasized that the same skills that were used with African-American relevant text, would also be needed to understand and to excel in reading other types of texts. The independent variable in this study was the type of literature used within the intervention. Correspondingly, the dependent variable identified in this study, was the progress in comprehension that the participants made.

The researchers gave the students a story before and after the interventions took place that they had not read previously. They were also given 8 short answer questions that corresponded with the readings. The questions were both literal and inferential and varied as far as difficulty. Results were then compared with the scores of students who did not receive the intervention. From pretest to posttest, the results yielded positive for students who were part of the study. By helping the students relate and understand experiences within their own lives and interactions to that of literary texts, they were able to relate them to other reading. Qualitative and quantitative data from the data demonstrate the gains in which these students made in their literary studies.

According to Lee, by understanding students, students' experiences, and the environment in which students live, teachers can create curriculums and techniques in which all students can thrive. It is important to first understand the way students relate the context of a text to their own lives so that text can become relevant and meaningful. In these contexts, students should be taught similar themes, values, and underlying factors (irony, prophecy in the sense of

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foreshadowing, satire, etc). This is a more inviting atmosphere for them to flourish because it is easier to relate to and it mirrors their own lives and histories.

It was also concluded that, by teaching using material that students can relate to easily, the social constructs that usually alienated these students instead help to usher in analytical techniques that existed due to the familiarization of the reader to the situation being read. This showed the lessening of the gap of understanding by drawing upon the experiences and vernacular that was more relatable to the students. The same strategies were implemented later when introducing texts that students might not feel relevant because they had already obtained the skills to help them with word and passage comprehension.

I have always been an avid believer in, “you cannot teach me, if you don’t know me.” After reading this study, this quote resonates on a deeper level. In order to engage and teach students, as emphasized in this research study, it is imperative that teachers relate to students and teach to their interests to make reading relevant to their lives. Perhaps teachers take into account the interests or background of one particular student. This information can be used to engage the student which furthermore can be used as a tool for teaching. In conclusion, students need to first be engaged in literature that is relatable, so that they can then apply these learned skills to other texts.

In review, these studies have shown different components and considerations for a successful intervention. For example, RTI (Public Instruction, 2010) outlines the components of an intervention that is aimed at closing the achievement gap between of lower achieving students by developing a culturally responsive intervention that incorporates high impact teaching strategies, checks for progress, and collaboration. According to Vaughn, Cirino, Wanzek,

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Wexler, Fletcher, and Denton (2010), a successful intervention should take place on a smaller scale so that it can be more individualized for the needs of the student. These researchers revealed that interventions are difficult to administer but that if students are taught in small groups, and using high impact strategies, they will experience success. Lukin and Estraviz (2010) demonstrated the importance of knowing that not all intervention programs will meet the needs of all students. They also pointed out that while many students are in need of reading interventions, they are not all in need of the same one. Lee's (1995) study helped to understand the importance of getting to know students so that they can be engaged in a meaningful way. By using material that students can relate to, a connection can be built. They can then be instructed using material they are invested in, so that they can apply these same skills to a variety of texts. Overall, these studies help to form a platform to begin looking at interventions. If the importance, purpose, and how to choose interventions, is kept in mind, educators can develop meaningful interventions which will in turn translate to success for students with learning disabilities.

Specific Interventions

As literacy is discussed, it is important to understand that literacy is an umbrella term which covers many components. Therefore, by examining interventions that have worked for each component, a picture can be painted of an all encompassing literacy intervention. In the following study, Vaughn and Klingner (1998) provide an overview of collaborative strategic reading strategies (CSR) to increase student reading comprehension.

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There are a plethora of comprehension strategies that students can be taught; however, the quality of the strategy is more important than the quantity of strategies that are required. These researchers looked at which strategies were most effective and decided upon four that yielded the greatest impact on student success, in order to compile reading comprehension strategies that students could obtain and utilize while reading.

The independent variables in this research study were the comprehension reading strategies (CSR). Researchers wanted to see if teaching these strategies would impact students' comprehension when compared to students who were not given this instruction. The dependent variable was the progress made by the students on a standardized post test given to those students receiving intervention prior to the study.

The researchers took a sample of 4th grade elementary students from a metropolitan area. Of these 141 students 68% were Hispanic, 24% white, 7% black, and 1% Asian or American Indian. In this study, 14 students were identified as have a learning disability, and 71 were identified as having English as a second language. Their reading achievement scores indicated that 45 students were at a low reading level, 54 were at the average reading level, and 22 were at the high reading level. The intervention was conducted in a social studies class in which students received the intervention on the same subject, the economy of Florida. They were part of this intervention for 11 days, as that is how long it takes to teach one social studies unit. The control group was a different class, in which the students did not receive the CSR material, yet were still taught the same information.

The procedure was implemented in two phases. In the first phase the students were taught specific comprehension strategies through direct instruction. This was done by the student and teacher as a team so as to allow for the teacher to demonstrate the thought process behind the

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strategies. The four reading strategies that were taught were previewing and predicting, monitoring for understanding and vocabulary knowledge, main idea, and self-questioning and understanding. Another way to articulate these strategies are preview, click and clunk, get the gist, and wrap-up. In order to teach these strategies the instructors explained, modeled, implemented, and provided opportunities for the student to practice using each strategy. Researchers also reviewed these strategies repeatedly so that students could eventually use them with confidence.

The purpose behind teaching students to preview text is to pique interest, activate prior knowledge, and prepare them for what is ahead before reading a text. Researchers instructed students to look at the text, headings, titles, and pictures to draw inferences about what the reading is about, what they already know about the reading, and what they might learn from the reading. “Click and Clunk” was taught so that students could read and comprehend an entire selection of text. This strategy aimed at allowing students to monitor their comprehension continuously while reading. This strategy forced the students to realize they didn’t understand something and take notes while they were reading. When students had a good understanding of what they were reading it “clicked.” On the other hand, when they didn’t understand something researchers referred to it as a “clunk.” After identifying what “clunked,” researchers taught students to “de-clunk” the information which meant to use reading strategies to understand what was being read. “Get the gist” was a strategy taught to participants that taught them how to determine the main idea. Students were taught to “get the gist” from smaller passages, and then progressively larger passages. They were expected to iterate the most important details, and explain why those details were chosen as the most important. “Wrap-up” was the last strategy taught by researchers. This process involved teaching students to use main ideas to summarize.

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Also, students were shown how to ask questions that the reading answered as a way to reinforce the important information from the reading.

The second phase of this study was to make cooperative learning groups for the students. In this phase researchers set the stage so that students could practice these strategies among their peers. The objective was to have them become experts in each strategy so that they could lead their classmates.

A self designed pretest was administered to both the control group and the group that was given the CSR. The same test was given as a post test. When pre-test and post tests were compared to the students who did not receive this intervention, it was clear that the students made substantial progress. Students who received the CSR outperformed the students in the control group substantially. A total of 56 students showed significant improvement within the group that received the intervention, while 25 students showed improvement in the control group. Students without a learning disability made greater growth; however, researchers indicated that even students with learning disabilities made progress. They also noted that students who regularly did not participate, many of whom were identified as having a learning disability, did so while using these methods. Furthermore, they suggested that if these methods were used longer for these students, more growth would be likely to occur.

So often, students who struggle with comprehension read through text and upon completion, have not comprehended what they actually read. Teaching students this difference allows them to see that they must understand before they proceed to read so that the text, as a whole, can make sense. Students seem to struggle with grasping the main idea by giving too much information, too little information, or no information at all. Students are often expected to understand the main idea but they are not taught how to find the main idea. This serves as a way

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for students to summarize what they have read in their own words, which also helps in retaining information. This is also a great study strategy.

As shown by these researchers, if students are introduced to a few, effective strategies, they are able to use them efficiently and with ease. This will strengthen their comprehension skills and can give students who struggle with comprehension increased confidence. Often times students can feel bombarded with different strategies. These strategies focus on the broadest forms of comprehension so that students can obtain the skills they need to read texts.

Furthermore, each of these strategies can be used effectively when reading expository texts. The next study demonstrates that many students excel when it comes to comprehension of narrative text. However, students tend to have the most difficulty when confronted with expository texts.

The study conducted by Saenz and Fuchs (2010) investigated the reading performance of students with a learning disability by using two different types of texts. They wanted to discover if a difference would exist in reading performance on narrative versus expository text. Narrative text is text which is intended for entertainment. This type of text encompasses characters, goals, motives, events, morals and themes. Expository text on the other hand is text which aims to communicate information and to help readers learn something new. They aimed to identify the areas that students exhibited differential performance within these two types of text. The authors posed two questions to consider. (1) Do secondary students with LD exhibit differential performance on reading fluency as a function of text type? (2) Do secondary students with LD exhibit differential performance on reading comprehension as a function of text type and question type? The independent variable was the type of text the student was assessed on;

expository versus narrative. The dependent variable was the student's performance on each assessment.

The sample consisted of 111 high school students from 6 different high schools who were all labeled as having a learning disability. All the students were either in special education reading classes or remedial reading classes. The majority of the 111 students, (90 %,) were in a special education class for a reading intervention program. All of the students were reading at an estimated reading grade level between 2nd and 8th grade. This was determined by classroom observations, statewide tests, and diagnostic data. Of the students, 57% were African American, and 41% were white. Also, 72% of these students were boys and 38% of students qualified for free lunch. The actual grade level that the students were enrolled in varied. Freshman made up 43% of the group, sophomores made up 20%, juniors made up 25%, and seniors made up 11%.

Students were given four different passages, two expository and two narratives in random order. At the end of each passage students were required to answer questions related to the text that were both inferential and literal. Students were scored on four different components after reading the passages. They were scored on words they read correctly in 2 minutes for fluency, total questions they answered correctly, the literal questions they answered correctly and the inferential questions they answered correctly.

The researchers found that students with a learning disability had a more difficult time with expository text than narrative text. They struggled more with expository text when it came to fluency and inferential comprehension. On the other hand, students read more words correctly and fluently on narrative passages and were able to answer inferential comprehension questions. Students were able to answer literal questions at the same level for both types of texts.

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Researchers have concluded that students are most often taught to read using narrative texts in primary grades; however, as students progress to higher grades they are confronted with more expository texts. By the time students reach 4th grade, they are expected to be able to read this type of text for information. When students reach high school and beyond, most of the literature they are required to read is expository. However, it appears that they are not adequately prepared to take on this task. Students are not familiar enough with expository texts and therefore it is challenging for them to read it.

According to the researchers, in order for students to read informational texts they must be better prepared. They need to learn different skills that can help them such as; word identification, word part identification, summarization, outlining, identifying main ideas, using graphic organizers, activating prior knowledge, vocabulary, inferential skills, and fluency. These various skills help students with comprehension and make it easier for them to determine what information is most important when reading. Teaching these skills to students will help them become better expository readers in general.

A student who may be behind in reading comprehension could use the previously mentioned skills and apply them to all different types of texts. Also, reading expository text is the most applicable type of reading to real world situations. Therefore, it is imperative that struggling students practice using the aforementioned skills until they can be used with confidence. If students demonstrate that they are able to comprehend, they should then be able to summarize the information they read into their own words. This means that they should have concrete writing skills when doing so. The next researcher wrote a book report that summarizes the main points of a book entitled, “Blueprint for Exceptional Writing” by Dr. Fontenot (Fontenot, 2008)

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Fontenot sought out to find a writing intervention that would be effective in enhancing the organization of student writing. She wanted to raise the skill levels of all students. She sought to assist students who struggle with writing as well as motivate students who were proficient to improve. Essentially closing the achievement gap between the two levels of writers was her ultimate goal. The independent variable was the introduction of the blueprint for students, and the dependent variable was the in-class evaluations and the Written Expression sub-test of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, Second Edition (WIAT-II).

Fontenot implemented a blueprint for writing to a variety of students over a 12 year period. In her book, she provides many examples of all different type of student learners. She had a variety of skill levels, as well as demographic make-up. The blueprint she implemented was a multi-sensory Master Plan. Students were taught to think about their writing before hand, plan their writing, and then write expressive and focused essays. This was done by teaching vocabulary, prewriting strategies, writing, and then editing. The students practiced using this blueprint though a variety of writing styles. They wrote narrative, persuasive, research, and analytic responses to readings using these methods.

Fontenot's findings indicated that the blueprint for writing was significantly successful for student participants. Students with special needs demonstrated a 12.38% gain in writing skills. Students who were not in special education demonstrated similar growth of 11.48%. These numbers were derived using in-class observations of student writing samples. Also, students were pre and post tested using the Written Expression subtest of the WIAT-II.

As illustrated by this researcher, a concrete blueprint can be a successful tool if implemented to struggling readers. Prior to writing, students should activate their prior

knowledge. They should then plan their writing out by mapping or outlining what they will write about. Finally, they should write and receive constructive feedback and direction. Creating a blueprint is only one way to improve writing skills. The next researcher will provide another strategy that is used to improve the overall writing of students.

As educators it is often understood that differentiation across the board is needed for all students because every person has different needs as a learner when offering instruction in comprehension as well as writing. Differentiating instruction is the key to closing the ability and achievement gap that exists too often within urban school districts today. This holds true for all students, and is even truer when working with students who have a learning disability. Furthermore, students who are considered high achieving, or not-so-far behind, are often neglected because others seem to need differentiation more. The following research conducted by Geisler, Hessler, Gardner, and Lovelace (2009) was a study involving specific writing strategies that would be used in an attempt to make stronger writers. They demonstrated how specific differentiated methods could prove effective for writing.

In this study researchers explored research-based strategies that were aimed at improving the overall writing quality for students. They aimed to find the effects of self counting and usage of synonym lists.

There are two independent variables in this study. The first independent variable in this study would be self counting. Self counting is when students count the number of words they write and monitor their own progress. They aim to write more words each time they write. The other independent variable was synonym lists. These are lists that provide the students with alternative words to strengthen their writing. The dependent variables were the number of different words that students wrote. Students were to count the number of words they wrote in a

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3 minute period of their writing sample. They were not allowed to count words that they repeated within the writing sample. Another dependent variable was the number of total words which included all words, even ones repeated.

For this particular study, researchers included 5 students. Students were all African Americans attending an urban elementary school in first grade. Four of the students were female, one was male. Selection of these students was based on the score they received on their benchmark assessment at the beginning of first grade. All of these students scored at or above the second grade level in reading and comprehension. Although these students tested at a higher grade level than first, they were still instructed with their peers. A teacher assessed the students' writing abilities and found that, 3 of the 5 students were considered to be strong writers. There were fifteen other students in the class who did not receive the intervention, but were still expected to complete all the writing activities.

Researchers introduced the self-counting strategy before the intervention began by explaining the process and the importance of writing more words, and different words. Students were then trained to self count and record their own results. They used a transparency over their original writing sample so that they could count the words while maintaining a clean copy of their work. Researchers then took the number of words written, and the number of different words and graphed them so that the participants would be able to see their progress. Student progress was measured during three different circumstances: once before the intervention took place, again when they were instructed on how to count words, and a third time when they were instructed on how to use the synonym list. During the first phase, students were expected to produce a narrative essay on any topic they wanted and they were allowed to take as much time as they needed. They were neither encouraged nor discouraged from using self counting and had

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no access to a synonym list. The same probe took place after introducing the self counting phase, and the last probe took place after the inclusion of the synonym list.

Researchers examined the effects of self counting and synonym use to increase writing ability and found that both of these interventions did in fact prove useful. By using these two intervention strategies, all the students showed improved writing. Some showed more improvement during different phases meaning that the self counting strategy worked better for some students, while the synonym list worked better for others. Growth however, was noted across the board for each intervention and students wrote more words, and used more varied words when the pre test was compared to the post test.

According to researchers, these two interventions are great tools to improve the writing skills of any student. Explicitly teaching students how to do this and working with them can help to make this a more natural style of writing for students. If these strategies are taught, and consistently enforced, students may begin to do them subconsciously. Since both of these interventions proved successful for students who were on grade level, it was assumed that they would work for a student whose writing is not on grade level. These are tools that could essentially help a student make a lasting change for the better on his/her writing. Furthermore, this is a great way to get students to expand vocabulary. Use of the synonym list and directly teaching the importance of using different words will help them with oral communication skills as well. Lastly, graphing student data is a tool that can be used for student motivation. Students were essentially working harder each time to beat the last number of words they wrote, not realizing that they were competing against themselves to improve their writing skills.

Using a synonym list, as suggested by the previous study, can be beneficial when attempting to improve the writing skills of a student. Furthermore, it helps to enhance the

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vocabulary of students. Coupling this previously mentioned intervention with the suggestions on teaching vocabulary offered by the next study therefore go hand in hand.

Curtis and Longo (2001) performed a comprehensive study that was aimed at improving the vocabulary of students. Their sub-study areas dealt with word comprehension, fluency, writing, word attack, and word identification. Ultimately, they sought to improve the literacy of students by teaching them ways to understand words and the concepts behind them. This research study focused on three main components: (1) focus on vocabulary learning, (2) moving vocabulary from isolation to context, and (3) selection of vocabulary words for instruction. The independent variable in this study was the intervention introduced to the students. The dependent variable was the progress made by each student.

The students who made up this sample for this study were from Boys Town, Nebraska. They attended a recreation/education center for children and young adults who were, at the time of the study, undergoing financial hardships as well as emotional vulnerability from serious situations. The median age of the test group was around 15 years of age. Students were included in this program for 16 weeks.

The main components of the procedures revolve around the fulfillment of five major concerns: (1) introduction and activation of word meanings, (2) present words in a variety of contexts, (3) provision of multiple opportunities to learn and expansion of meanings, (4) promotion of active and generative processing of vocabulary meanings, and (5) provision of ongoing assessment and communication of progress.

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Researchers gave students a pre and post test for each vocabulary unit. The pretests were used as a guide to find out what students already knew, and what words they needed to work on the most. When students tested low on the pretest, 30-60%, emphasis was placed on expanding the knowledge of word meanings. When students tested high however, emphasis was placed on word relationships and word usage. Meetings during the intervention took place as frequent as possible to discuss the progress made by the student at which time researchers worked on reading fluency by conducting read alouds.

Introducing and activating word meanings was taught to promote word knowledge using explicit instruction. The word and its meaning was given to the students. This was followed by a discussion of the context in which the word could be used. Researchers then proceeded to present the words in a variety of contexts. This took the form of an activity that was referred to as a cloze procedure or fill- in-the-blank, which allowed students to discover different ways that one vocabulary word could be used. This was also used in a paragraph form which helps students with using the appropriate vocabulary word by using context clues. This process was modeled by teachers using a think aloud procedure so that students could also see that one word was not the “right word.” Researchers provided multiple opportunities to learn and to expand meaning by creating meaningful encounters with word meaning. Another activity known as the “Analogies task” was used to get students to think of how the word can be related to other words. In order for students to do this activity successfully, they were taught the different ways that words could be related (e.g., opposites, synonyms, antonyms, object-use, etc.). Promoting active and generative processing encouraged students to write. Writing then forced students to actively process the meanings of words. Students were required to write using at least 5 words from the

vocabulary list. Lastly, researchers assessed progress and communicated with the students continually as a key part of the intervention.

The findings were successful in more than one aspect. The students showed significant progress as proven by their post test scores. Researchers focused on different strategies based on the students needs as indicated by their pretest. This way, each student was receiving similar, yet differentiated instruction. This intervention also helped the students build confidence and understand their own aptness to retaining information and making connections between words, meanings, concepts and synonyms with one another. On average, students tested around 40% on their sentence-production task as a pretest. The same task was given at the end of the intervention and scores raised, on average, to 75%. The second measure of success was measured by a vocabulary pretest and post test. On average, students scored 40% on the pretest and 90% on the post test, indicating significant growth.

The researchers suggested that by providing students with varying ways to promote vocabulary building, success should surface. The word selections are an influential factor on whether retaining and learning is achievable due to the familiarity and emphasis of certain words and concepts. For students who struggle greatly, the words may be fewer so that they can experience more meaningful instruction. The constant reviews and reinforcement of associations and concepts to the words that represent them helps show the embedding of the seemingly hard information to a receptive and growing mind.

When students struggle with vocabulary, they ultimately struggle across the board when it comes to literacy. It is pointed out by this project that literacy consists of many different components that are intertwined together. If one area is weak, then all areas are affected. With

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poor vocabulary, a student will consequently struggle with comprehension, fluency, and writing. Therefore, teaching vocabulary, while keeping all of these components in mind, could be a great way to strengthen the skills of a student who is struggling overall. Furthermore, allowing the student to experience success builds confidence. So often students have tried and failed which makes them inept to give up or work with less persistence. Allowing them to experience success can be a tool used to gauge students and encourage them.

As this study suggests, increasing vocabulary will not only help with writing, but with increasing the comprehension experienced by students. Lastly, there is one trait that can almost certainly indicate a student who is struggling to read, fluency.

Spencer and Manis (2010) sought out to find more information about fluency and its impact on comprehension for students who have reading deficits. They wanted to see if increased fluency would mean increased comprehension and decoding. For many years, and even still today, people believe that fluency is the most dominant trait of a person who is reading at a proficient level. Therefore, people may theorize that reading fluently is essential for students if they want to achieve proficiency. The independent variable was the Great Leaps Reading (Campbell, 1998) program, while the dependent variable was the results of fluency the post test which was later compared to the pretest.

The researchers included 60 middle school students from two different middle schools. The middle schools could be found on the outskirts of a large urban city on the west coast. More boys (43) participated than girls (17) and all students were between the ages of 10 and 15. They were in grades 6-8. Of the students, 35 of were Hispanic, 12 were Caucasian, 10 were African American, and the remaining 3 students fell under the category of other. Within this group of students, 36 spoke English as their first language while 24 of them were English language

learners. All of these students participated in a special day program which is a self contained special education classroom. They were in this classroom, mostly due to their low reading levels. In order to become eligible for this study, participants also had to score below the 4th grade level on the Woodcock Reading Mastery test. (Woodcock 2011)

This study was conducted by paraprofessionals whom were trained in the Great Leaps Reading Program. The sample was then divided into two groups randomly. One group would be the experimental group while the other would be the control group. Each day the paraprofessional would take a student out individually and give him/her 10 minutes of instruction. First, students read approximately 60 words or sounds. Then students would read whole words. Finally, they would read quickly and accurately for one minute. Students would go over the same sounds, words and reading passages until they demonstrated mastery by having minimal to no errors. Once students demonstrated proficiency, they were then challenged by new lists that were slightly, and progressively more difficult. The students in the control group also met with a paraprofessional for 10 minutes each day; however, they did not receive the intervention. Instead, these students were taught study skills and organizational skills.

Prior to completing the Great Leaps reading program, the students took a pretest that measured different components of literacy including comprehension and fluency. After completion of the reading program Great Leaps, the students were post tested to see if they had made any significant progress. The results showed that students made significant progress on the fluency subtests; however, they did not show any progress within the comprehension subtests. Students were reading the passages with greater fluency. This meant that they were reading the passages with fewer errors, and more correct words per minute. The intervention was solely

focused on fluency, but it was noted that improvements in fluency did not result in increased comprehension.

Students are taught at an early age how to read and as they grow older they are expected to read to learn. This is a philosophy shared by many teachers but it is difficult for a student who is not fluent in reading to learn by reading. The researchers emphasized that educators must keep in mind, especially when working with students who have learning disabilities, that learning to read must consequently be continually taught even in later years.

Many students who have reading deficits, do so in the area of fluency. Therefore, this area is one component of literacy that cannot be ignored. The design of the Great Leaps Reading Program, if paired with other interventions, could be a useful tool for students. In order to be a successful reader, students should become increasingly fluent so they can become confident enough to grow in other areas.

In review, these articles showed that the importance of literacy lies within the domains of comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and fluency. For example, Vaughn and Klingner (1999) emphasized the importance of previewing text, understanding vocabulary, grasping the main idea, and summarizing the reading as the main strategies readers need to successfully comprehend while reading. Saenz and Fuchs (2010) pointed out the necessity of explicitly teaching students how to comprehend expository texts so that they can be successful in higher grade levels as well as in real life beyond high school. In order to improve the writing skills, Fontenot's (2008) research indicated that a blueprint for writing can be used as a successful tool. Providing the student with opportunities to activate their prior knowledge, map out their writing, and then guide them through the writing process, will help them produce more organized writing. Furthermore, improving the overall quality of writing, as pointed out by Geisler, Hessler,

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Gardner, and Lovelace (2009), can be done by implementing two strategies; word counting, and using a synonym list. Curtis and Longo (2001) built on this writing component by introducing 5 vocabulary strategies that can help to increase vocabulary. They suggested providing word meaning, presenting the vocabulary in a variety of texts, providing opportunities to learn and expand on meanings, promoting active processing of meaning, and assessing progress continually. Finally, Spencer and Manis (2010) provided two strategies to improve the fluency of students. By mastering sounds, words, and passages, and then progressively mastering more difficult material, students will demonstrate progress in fluency. Overall, these studies provide a solid foundation for strategies that can be implemented for a student who is struggling with literacy.

As this chapter points out, a one on one intervention is important for struggling readers. As section one suggests, before implementation, researchers must look at intervention as a whole so that interventions are meaningful. The second section, which provided explicit and effective comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and fluency interventions, is what future researchers can use as a blueprint for constructing future studies. By using strategies such as the ones within this chapter, educators are able to provide individualized interventions. Looking at research that has already been done is important in shaping future educational decisions. Using these research based strategies can help educators design interventions that may work for a particular student. By building off these various researches a meaningful and appropriate intervention can be designed for a student.

Chapter 3: Procedures for the Study

This chapter outlines the procedural components of my case study. A detailed description of my student sample, who will be referred to as “Andrea” to maintain confidentiality, can be found in this chapter. This chapter includes a detailed explanation of her background information and academic, information processing, and socio-emotional characteristics. Also, a description of the various procedures I used for comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and fluency will be discussed in this chapter. Lastly, the various methods of data collection that took place over the duration of the literacy intervention to assess levels and progress will be explained.

Student Description

The information that is provided in this description came from a review of Andrea’s cumulative folder on July 2nd, 2012. Also an interview was conducted with her former IEP teacher on July 5th, 2012. Information was also obtained from direct observation during our sessions together.

Andrea is a female student who has recently completed her 8th grade year at Capital West Academy. On the first day of intervention, she was a few days short of being 15 years old. She was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She lives with her mother and two younger brothers. She spends a lot of her time with her grandparents who have significantly assisted in rearing her and her siblings.

In 2003, Andrea was diagnosed with ADD at which time she was referred for special education for a Cognitive disability (CD) as well as Speech and Language Impairment (SPLI). Her teacher reported that she was experiencing academic difficulty for the duration of the school year. She noticed that Andrea experienced difficulty retaining information and translating

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information from one context to another. She also reported that Andrea was having a difficult time paying attention in class. Andrea underwent the required testing to determine eligibility, however she did not qualify at that time for a special education program. She was found to perform on an average reading, written language, and general knowledge level. She was recommended again in 2004, at which time, she did meet all of the requirements for SPLI. At this time she was not diagnosed with CD. In 2008, her Individualized Education Plan was reevaluated to determine if her services should be expanded, particularly in the area of Cognitive Disability. At this time she did meet all criteria for CD as well.

Andrea is reading approximately at the 3rd grade reading level. She experiences difficulty with comprehending material that is beyond her reading level. She struggles when she is required to move at a fast pace, and when she is confronted with lengthy reading. When asked comprehension questions, she is able to respond to implicit questions accurately but she struggles with explicit questions. Often she will read a question, and offer an answer that does not relate to the question being asked. She can recall some details from readings, but often misses the main ideas. When she reads, she will often read without understanding. She does not always think about what she is reading when it is difficult material and she doesn't go back and reread to gain a better understanding. When it comes to writing, Andrea struggles with making complete sentences. She is able to write short, simple sentences, but when she does not take her time and organize her thoughts, her sentence structure is poor. Her sentences lack detail and are often incomplete. When writing, Andrea's vocabulary is often limited and therefore her communication skills are below grade level. She repeats words and lacks variety. She has difficulty communicating, and if she is trying to express a thought, she has difficulty saying it another way. Furthermore, she has difficulty using context clues to help her understand words

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that are unfamiliar to her. Also, Andrea has a difficult time when it comes to beginning writing assignments. When writing she does not make use of transition words so consequently her writing lacks organization. Regarding fluency, Andrea reads disjointedly. She is able to fluently read sight words, but when it comes to reading sentences she struggles. She does not add expression when reading.

Andrea is a very eager and motivated student who is excited to please her teachers. Without hesitation, she will attempt any task given to her. With certain accommodations and one on one instruction, Andrea is able to experience more success and display her strengths. If she takes her time with reading, and her instruction is scaffolded, she can work with material that is beyond her reading level. Also, if frequent checks for understanding are made she is able to note important details as she reads. Rereading and repetition of main ideas help her to grasp the main idea. When she does not know the answer to a question, either implicit or explicit, she can usually come to the answer if she is asked probing questions to focus her thought process as opposed to open ended questioning. Also, when prompted, Andrea can and will add detail to her writing. She is able to re-read her writing and find mistakes in sentence structure as well, however, she does not re-read her writing on her own. When she makes mistakes within her writing, she often will read them correctly even if they have mistakes. If mistakes are pointed out she can usually correct them on her own. When writing, she typically does not write in an organized fashion but when given a graphic organizer as a supplemental tool, she can use it to assist her writing. Also, if repetition of vocabulary is pointed out to her, she is able to find synonyms to vary her writing. Providing vocabulary words that she might struggle with prior to reading is one way that Andrea's fluency is improved. Working on vocabulary words prior to reading them in context improves her fluency.

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Andrea is a very pleasant young lady. She has a few close friends and is liked by her peers as well as teachers. She has a close relationship with her family members as well. She is easy to work with because she follows instruction well. Andrea is interested in music. She is a huge fan of an artist by the name of Justin Bieber. She talks about him all the time and really enjoys his music. She has the typical interests of a teenage girl as she enjoys hanging out with her friends, fashion, and talking on the phone.

Procedures Description

Comprehension Interventions

As a comprehension intervention I decided to teach and implement a process for previewing text, understanding vocabulary, grasping the main idea, and summarizing as the main strategies (Vaughn and Klingner (1999)). In doing this, I chose to use only expository texts because these are the texts that most struggling readers have difficulty with as suggested by researchers Saenz and Fuchs (2010). I created a comprehension template for Andrea that she used for every reading session. I introduced the template to her and explained the purpose behind each step. I explained it in depth so that she would be comfortable and confident when using it, and so that she could understand the reasoning behind each step. My goal was to teach these strategies by going through them with her, and then to eventually let her complete them confidently on her own.

The first column of the template labeled “Preview and Predict” was used to activate her prior knowledge. She had to think about what she already knew about the topic, what she wanted to know, and what she thought she would learn. She was encouraged to look at the text,

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headings, titles, bold-faced words, and pictures to draw inferences during this step. This process of activating prior knowledge was meant to help her prepare for each reading.

The second section of the template was dedicated to “Clunks.” During the reading, we stopped after every paragraph at which point we would restate the main idea. If she was not able to restate the main idea then we “clunked it” in our own words so that it would “click.” This is often where new vocabulary words would go. This strategy’s main purpose was to force her to constantly check for understanding by continuously monitoring her comprehension.

The third section was entitled “main ideas.” In this part of the comprehension intervention, Andrea and I would re-read the selection and underline the important details paragraph by paragraph. She would then translate those important details into her own words and record them in this section.

Finally, the summary section made up the third column. For this part of the comprehension intervention, Andrea had to re-write what she read in her own words. Andrea was able to use her main ideas to form a summary but she was required to write them in complete sentences and in paragraph form. The second part of the summary section was the questions section. In this section, she would formulate questions that her summary answered. This skill was used to make sure that she had indeed summarized the information. This part of the intervention is also a strategy used to help her retain the information she read in her reading.

Writing Interventions

Journaling was done with Andrea as suggested by her IEP teacher. I gave her writing prompts that were random and allowed her to write freely and to express herself. This was done

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initially so that I could obtain a writing sample from her, however we continued the process for the duration of the study. We then took her journal entries, and reread them to rewrite them. During the process of rereading, I allowed her to correct her mistakes. When she did not match a mistake, I would point at it and ask her if she noticed a mistake. My aim was to build on her writing confidence so I kept from criticizing her writing and instead focused on her main ideas and used them to guide her on a second draft.

A writing blueprint was introduced as a way to help her organize her writing. I created a template that resembles a home. I introduced this intervention by explaining how a house is built, from the ground up. The foundation has to be laid, then walls go up to support the house, followed by a roof that tops the house off and completes it. Also, afterwards you have to go back and add decorations and furnishings. I then showed her how writing is similar in that the foundation is the big picture, the walls are the main ideas, the roof is the conclusion, and the decorations are the supporting details of the main ideas. When we summarized our readings, we did so using this blueprint before she actually wrote her summary to help her organize her writing. Also, we rewrote journals using the blueprint so that she could see how her writing could be improved by first organizing her thoughts. Andrea asked if we could use the blueprint before she wrote because she liked the way it helped her organize her thoughts. Eventually, I let her use the blueprint whenever she wanted to use it for a journal prompt, but still required her to use it for writing summaries.

Word Count is a strategy that was proven effective by researchers Geisler, Hessler, Gardner, and Lovelace (2009). After she completed a prompt, together we would count the number of words she used. We would then record this number at the bottom of the page, and then transfer it to a graph to track her progress. The idea behind this intervention is that the more

words she writes, the more detail she will add. Also, I encouraged her each time to beat her last number as a way to motivate her to write more words.

Masterpiece sentencng is the final writing intervention I used with Andrea. In this intervention, we simply took sentences, and found ways to add details to them to make them better sentences. We used sentences that she generated in her own writing, and rewrote them to make them better. I also provided her with sentences that could be combined, and we practiced putting these sentences together using conjunctions and transition words.

Vocabulary Interventions

For vocabulary, I used a variety of strategies that were proven effective by Curtis and Longo (2001). They suggested providing word meaning, presenting the vocabulary in a variety of texts, providing opportunities to learn and expand on meanings, promoting active processing of meaning, and assessing progress continually. The first strategy that I used I referred to as “Bank It.” Before we read, we always took a look at the bold faced words. If she was not familiar with a word, we put it right into our bank of words. She then found the definition using context clues, and then defined the word using her own words. When we came across words that she didn’t know that were not bold, we also added those to her bank and used context clues to help us understand what they meant. I then used this list of words as a review for when we revisited the reading. Also, I required her to use these words in her written summaries so that she could get practice using the words.

The second strategy that I used was a synonym list. We generated a list of words that she used frequently and we also picked words randomly. I used her journals to find these words, and

when I couldn't find them we just picked arbitrary words. I encouraged her to brainstorm different ways to say the same word. When she got stuck and could not think of words, I did help her to come up with more words. She was then no longer allowed to use the word in her writing and instead had to use the alternate words.

Lastly, as a vocabulary intervention we worked with a word map. We used these to assist her in understanding words that she was struggling to grasp and retain their meaning. In this exercise, she put the word in the middle of the template and then she had to write her own definition of the word. Following this, she had to determine what part of speech the word was, and any synonyms or antonyms for the word. Next, she had to use the word in a sentence and then draw a picture that would remind her of the word.

Fluency Interventions

As a fluency intervention, Spencer and Manis (2010) suggested re-reading as a way to improve fluency. We continually did different strategies while reading. Every reading, we re-read at least 3 times so that she could become increasingly comfortable with the reading. Some days I would let Andrea read aloud just so she could practice reading by herself. We also practiced a method called echo reading where I would read and she would then mock the way that I read to emulate my expression and word flow. On one occasion we tried to do choral reading where we would read at the same time, but this strategy was not liked by the student because it was difficult for us to keep up with one another. It didn't seem to be effective so we did not revisit the strategy.

Explanation of Data Collection

The first form of data collection that I did was to administer The Woodcock Reading Mastery (Woodcock 2011) (WRM). This is a formal assessment that offers a variety of interpretive scores. It took us approximately 50 minutes to complete the test. It uses subtests to assess reading achievement and can be administered to anyone from age 5 to 75. It contains 6 subtests and 3 clusters total. I only administered 4 of the 6 subtests because the reading readiness tests are only administered to students who are in Pre K through first grade. The word identification and word attack tests combine to form the basic skills cluster and the word comprehension and passage comprehension subtests make up the reading comprehension cluster.

The basic skills cluster is made up of word identification and word attack. Word identification requires students to read words. It begins with one word per page and advances to multiple words that are increasingly difficult. The student is not required to know what the word's meaning is, but should be able to say the word. The word attack test assesses the student's ability to read two types of words to measure phonics and analytical skills. These words are nonsense words and words that are hardly used.

The reading comprehension cluster is made up of two parts; word comprehension and passage comprehension. Word comprehension is broken down into three separate tests; antonyms, synonyms, and analogies. The antonym tests measures the student's ability to read a word and respond with a word that is opposite in meaning whereas the synonym test measures the student's ability to state another word similar in meaning. The analogies test requires the student to read a pair of words and ascertain the relationship between the two words. The student must then use the same relationship to provide a word that completes the analogy. This test is used to demonstrate content embedded word knowledge. The passage comprehension portion of

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the test provides the student with a short passage with a blank that the student is required to fill in. The first passages have pictures to accompany them but as the test progresses and becomes more difficult, the passages are no longer accompanied by pictures.

The second type of data I collected was done by using a Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) which is an informal reading inventory. It is not norm-referenced or standardized and instead the scores are interpreted in regard to the individual student and not any norm group. This inventory provides information about the conditions under which the student can identify words and comprehend texts successfully. Also, this assessment aims to reveal conditions under which students unsuccessfully comprehend and identify words. This assessment identifies the student's reading at the independent, instructional, and frustration levels. The QRI provides various passages that assess the oral and silent reading and listening ability of students.

The QRI is used for determining student's reading levels, grouping of students, and choosing appropriate books. It can also be used to design and evaluate intervention instruction and document growth which is the purpose it served within my research study.

Andrea's initial journal was used as data collection as well. I used this as a starting point to track the total number of words that she used when given a writing prompt. I also used this as a method of assessing her organizational skills and sentence formation when writing. As a post test, her last writing sample was compared to her initial writing sample.

The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test has a test which is the Oral Reading Fluency Test. In this test the student is required to read a passage that is timed. Also, the number of errors is recorded. To test her fluency, we read the same passage twice per week to record the number of mistakes as well as the time it took her to complete the reading passage.

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Lastly, an ongoing data collection of unit vocabulary knowledge was done. Prior to the readings I collected the vocabulary words that we would encounter throughout tutoring. We looked at the words and I asked Andrea to provide me with the meaning of the word. If she was unfamiliar with the word and was not able to tell me the meaning then we added the word to a word bank. I then gave her a pretest with the words and asked her to match them with the correct definition. As a post test, a vocabulary test with all of the words from the bank was administered to determine if she had retained the meanings of the words.

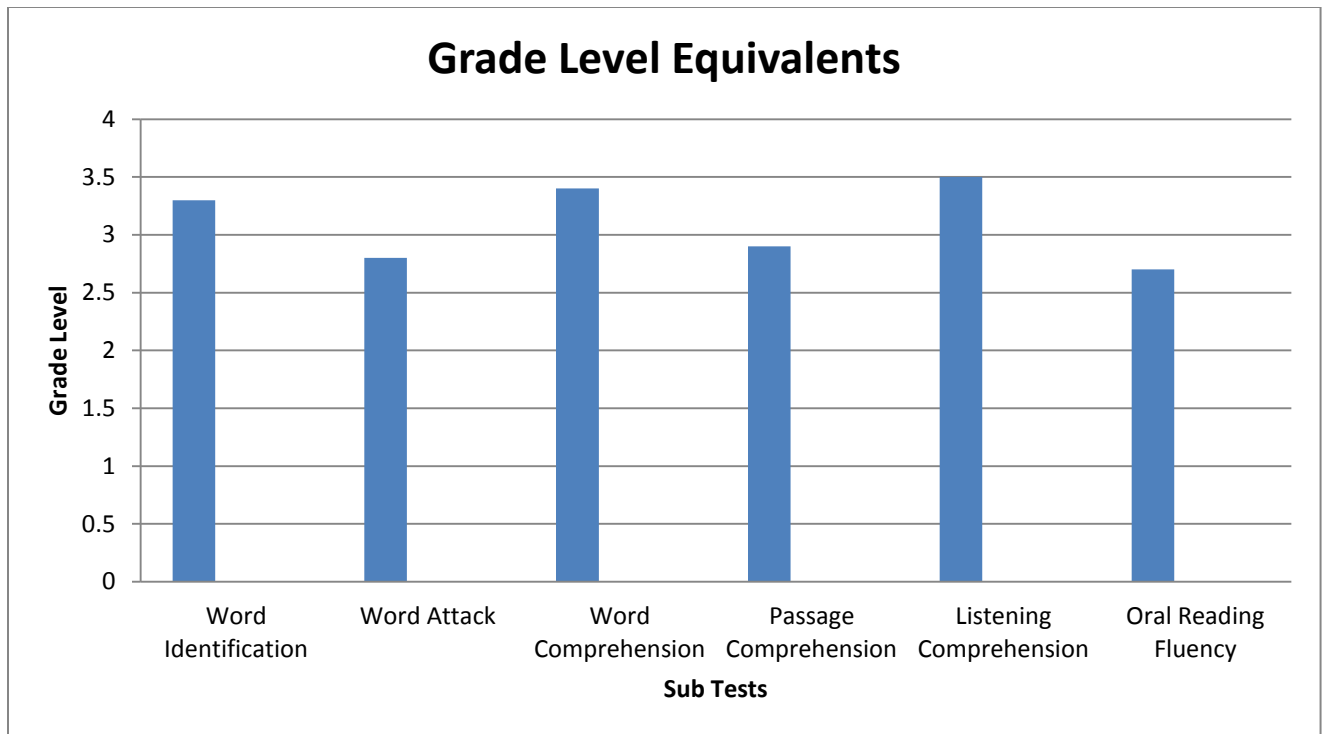
In review, the procedural components of my research study outlined within this chapter have guided my intervention from beginning stages to the final day. The student description helped me as a starting point for designing the intervention to meet the needs of my student. Next, I used research based procedures to address these specific needs and to plan the interventions that I used. Lastly, the different ways in which I gathered data to assess the student's levels as well as progress made by the student helped me to determine the results of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

As the procedures have been outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on the actual results of the procedures and the effectiveness of the interventions. Andrea's journey throughout the intervention will become clear as we discuss it both qualitatively and quantitatively. First and foremost the results of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test will be discussed so that her current levels can be understood. Next, a synthesis of her QRI performance will be described followed by a review of the progress made with her writing and fluency. Finally, the results of her vocabulary post assessment will be covered.

On the Woodcock Reading Mastery assessment (Woodcock 2011) I tested Andrea based on her grade level. The assessment took us approximately 48 minutes with a few breaks between subtests. Throughout testing she demonstrated excellent confidence, focus, and effort. She was determined to do well and when she didn't understand something she asked clarifying questions. When she reached her ceiling, she tried even still, to produce the correct answers. I did not have to repeat any directions at any time as she was very attentive. Overall, she tried her best on this assessment.

I tested Andrea in the areas of word identification, word attack, word comprehension, passage comprehension, listening comprehension, and oral reading fluency. In each area a grade level score was derived that indicates how the student compares to a student of the average performance level of a specific grade. On each test, Andrea ranged from the 2.7 grade level to 3.5. On average she is performing at a 3.2 grade level. Her oral reading fluency, word attack, and passage comprehension were the three subtests in which she scored below the 3rd grade level. Her listening comprehension was the highest score, at the 3.5 grade level.



Relative performance index (RPI) translated Andrea's scores into task-performance terms. It described the probability of success or accuracy that she would experience with similar tasks. Also, the RPI shares the same meaning when age and grade level shift. Percentile ranks indicated the percentage of individuals in the same grade who scored at or below the student's raw score. Andrea scored at the second percentile on word identification with an RPI of 3/90 which means Andrea performed with 3% accuracy on word identification, when the average individual at the same grade level would perform with 90% accuracy. Her scores in the remaining subtests were as follows: word attack she fell in the second percentile with an RPI of 38%, word comprehension she fell in the 2nd percentile with an RPI of 29%, passage comprehension she fell in the 1st percentile with 10% accuracy, listening comprehension she fell in the 5th percentile with 29% accuracy, and oral reading fluency she fell in the 1st percentile with 19% accuracy. According to the descriptive categories, she was considered well below average in word identification and passage comprehension. She was below average in all other subtest

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areas. When the clusters for basic skills and reading comprehension were compared she scored lowest in total reading comprehension.

Score Summary

Test	Standard Score	Confidence Interval 90%	Percentile Rank	Relative Performance Index	Descriptive Category
Word Identification	68	60-76	2	3/90	Well below average
Word Attack	70	59-81	2	38/90	Well below average
Word Comp.	70	63-77	2	29/90	Well below average
Passage Comprehension	66	57-75	1	10/90	Well below average
Listening Comprehension	76	68-84	5	29/90	Below average
Oral Reading Fluency	73	62-72	1	18/90	Below average

On the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) Andrea answered the concepts questions with 42 % accuracy. She did not know who Johnny Appleseed was and could not generate much detail about why people plant certain trees in certain places. She did understand that people plant fruit trees for food and that apple cider is a drink, she did not specify that it was an apple drink. When reading out loud, she had a total of 18 mistakes in a reading that was 308 words total. She had 9 mistakes that were considered meaning changing miscues. This put her at the instructional level for grade 4. She read an average of 49 correct words per minute. She was able to retell 8 out of 47 total details. She did not recall any information from the setting or background of the story. She did retell the goal and some of the events that took place as well as the resolution. She omitted many important supporting details. When it came to the comprehension questions, she

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was able to recall 4 of the explicit questions, but none of the implicit questions. This put her at the frustration level. However, when she was allowed to look back at the reading, she was able to find the answer for 2 implicit questions. This put her at 6 correct answers out of 8. She did not wish to find the answers for the other two implicit questions as she became frustrated with looking through the reading. She had 6 answers correct, which put her at the instructional level once again. This QRI indicated that Andrea’s instructional level is at the fourth grade level.

QRI Level: Four “Johnny Appleseed”			
Concept Questions	Miscues	Retelling Story	Comprehension Questions
Score: 5/12 42%	Total Miscues: 18 Number of Meaning-Changing Miscues:9 Instructional Level	Score: 8/47	Without Look-Backs Explicit: 4/8 Implicit: 0/8 Frustration Level With Look-Backs Explicit: 0/8 Implicit: 2/8 Total: 6/8 Instructional Level

The first comprehension guides that were completed by Andrea were done with my help. I used the first half of the intervention to instruct Andrea on how to use the guide. During this time I helped her and completed the guide with her. Gradually, I helped her less each time we completed the guide. Andrea completed the final comprehension guide independently. On the initial comprehension guide we had to go through each section together. By the second week of intervention, she was becoming more familiar with the chart. When asked, “Why do we clunk information from our reading?” Andrea replied, “So that we can make it click.” She understood that while we read it is important to continually check for understanding. On the final

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comprehension guide, Andrea demonstrated that she could independently complete the comprehension guide with confidence and success. She was able to preview the text, clunk information she didn't know, locate the main ideas, and summarize the information on her own.

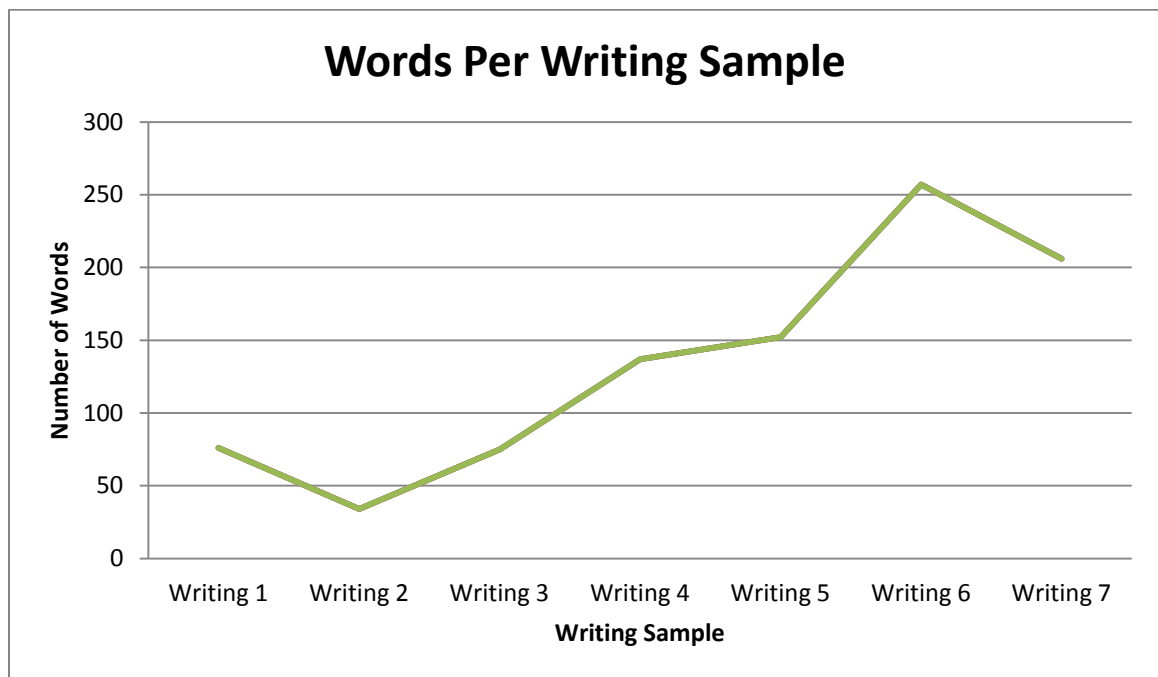
On the initial journal entry that Andrea completed she wrote a total of 76 words and 0 complete sentences. All of her sentences were either incomplete thoughts or run-on sentences. She also had a lot of repetition within her writing and spelling errors that made understanding the writing difficult. The sample also lacked organization as it had no distinct beginning, middle, or end. Furthermore, she was very simplistic in her writing as she did not add much detail.

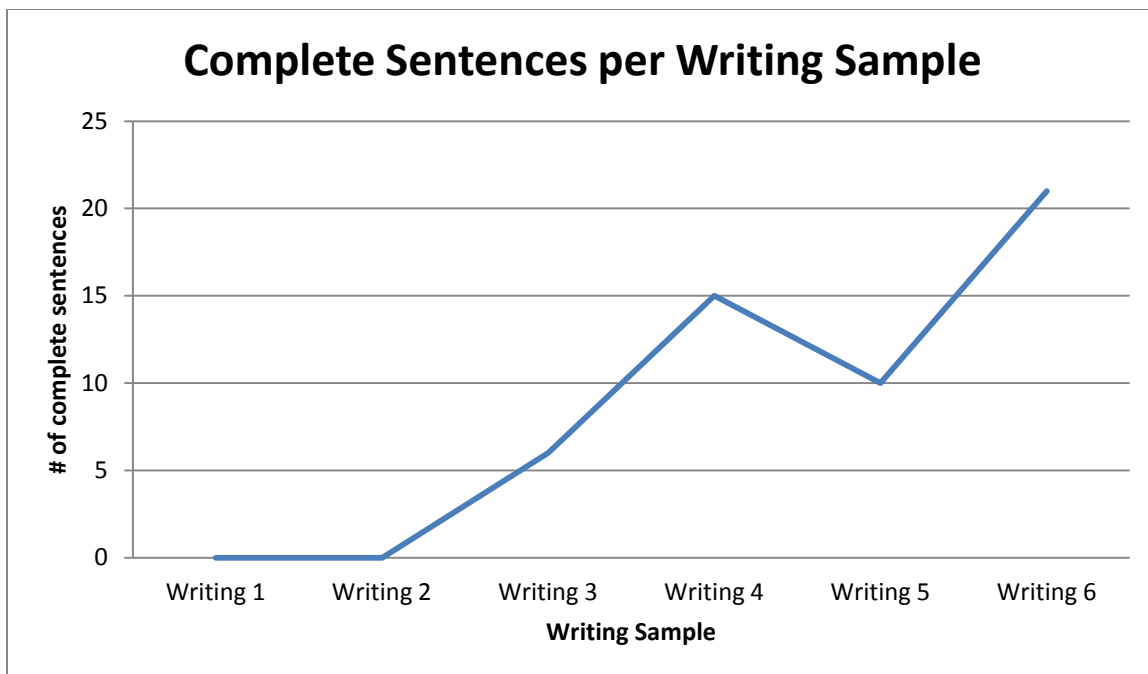
Each time Andrea wrote in her journal, the number of words that she wrote after each writing assignment was recorded on a graph as well as the number of complete sentences. This use of visual representation was a tool used to motivate Andrea. She was able to track her words and sentences and each time she would work towards beating her last number. On one occasion I asked Andrea if she thought she would be able to beat her last recorded number. She replied saying that she didn't think she would have enough. I then asked her how she was going to make it longer. She replied by saying, "I have to add more details." This demonstrated that she understood the concept of adding supporting details to add depth and character to her writing. During another writing, she stopped to say, "I am tired of using the word 'different.'" She asked if we could find other words that mean the same as "different" so that she could have variety in her writing. We then made use of the synonym list in which we found words that have similar meanings. On her second writing sample, she was extremely frustrated. She gave up before she completed her writing and I could tell she was frustrated. At this point I asked her if she would like to use the blueprint moving forward. She agreed that it would help her with the writing process so we used it from then on. She absolutely loved using the blueprint as she requested it

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for future writings. The blueprint helped her to sort out her thoughts before putting them into a writing response which in turn helped her to think about her sentences before she wrote them in her final draft. This allowed Andrea to have more complete, thought out, sentences. As the writing process progressed, she became increasingly independent when it came to using the blueprint. She took her time on her writing and worked diligently on each piece.

The data indicates that her total number of words was increasing as well as her total number of complete sentences. Her final journal, which she wrote independently, was 206 words and had 16 complete sentences. Also, she used the blueprint for her last journal entry which was consequently written in an organized fashion with a clear beginning, middle and end. She included supporting details for each main idea. For most of this writing prompt she wrote in clear and complete sentences. It appeared as though in the beginning of this writing she took time and self corrected however, as the writing came to an end, her last two paragraphs did include improperly written sentences perhaps because she was in a hurry to finish.





Andrea took the oral reading fluency test in the Woodcock Reading Master Test which was at the 3rd grade level. On her initial attempt she received 6 errors out of a total of 97 words total. She read this passage in 100 seconds. She then read the passage at the fourth grade level. In the latter test she received 14 errors out of 158 words and completed the reading in 110 seconds. Twice a week Andrea read the passages as I timed them and recorded the number of errors. When Andrea showed significant improvement on the third grade reading passage, we moved along and completed the 4th grade reading passage.

Andrea was eager each time we read because she wanted to do better. At first she was rushing through the reading but was making more mistakes. I explained to her that I was checking for mistakes as well as time and so she took her time making sure that she read each word. After reading the 3rd grade passage 3 times, she was ready to move to the 4th grade passage. We read the 4th grade passage 3 times, at which point she also demonstrated significant improvement. She was frustrated that she had to keep reading the same thing repeatedly. I asked

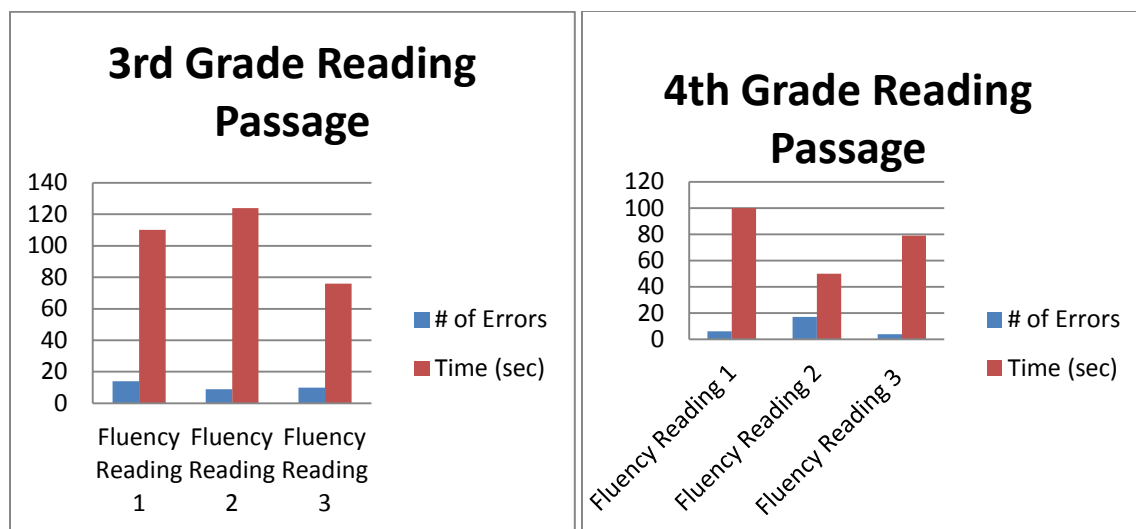
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her if she knew why we were rereading them so many times. She stated, “so that I can practice reading them so that I can read them better.”

Each time Andrea read, the time and number of errors tended to fluctuate. However, the number of errors was higher after the first reading due to her rushing through the reading to beat her previous time. Before the third attempt, I told her that she needed to take her time, make sure she read each word, and that if she didn't beat her time it was fine, but that I wanted to see less errors. On the third attempt she decreased her number of errors, and beat her original time. When she read the 4th grade passage on her second attempt, the number of errors decreased but her time increased. On the final attempts of the 4th grade passage, both the number of errors and time decreased from her original attempt. Her scores can be found in the charts below.

3 rd Grade Reading Passage (97 words)			4 th Grade Reading Passage (158 words)	
	# of Errors	Time (sec.)	# of Errors	Time (sec.)
Attempt 1	6	100	14	110
Attempt 2	17	50	9	124
Attempt 3	4	79	10	76

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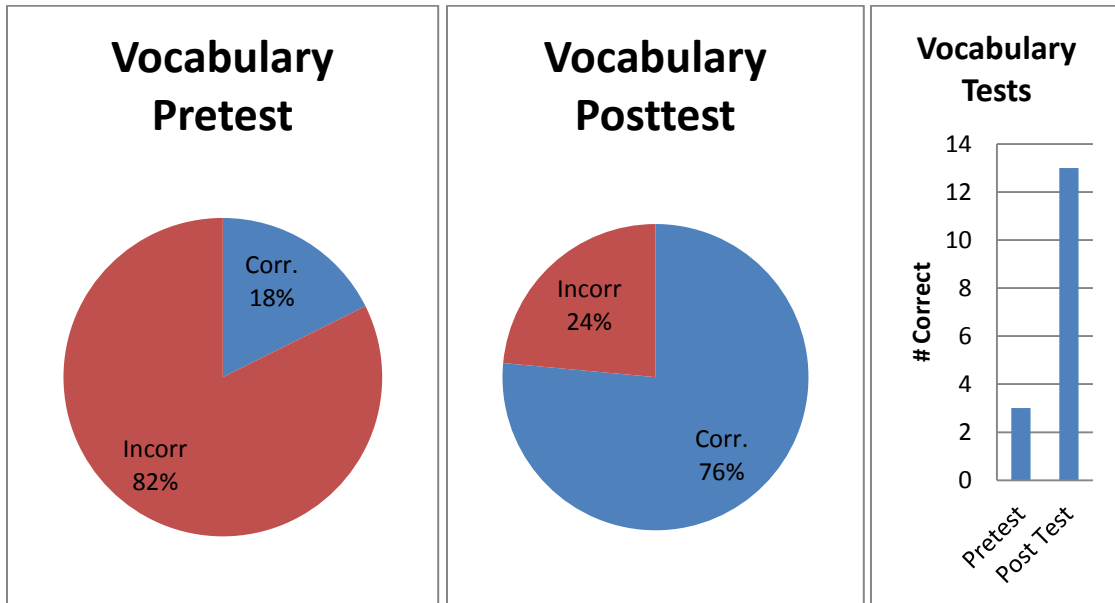


Prior to each reading we went over vocabulary. I asked her if she was familiar with each word and if she knew what each word meant. While she was familiar with some of the words she was not able to iterate their meaning so the words needed to be relearned or learned for the first time. She scored 3 out of 17 correctly on the initial pretest. When she took this test she guessed the meaning of all the words but was able to put some definitions with the word based on prior knowledge.

When working with vocabulary, I used as many opportunities as I could to reinforce the words. She wrote them in various ways, we used them in our dialect, and she used them when writing in her journal. We even completed word maps for some of the words. During the vocabulary quiz, she would think about the different strategies we used when we learned the words. She stated, “I remember drawing the picture of legislative. It was a big “L” with legislative and law making.” She also stated, “Activate, like activating prior knowledge, or turning on what you already know.”

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A total of 17 words were introduced and taught over the duration of the intervention. After implementing different strategies to help her to retain the meaning of these words, a vocabulary quiz was given as a method of post testing to determine if she retained the information. She scored 13 out 17 on this assessment meaning that she went from 18% to 76% accuracy. When taking the final assessment, she demonstrated confidence in her answers as she was able to iterate the meaning before she even found the corresponding answer. When she matched a word with the wrong definition, she even self corrected herself as the vocabulary quiz went on.



In conclusion, the results of the procedures have been laid out and the effectiveness is interpretable. Andrea's journey has been outlined with various graphical representations. The results of the WRMT placed her at approximately the third grade level, while the results of the QRI-5 placed her at an instructional level of 4th grade. Using the comprehension guide demonstrated that she gradually made improvements, and her writing samples indicate growth within organization, details, and sentence structure. The results of her ongoing fluency scores

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suggest that her scores fluctuated, but ultimately decreased when the final score was compared to the initial score. Lastly, The results of the vocabulary post test, when compared to the pre test also indicate an increase in score. Since we have covered the results of the intervention, we will move forward and look at the interpretation of these results, strengths, limitations, and next steps for Andrea.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The purpose of this study was ultimately to raise the literacy skills of an underperforming student, Andrea. Andrea struggles in 4 different areas of literacy; comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and fluency. This study aimed to find different strategies that would help to increase the skills and confidence of this student in each area. In my study, I used various research based strategies that I thought would be beneficial for my student participant. The results of each intervention will be outlined within this chapter as well as strengths and limitations. Finally, recommendations for the student moving forward will be provided.

For the comprehension component, I used the strategies suggested by Vaughn and Klingner (1999). They suggested that students should be taught to preview text, understand vocabulary, grasp main ideas, and summarize reading to increase comprehension. When addressing writing, I used the previously researched strategy of Geisler, Hessler, Gardner, and Lovelace (2009). These researchers suggested counting words written by the student, charting the total number of words, and making synonym lists. I also decided to count the number of complete sentences in each writing sample. As an additional writing strategy I used the method of blueprinting the writing process as suggested by Fontenot (2008). For vocabulary, Curtis and Longo (2001) provided a variety of methods to make words meaningful for students that were successful for students. I applied these methods within my study as well. Lastly, Spencer and Manis (2010) suggested that by re-reading passages students are able to practice, and become more familiar with words, which will then result in increased fluency.

Explanation of results

The final comprehension guide was used to determine Andrea's comprehension skills. On the final comprehension guide, Andrea demonstrated that she could independently complete the guide with confidence and success. She was able to preview the text, clunk information she didn't know, locate the main ideas, and summarize the information on her own. During the beginning of our sessions, I had to complete this guide with Andrea and show her exactly where to go for information and how to translate it to the guide. However, as we progressed, she used the comprehension guide with ease. Instead of writing the main ideas on the comprehension guide, in an effort to save time, I allowed her to underline them on the actual reading. She did a sufficient job underlining only the pertinent information. She was able to complete it independently and successfully by our last session which indicated that her comprehension skills, when using this guide, did improve.

The results of the writing interventions were measured by using the writing samples produced by Andrea. On the initial sample, Andrea wrote a total of 76 words. As she continued to write in her journal we continued to track the number of words she wrote per journal entry. The number gradually increased, with the exception of one journal entry that caused Andrea a lot of frustration. By the end of tutoring her last, independently written journal entry was 206 words. Furthermore, the number of complete sentences Andrea wrote on her initial journal entry was zero. This number increased as we used the blueprint for writing because Andrea was able to organize her thoughts as well as make a rough draft. As our sessions went on, Andrea began to write better sentences and her total number of complete sentences in the final writing sample was 16 as compared to having zero complete sentences in her initial writing sample. The increase in

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words and sentences signifies that she was able to write more detailed and complete thoughts as her writing progressed.

Andrea also completed the writing blueprint independently. Her writing became increasingly more organized once she began to use the blueprint for writing. She had a clear beginning, middle, and end, in each of her writing samples, including the one she completed independently. Her first paragraphs included the main topic and the big picture. The following paragraphs had distinct main ideas and key points that were followed by supporting details, explanations, examples, and evidence. Her final paragraph in each writing sample was a clear and concise conclusion and summary of the writing in its entirety.

The results of the writing interventions indicate that Andrea was able to produce more detail when writing, as demonstrated by her word count. Also, she was able to write complete sentences when she organized her thoughts prior to beginning to write. Using the blueprint for writing helped her to organize her thoughts and made it possible for her to write in a clearly organized fashion. The evidence in my student's work indicated that the interventions used to enhance her writing were overall successful.

The results of the vocabulary interventions were measured by a vocabulary pretest and posttest. At the beginning of tutoring, Andrea was not able to define any of the words that I had selected to be our focus. She had some prior knowledge of a few of the vocabulary words but was not able to correctly define any of them. When taking the initial vocabulary exam, she was able to correctly match 3 out of 17 items. I do believe that the 3 that she got correct were coincidentally correct, however she may have remembered what the words meant. She appeared to guess on the majority of the items. She was able to identify the meaning of 13 out of 14 words

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correctly on the final vocabulary assessment. As I watched her take this exam, I noticed that she took it with confidence. She knew the definition without even looking at the options. A few items she initially had incorrect, but she self corrected as the exam went on. She went from 18% accuracy to 76% accuracy. This growth indicates that the vocabulary interventions were successful and that she benefits from learning vocabulary in a variety of contexts.

The results of the fluency intervention were measured by recoding the number of errors in an oral reading, as well as the time. On the third grade reading passage, Andrea had 6 errors and read the passage in 100 seconds. On her third attempt, she had 4 errors, and read the passage in 79 seconds. On the 4th grade reading Andrea had 14 errors on her initial attempt and read the passage in 110 seconds. On her third attempt of this reading, she had 10 errors, and completed the reading in 76 seconds. Through repeated reading, Andrea demonstrated growth in fluency. She was able to read at a faster pace and with fewer errors for each reading passage when compared to her initial time. Her number of errors and the time it took her to read the passages did fluctuate between her first and second attempt. Overall, her scores did improve which indicated that repeated readings did improve her fluency.

Strengths and Limitations

This particular research was relatively successful. I believe that the interventions that were used were solid and highly impactful. The student's attitude was a major factor in the success of this program. Andrea demonstrated enthusiasm to learn and she worked hard each day of the study. She came on time or early every day, and some days we extended the time of our session to finish up activities.

The intervention took place 4 times a week, for 4 weeks total. I do believe that in order to see more substantial results a longer intervention would yield even more literacy growth. Within this study, the student did demonstrate growth. Also, the last day of intervention within each week was on a Thursday which left 3 days in between the next intervention on Monday. During this time the student did not practice using any of the strategies. Perhaps if the student did not have this long break, or practiced using strategies at home, she would have retained more information or the results would have been greater.

I was able to work with Andrea in a one-on-one setting with no distractions. This was a definite strength within my research study. I could focus on her alone and make accommodations when needed. According to Vaughn, Cirino, Wanzek, Wexler, Fletcher, and Denton (2010), a successful intervention should take place on a smaller scale so that it can be more individualized for the needs of the student. These researchers revealed that interventions are difficult to administer on a large scale but that if students are taught in small groups, and using high impact strategies, they will experience success.

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Throughout the intervention, session by session anecdotal notes were made as a tool for reflection. In this outline, specific observations were recorded as well as changes warranted throughout the study. As sessions progressed, I looked at this data and had to tweak my lessons accordingly. As mentioned in chapter 2, Lukin and Estraviz (2010) implemented a reading intervention. This intervention was not catered to a specific individual and the results yielded that it was not successful for all students. A research-based intervention does not mean that desired results will be obtained. This case study demonstrated that even with a one-on-one intervention, educators need to accommodate specifically to the needs of students on an individual basis. A general intervention that is not providing for the individual needs of students cannot have guaranteed results. In order for progress and gains to be made, interventions need to be specific and personalized for students. When I noted that Andrea was having a difficult time with beginning her writing samples, I knew that a prewriting activity needed to be implemented. Therefore, whenever we wrote we always completed a blueprint for writing. Choral reading is another example of how accommodations were made during intervention. I originally planned on using this strategy throughout the intervention for fluency. However, we tried this method once and it was not only unsuccessful but Andrea was frustrated by it. I made the decision at that point to discontinue using this strategy.

The research study conducted by Lee (1995), the interests and background of the students were taken into consideration as a way to design engaging instruction. I made an effort to engage Andrea in a significant way so I aimed to discover her interests as a way to connect with her and engage her in a meaningful way. This is why I chose to use Justin Bieber and her birthday as topics for free writing opportunities. The writing skills that we practiced during those writing activities were then applied, as they were in Lee's study, when she wrote her expository writing samples.

Recommendations

In order to continue to meet Andrea's needs I believe that she should continue to use these strategies both in the classroom and at home. With practice, she will become better at comprehending, writing, learning vocabulary, and fluency which will, in turn, increase Andrea's literacy skills. Additionally, these skills all align with the common core standards so consequently, she will be meeting academic expectations.

Standard W.8.2a-f. emphasizes that students are expected to be able to, "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. e. Establish and maintain a formal style. f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented" (p. 42). If Andrea continues to use the blueprint for writing, the organization of her writing will greatly improve. Eventually, writing in an organized fashion could come naturally to her. The blueprint serves as a rough draft for her to grow from. Without the blueprint, her writing lacks organization and she does not write clear and complete sentences. Perhaps the usage of any graphic organizer could assist her in the writing process. It is important however, to refrain from overwhelming her with more than a few

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strategies. Also, Standard L.4.1f. states that students should be able to, “produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons” (p.56). If Andrea continues to go back and count her complete sentences it will help her to reread her writing and digest it sentence by sentence. This way she can self correct when she does not write complete sentences.

Standard L.7.3a emphasizes that students should know how to, “choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy” (p. 56). Using a synonym list is a great tool that Andrea can use when writing to assist her with adding variance to her writing. A synonym list poster or dictionary could be made as a reference tool. Making this reference tool with the student would help her to remember the different ways that words can be used.

The comprehension guide can be used for both expository as well as narrative readings. This guide forces the student to continually check for understanding. This enables her to read an entire selection for understanding while she is reading instead of reaching the end of her reading only to discover she has not comprehended it in its entirety. Furthermore, the comprehension guide helps her to activate prior knowledge before she begins reading so that she knows what to expect, which helps her to retain new information. The comprehension guide will help Andrea. In Standard RI.8.1 it states that students are expected to “Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text” (p. 39). The guide will also help Andrea in standard RI.8.2. which states that students should be able to, “Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of

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the text. These two standards go hand in hand with the comprehension component of this case study. (p. 39)

The vocabulary word bank and word maps go hand in hand in helping her retain new vocabulary words. She benefited from learning new words in a variety of context throughout the intervention so continuing to use these strategies at home and in the classroom would be useful. By defining words on her own, and then making use of it in various ways, she is able to recall the word meanings more consistently. Using this strategy coincides with Standard L.8.4 which is, “Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies” (p 53). It also coincides with standard L.8.6., “Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression” (p. 53).

Standard RF.5.4a-c. emphasizes the importance of fluency. “Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding. b. Read on-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings. c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary” (p.17). By forcing Andrea to reread not only increases her comprehension, but helps her with fluency. She should therefore be required to read passages multiple times. This will allow her to self correct so that she can gain increased understanding while reading. Most importantly, rereading will increase her word recognition and with words in context.

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In conclusion, a literacy intervention that is all encompassing can have a positive impact on a student's success. In order to meet the needs of a student, one must first discover what specific needs the student has. My student struggled within the areas of comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and fluency. The research that I conducted was done as a way to find strategies that would be effective. The strategies and research that I discovered were substantial because they helped me design my interventions for this case study. By making accommodations and modifications according to the needs of my student, I was able to collect data that shows improvements were made.

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Appendices

Session-by-Session Anecdotal Notes and Planning Chart

SESSION	INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN	SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS FROM LESSON	CONCERNS/CHANGES WARRANTED
1 7/2/12 Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building (introductions) • Woodcock Reading Mastery Assessment • Fluency reading -3rd grade 	<p>Student was eager to be at tutoring. She introduced me to many of her teachers, and showed me around the building.</p> <p>During assessment, student was engaged. She tried hard and was excited about taking the test. She pushed herself when approaching her ceiling.</p> <p>Fluency: 6 errors, 100 words</p>	
2 7/3/12 Tue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal: "What will you miss about your old school and what are you looking forward to at your new school?" • Count words and record number in journal and on graph • Review components of literacy: Comprehension, vocabulary, writing, fluency • Look for repeated words. • Add repeated word to Synonym list, and find words to replace 	<p>Student was excited about owning her own journal. She expressed that she enjoys writing. During her writing, she asked me how to spell various words. I told her to try and spell them on her own, and she did continue to make attempts at spelling words that she was not certain about.</p> <p>Words written: 76</p> <p>Words repeated: Fun- 3 times</p> <p>Student did not know what a synonym was but once I gave her a few examples, she was able to generate her own synonyms.</p> <p>We then tried to do choral reading, but the student expressed that she found it difficult to read with me. I let her continue independently. She omitted many words, and read the wrong words. She paused 4 times because she lost her place. She would self correct when she noticed that she made a mistake.</p> <p>She came across the word, "activate." She</p>	<p>I would like to see the student answer questions using complete sentences. I will show the student how to use the question to help write the response.</p> <p>Choral reading was not successful with this student. I will try to do echo reading with the student to practice fluency instead.</p> <p>When we read the selection, we came across words we did not know. For future readings, I will get the more challenging words before we read and go over them with the student prior to reading.</p> <p>We did not use the comprehension graphic organizer today because I</p>

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	<p>repeated word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Aloud, "Using Prior Knowledge" • Add vocabulary words to "Bank" • Answer comprehension Questions • Summarize reading 	<p>read the word and continued to read. I stopped her and asked her if she knew the meaning but she did not. We then banked this word and defined it in our own words.</p> <p>When answering comprehension questions, the student did not use complete sentences, and did not always answer the question being asked. The reading was at a 3rd grade level, but it was apparent by her responses to the comprehension questions that she did not have a good understanding.</p> <p>In the reading summary, student summarized the reading in 3 sentences. She did generalize the information but lacked detail and substance.</p>	<p>wanted to gauge the students comprehension without using supplemental materials. I will use this comprehension guide for our next selection.</p>
<p>3 7/5/12 Thurs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal: who is your favorite person, what are they like, and why are they your favorite person? • Preview and predict – Triangle reading • Vocabulary Review • Echo Reading • Clunks and Main Ideas • Comprehension Questions • Summary • Formulate Questions • Fluency Reading #2- 3rd grade 	<p>Student was stuck on the journal prompt for today. She started to write, did not like what she was writing and then started over. The second time she got a little bit further but grew frustrated because she couldn't think of what to write. When I noticed that she was having difficulty writing, we decided to skip the journal for today, and revisit it tomorrow.</p> <p>We then looked at the new reading for today. We talked about "activating prior knowledge" and student began to fill out the comprehension guide. She was able to tell me what she already knew about triangles, what she thought the reading would be about and what she wanted to know more about.</p> <p>We then looked over the reading for vocabulary words that the student was not familiar with. We put these words into our vocabulary "bank" and defined them as we read. The student wanted to write the definitions directly from the reading but once I instructed her to put the definitions in her own</p>	<p>I am concerned that the student was not able to write when given the prompt. Some prewriting instructions or more specific prompts may be needed in the future to help the student with her writing progress.</p> <p>Further instruction in finding the main idea is needed.</p> <p>Moving forward I will have to remind student to take her time when reading for fluency, so that she can get less errors.</p>

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		<p>words, she struggled but was able to do so.</p> <p>We read the passage and after each paragraph, the student reiterated what she had read. If the information was something she did not know we “clunked it” and then discussed it until in “clicked” As we began reading she read something and if she didn’t understand it she continued to read. When asked, “what have you just read?” the student was not able to answer. By the end of the reading, she knew what information she needed to clunk and click before proceeding to read.</p> <p>We then went back and read each paragraph and underlined main ideas and recorded these main ideas into our comprehension guide. As student was underlining important details, she sometimes omitted the important details or included too many details.</p> <p>We did not have time to summarize and formulate questions.</p> <p>Fluency Reading: 17 errors, 50 seconds</p> <p>Student rushed through this reading in order to beat her previous time. Afterwards I told her the number of errors that she made was greater because she rushed.</p>	
4 7/9/12 Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal: What three things would you want to do on your birthday? • Review reading and vocabulary • Complete blueprint for writing summary • Write summary 	<p>Again, student struggled with the journal entry today. She wrote one long sentence that was poorly written. She did not have any structure to her response either. We counted 34 words.</p> <p>When asked what we read about the following Monday the student did recall the reading on triangles. We looked at the comprehension guide that she began to fill out and we talked about, and summarized the work that we had already done.</p> <p>I then introduced the student to the blueprint</p>	<p>Student seems to be struggling with journaling. She is not able to write clearly, or organized, without a prewriting assignment. I will have the student outline journals prior to writing moving forward. Also, we will need to work on how to combine sentences as well as how to avoid run-on sentences. We will revisit this</p>

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	on triangles	<p>for writing guide. We discussed how a house is build from the ground up, and then decorations are added. The floor is like the topic, or the main idea, then the walls are the support, like main ideas, and then the roof is what tops the house off, like a conclusion. Then, we go back and add decorations to our walls which are details that support our main ideas. The student understood the guide and we began to write. I guided the student in completing the blueprint, and together we completed it. I also told the student that as tutoring goes on, I will expect her to be able to complete this blueprint independently. This process took a lot of time because as we went through the process of building the “house,” I explained each step thoroughly. I also tried gave the student time to try and do it on her own.</p> <p>We did not have time to use the blueprint and complete the final writing.</p>	journal and, using the same prompt, rewrite it.
5 7/10/12 Tues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangle summary • Revisit Journal from 7/9/12 • Make blueprint for journal • Rewrite journal entry • Fluency Reading #3- 3rd grade 	<p>The blueprint was completed by the end of tutoring yesterday. The student translated the information into paragraph form. She did an excellent job and was excited to see how organized and thorough her writing was. We then counted the words: 75</p> <p>We then looked at the journal entry from yesterday. She read it out loud and we talked about how she felt about that entry. The student expressed that it “wasn’t very good” and that she “could do better.” I asked her to count how many sentences she made, and she counted two. I told her to read each sentence to me, and she realized that it was just one long sentence. I then pulled out the blueprint for writing sheet and she immediately knew what we were going to do.</p>	

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		<p>I helped her with completing the blueprint based on the information she already gave me in her journal. We put the question being asked into a topic sentence, then put the three things she wanted to do as the pillars, and then topped it off with a conclusion. Then we went back and added detail to the three things she wanted to do. The student needed little assistance. She got stuck a few times and I asked her questions to get her to think but she came up with most of the ideas on her own.</p> <p>Once the blueprint was finish I was going to ask the student to rewrite the journal but before I could, she volunteered! She wrote until the end of tutoring, we did not have time to review the final product.</p> <p>Reading Fluency: 4 errors, 79 seconds</p> <p>Time and number of errors decreased from original reading! Student was excited to see this progress.</p>	
<p>6 7/11/12 Wed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count words from yesterday's journal • Practice combining sentences • Introduce reading "What is Culture" • Echo read 	<p>We counted the the words from the journal rewrite and come up with 167 words! The original writing had 34 words. The student was pleased with the new and improved writing. There were no repeated words noted in this writing selection.</p> <p>I gave student a worksheet of sentences that could be combined because in her journal she demonstrated that she did not know how to properly combine sentences. We went through 8 examples. The student wanted to combine each sentence using the word "and." It was difficult for her to think beyond that word unless I gave her similar examples out loud and let her fill in the blanks. Then she was able to apply that to the worksheet. We only completed 8 out of 10 because the student reached a point where she became frustrated.</p>	<p>Continue to practice making "masterpiece" sentences by combining sentences. I think that I would like to do this process backwards also by giving her run on sentences and having her break them down into smaller sentences. This may be what she needs since she is writing such long sentences.</p> <p>I will also choose sentences generated by the student, and help her to expand them by adding more details and to put them in single sentences when they are run-</p>

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		<p>She sat with her hands covering her face and her head down as she struggled with how to combine the sentences.</p> <p>We moved on and I introduced the new reading to her. I asked her, “before we begin reading what do we need to do.” She thought for a minute and said “skim over the reading.” Although this answer was right, I wanted a different answer. I asked the student, “what do we do even before that? It is something we read about before.” She then said, “use prior knowledge.” I told her that was the right answer but that I wanted her to use one of our vocabulary words. I said, what means the same as “turn on?” student responded “Activate! We have to activate prior knowledge.” I asked her what that means and she was able to tell me without hesitation. I am glad to see that she remembered the reading and the vocabulary words as well!</p> <p>We then looked over the reading, reviewed the title, and the bold-faced words. She told me what she already knows about culture, what she wants to know, and what she predicts the reading will be about.</p> <p>We then began to read using the echo reading strategy. She expressed that it was difficult but I insisted that we try anyway. I broke the sentences down into chunks and she repeated each chunk after I read it. We read through each paragraph this way twice, and then she read it on her own. I noticed that she made fewer mistakes each time we read it. When she read it on her own, she did not hesitate over words that she originally stumbled on such as: situation, automatically, identify, effective. Tomorrow I will have her read the entire selection independently and note whether or not she staggers over these words.</p>	<p>ons.</p>
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<p>7 7/12/12 Thurs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue reading about culture • Clunk it & Click It • Record main ideas • Comprehension Questions • Reading Fluency- 4th grade 	<p>When she re-read the passage from yesterday, she read a little choppy but when she approached the words that warranted a struggle yesterday, she got them with little hesitation! I told her that I noticed this and explained that this is why we pre-read, read, and then re-read. She thought it was funny to read something so much but then we had a short discussion about the different reasons why reading something more than once is important. This seemed to click with the student and she understood the importance.</p> <p>Student did well with clunk it and click it, however there were not many opportunities for clunks in this reading because she was able to comprehend most of it.</p> <p>As an incentive, and a birthday present, I received permission from student's parent to paint her finger nails. She was super excited and has been working hard for this reward all week!</p> <p>Reading Fluency: 14 errors, 110 seconds</p>	<p>I noticed that when the student uses the blueprint for writing, she is less likely to repeat words. However, I do want to continue to work on our synonym list so that she can have a more extensive list of vocabulary. I will begin to give the student words on a daily basis to help her with this process instead of waiting for her to over use a word.</p> <p>We will also have to go back and revisit vocabulary from previous readings. We will make note cards that we can pull out at the end of tutoring for the days that we finish early.</p>
<p>8 7/16/12 Mon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Reading • Complete Blueprint for writing on culture • Complete summary for blueprint for writing 	<p>The blue print for writing process we did together, but I tried to give her as little help as possible. She got stuck on adding details so we had to work through that together. Once the blueprint was completed the summary came easily.</p>	
<p>9 7/17/12 Tues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal: What is a role model, what makes a role model, and who is your role model? • Reading Fluency 	<p>Student was able to outline her writing without the template. I did assist her in each step but she knew the order in which she her writing should go.</p> <p>I did have to help her with her conclusion by asking her to "summarize what you have</p>	<p>She did not actually use the words once the writing process began.</p> <p>When she writes her outline, she uses complete sentences. I would like to see her use</p>

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	#2- 4 th grade	<p>written about in one sentence.” I also wanted to push her into formulating an attention grabbing topic sentence so I pushed her to “give me more” The student was a little distressed about using the vocabulary words in her journal but when I gave her examples of how I would use the words, she was able to find a way to make them work. Also, I explained that if we force ourselves to use new words, it helps us to remember what they mean, and then they just become a part of our vocabulary!</p> <p>She worked hard and diligently throughout the session however she did not finish.</p> <p>Reading Fluency: 9 errors, 124 seconds</p> <p>Student’s time increased, however errors decreased. I instructed her to take her time, which she did, but it increased her total time.</p>	phrases and then turn them into complete sentences during the writing process.
10 7/18/12 Wed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish writing response • Review Vocabulary for “Branches of Government” reading- Add words to Bank • Echo Reading 	<p>Student finished writing about what a role model is Total words:152</p> <p>We reviewed the vocabulary, and the student knew that we would be banking the bold faced words. She put them in the bank and then defined them. Without telling her she stated, “I am trying to put the definition in my own words.”</p>	
11 7/19/12 Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Clunk It, Click It –Branches of government • Underline main ideas • Reading Fluency #3- 4th grade 	<p>We clicked all of the vocabulary words, reinforcing the vocabulary words we reviewed yesterday. We also put this information into a graphic organizer so that we could see how each branch was related to one another.</p> <p>When we went through each paragraph, she did a great job underlining important details.</p>	

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		<p>Reading Fluency: 10 errors, 76 seconds</p> <p>Both time and number of errors decreased from original time and errors.</p>	
<p>12 7/23/12 Mon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Vocabulary for Branches of government- Vocabulary maps Journal prompt: What is your dream job, why is that your dream job, and what does it take to achieve your goal? (outline without blueprint) 	<p>Student was familiar with doing these vocabulary maps.</p> <p>I asked her how many words she wrote last time, and how she would make sure she wrote more this time. She stated, "I can add more detail to each sentence." We then went back and reread it and looked at which sentences we could add detail to.</p> <p>Again, she did a wonderful job with the outline even though we did not use the blueprint.</p>	
<p>13 7/24/12 Tues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish journal entry Review vocabulary Blueprint for Writing- Branches of government 	<p>Student remembered the pictures that she drew to help her remember legislative, executive, and judicial. She was able to tell me the meaning of each word because of the pictures.</p>	
<p>14 7/25/12 Wed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Blueprint (independently) Write summary (independently) 	<p>I told the student that she could write the summary however she would like. She decided that she wanted to use the blueprint so we made a template together.</p>	
<p>15 7/26/12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Final writing-counting words QRI 	<p>After administering the QRI she then took the vocabulary quiz and wrote her summary.</p> <p>When taking the vocabulary quiz, she would</p>	

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Thurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="326 203 574 233">• Vocabulary Quiz	<p data-bbox="597 203 1169 436">talk out loud and say things that would help her remember the definition. She made reference to one of the word maps we did by recalling the picture she drew. She also used one of her sentences that she wrote when recalling the meaning of a word.</p> <p data-bbox="597 472 1149 541">When she was finished with her writing we counted the words together. Total words: 206</p>	
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