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Reading instruction practices by teachers of Hispanic elementary students: A teacher survey of classroom time spent in 25 reading instructional activities

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READING INSTRUCTION PRACTICES BY TEACHERS OF HISPANIC ELEMENTARY STUDENTS: A TEACHER SURVEY OF CLASSROOM TIME SPENT IN 25 READING INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

A Dissertation

by

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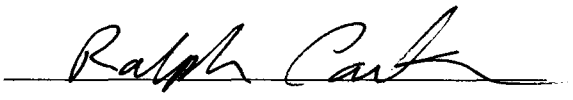

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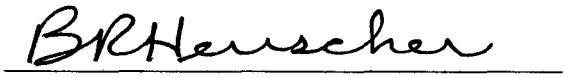

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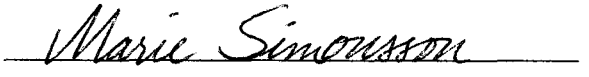

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Abstract

Steele, R. A. (2004). Reading Instruction Practices by Teachers of Hispanic Elementary Students: A Teacher Survey of Classroom Time Spent in 25 Reading Instructional Activities. Doctor of Education (EdD), December, 2004, 202 pp., 7 tables, 38 figures, references, 719 titles.

This study was conducted in order to measure the amount of time spent among Hispanic elementary students in each of the most commonly used reading instruction methodologies. A survey was conducted among 500 randomly selected pre-kindergarten through fifth grade teachers instructing students who are 95% Hispanic and 63.4% English-as-a-second-language. Twenty of the 221 elementary campuses within a two-county area were randomly selected, representing ten school districts. All teachers at selected campuses were asked to estimate the amount of weekly class time spent in 25 reading and reading-readiness activities and methods of instruction. In addition, teachers provided various demographic data. Findings included areas of major variance within each grade level and, for the most part, predictable trends from grade level to grade level. Findings were also discovered in teacher demographic trends (years of experience, educational level, and gender). Variances among districts and campuses were also analyzed. And finally, significant variance was measured between the reading instruction time provided in non-bilingual versus bilingual classes, with bilingual classes receiving

significantly less instruction. Further research is recommended to discover why this anomaly exists and to see if increasing the reading instruction time will improve the reading achievement of students in bilingual classes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the primary years of school, students learn the rudimentary skills of symbol decoding and word-formation. Development of more advanced reading skills among students has historically been a major challenge for educators (Leinehardt, Zigmond, & Cooley, 1981), requiring significantly different methods of instruction. Scholars have argued over the effectiveness of the various approaches for reading instruction. Most teachers are taught to use a variety of "best practices" for primary as well as later developmental reading instruction. Yet, a recent New York Times article – "Gap Between Best and Worst Widens on U. S. Reading Test" – detailing the latest NAEP results, indicates that many children are still being left behind in reading achievement (Zernike, 2001, p. A2). Hispanic elementary students were among those falling further behind from the previous to the current NAEP results (Hirsch & Moats, 2001). However, some highly respected scholars have disputed the NAEP's gloomy findings (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; McQuillan, 1998).

One major reading instruction paradigm – skills-based instruction – holds that direct instruction covering discreet reading skills such as "sequential order," "main idea," and "making inferences" is the soundest method for advancing reading skills. Another paradigm – literature-based instruction – contends that advanced reading skills are best developed through regular reading practice (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson,

1985), preferably in high-quality fiction and non-fiction, rather than in short passages which are written specifically to mimic the types of passages found in state-mandated standardized tests (Decker, 1986). The distinction is usually between skill-based/word-recognition approaches and a socio-psycholinguistic approach where students are interactively exploring literature (Freeman & Freeman, 1992; Freeman & Freeman, 2000a).

Statement of the Problem

A vast body of research has been compiled on the efficacy of the most popular reading instruction methods (Cosgrove, 2001); however, little has been done to measure the actual amount of time being spent by elementary teachers in the various modes of instruction. No research has yet been conducted specifically to measure the time spent in the different instruction methods by teachers of Hispanic, ELD students. A survey of teachers of such students provides especially pertinent data for educational leaders with growing populations of ELD Hispanic students, as in the area where the study was conducted, the Rio Grande Valley, where school districts typically expect the majority of students entering kindergarten to be ELD students. Darlene Gouge of the Texas Education Agency's Ad Hoc Reporting Office states that, in the 2003 reporting cycle, 63.4% of kindergarten students in the region are identified as ELD, with little of no English language skills upon entry into school. The rapid growth in the numbers of ELD students is not just a regionally specific educational challenge, but one which affects the entire United States as can be seen by the following table published by the U. S. Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA, 2004a):

Table 1

U.S. Overall and LEP K-12 Enrollment Data per OELA

Year	Total Enrolled	'91+ Growth	LEP Enrolled	LEP Growth
91-92	43,134,517	0	2,430,712	0
92-93	44,444,939	3%	2,735,952	13%
93-94	45,443,389	5%	3,037,922	25%
94-95	47,745,835	11%	3,184,696	31%
95-96	47,582,665	10%	3,228,799	33%
96-97	46,714,980	8%	3,452,073	42%
97-98	46,023,969	7%	3,470,268	43%
98-99	46,153,266	7%	3,540,673	46%
99-00	47,356,089	10%	4,416,580	82%
00-01	47,665,483	11%	4,584,946	89%
01-02	48,296,777	12%	4,747,763	95%

Approximately eighty percent of the new ELD students are Spanish home-language children (OELA, 2004b), and most of these are immigrants from Mexico. Because such students enter primary school years without adequate English speaking skills, a portion of their time during the first two to four school years is devoted to mastering the English language. A question on the survey asks teachers to estimate the total time they spend in the classroom each week in English oral language development and other English mastery instruction since this could be considered a reading readiness activity. However, this type of language mastery instruction must consume at least a

portion of available instruction time which might otherwise be available for activities specifically aimed at mastering basic reading skills and other content area skills. Although reading, math, and the content areas are not ignored, the class time available for such studies may be substantially lower than the time available for students who do not need to spend any of their time learning English.

By the third grade, ELD students often have substantial gaps in reading comprehension skills, exacerbated by their daily challenge to function in a second language. A U. S. Department of Education longitudinal study of reading comprehension among third-grade students identified as LEP in first through third grade, compared with the scores or non-LEP students, yielded a mean scale (1 – 999) score of 607 for the LEP versus 665 for the non-LEP students. This is a scale score difference of only 10%; however, the variance between the two means represents almost a full standard deviation (Buron, Beecroft, Bell, Price, & Gemmen, 1998). Thus, on the normal curve, the LEP mean falls about 27 percentile points below the mean for non-LEP third graders – an extremely significant variance. The longer a student remains labeled as LEP after third grade, the wider the gap grows.

Some students, particularly recent immigrants, may spend additional years in bilingual classes, beyond third grade, when English language development continues to be a major concern. But by third grade, most are mainstreamed into classes together, regardless of their level of reading development, and are expected to read from the same textbooks and reading materials as native English speakers. Unfortunately, this one-size-fits-all reading material has been leveled nationally or state-wide, predominately for student populations among which English is not a second language. Third and fourth

grade ELD students, oftentimes already two grade levels behind their ELD peers nationally in terms of reading ability, are unable to comprehend these grade-leveled materials, and will find ways of avoiding the tedious and self-defeating process of attempting to read them.

As each school year passes, and struggling ELD readers continue to avoid reading, they fall further behind. In the early 1990's, nearly 60% of ELD Hispanic students were dropping out of school before graduation (Waggoner, 1991, p. 134). More recent data reveal that those who remain in school continue to lag several years behind their non-Hispanic counterparts (*Testimony*, 1997). One positive sign is that dropout rates have come down among Hispanic students since Waggoner's 1991 report if the current data from the Hispanic region where this research has been conducted are an accurate indicator. In Region One (Region One Educational Service Center in Southern Texas), where Cameron and Hidalgo Counties contain the majority of students, 2002 Texas Education Agency (TEA)

graduation data suggest that 57% of beginning first graders will graduate from high school (Texas, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted in order to measure the amount of time spent among Hispanic elementary students in each of the most commonly used reading instruction methodologies. The research seeks to determine what reading instruction methods are actually being used in the classrooms, to compare shifts in instructional methods from grade level to grade level, to compare the methods used by experienced versus

inexperienced teachers, and to determine variance among instructional activities in different grade levels, campuses, districts, and classrooms.

Research Questions

The research questions that will be addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What is the average amount of time spent by teachers of elementary ELD Hispanic students, at different grade levels, in the following six broad categories of reading instruction: direct instruction, out-loud reading, grouped reading activities, reading response activities, independent student reading time, and technology-based and other miscellaneous reading activities?

2. Are there significant differences among the amounts of time spent in different reading activities across grade levels, districts, campuses, types of classes, and in terms of teacher demographics?

3. What amount of class time is expended in instruction and activities designed to facilitate oral English language acquisition?

Methodology

A standard research survey, the type first used extensively back in the 1940s (Merton & Lazarsfeld, 1950), was used in this research. The survey was distributed among randomly selected local elementary teachers (in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties) to discover the most commonly used reading instruction methods including the following categories: direct instruction (DI) in phonics, DI in sight words, DI in general TAKS-type reading skills, DI in vocabulary, DI in literature and literary conventions, teachers

reading aloud (RA) to students, shared reading, students RA for assessment, students RA round robin for practice, paired reading, cooperative reading activities, writing for reading response (RR), student discussion for RR, other miscellaneous activities for RR, independent student reading (ISR) of accelerated reading (AR) books, ISR of non-AR fiction, ISR of non-AR non-fiction, ISR in basal readers, ISR in content area curricula, ISR in workbooks/worksheets, reading trade books on computers, reading other materials on computers, audiotape-assisted reading, additional oral English language development, and other miscellaneous reading seatwork. These six broad categories and their subcategories were chosen by first conducting an extensive literature review of elementary reading instruction activities. Then the pilot study was conducted, and more than 200 teachers surveyed in the pilot study were asked to identify any additional reading instruction activities that should be included in the final survey.

The survey instrument asks teachers to estimate the number of minutes each week devoted to each category of reading activity. Teachers also had an opportunity to identify other types of reading instruction they use in the classroom. The survey instrument (See Appendix A) was distributed to 439 teachers at 20 randomly selected elementary schools in ten school districts in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. Surveys were collected and data analyzed. By invitation from certain experienced teachers, teacher interviews and classroom observations were also accomplished to gain a fuller understanding of reading instruction methods so that the findings may contain clear and descriptive explanations of the methods and how they are provided to the students. Thus, to a limited extent, the quantitative findings have been triangulated using qualitative methodologies.

Significance of the Study

While much has been written concerning the effects of literature-based reading instruction and many reports have been published concerning individual reading instruction methods, relatively few of these studies have made a broad comparison of the overall combination of teaching methodologies in the typical elementary classroom, particularly in the ELD Hispanic classroom.

Limitations of the Study

Survey data are only reliable and accurate when survey respondents carefully and thoughtfully complete the surveys. Even then, when asked to estimate the amount of time they spend in a particular type of reading instruction, they may overestimate or underestimate. However, with a large enough number of respondents, it is assumed that these miscalculations should average out. Because ten districts and 20 campuses were randomly chosen, rather than randomly selecting teachers from all of the 22 districts and approximately 212 elementary campuses in the region, the sample represents a convenience sampling, rather than a perfectly random sampling of all teachers.

Delimitation of the Study

This research took place in a low-socioeconomic, Hispanic, primarily rural region in South Texas. Results may be completely different in a different setting. Generalizability will be minimal except to schools and districts with similar demographic characteristics.

Definitions of Terms

Colonia

A rural housing community where, because of lax zoning regulations, impoverished residents can build homes without many of the amenities required elsewhere (for example, running water, sewage, electricity, roads, drainage).

English Language Developing (ELD)

A term used to designate students who did not acquire English as their first language. ELD in this study refers to Hispanic, Mexican-American students for whom Spanish was their home language.

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

A synonymous term that is commonly used instead of ELD, especially in U. S. government documents and reports. The LEP terminology was not used extensively in this research report because it focuses more on the students' limitations rather than their continuing progress in the English language.

Literature-based reading instruction

Allowing students time to read and respond to literature in order to develop advanced reading skills.

Skills-based reading instruction

Teaching discreet reading skills such as phonics, main idea, and drawing conclusion in order to develop and improve reading skills.

Socio-Economic Status (SES)

A family's social and financial standard of living as determined by income, education, etcetera.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)

A criterion-referenced series of tests intended to measure for mastery of grade-level skills in reading, math, writing, and content area subjects.

Summary of Chapter 1

Little is known about the amount of time Hispanic ELD students spend in various reading activities inside their classrooms. Teachers commonly use a wide assortment of reading and reading readiness instructional activities to help their elementary students master reading skills. No survey has yet been done to measure the extent to which *all* of these methods are being practiced in classrooms, Hispanic or otherwise. A comprehensive survey of classroom time spent among Hispanic ELD students in each of the most common reading instruction modes may reveal many insights.

Organization of the Report

Chapter One introduces the study in terms of background, location, research approach, significance, and limitations. Chapter Two provides a fairly comprehensive review of literature concerning the 25 reading instruction methods measured in the survey, all of which are commonly used in elementary classrooms. Chapter Three is a detailed description of the methodology used in the study. Chapter Four reports findings, and Chapter Five includes conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review will discuss research findings related to several different categories of activity during reading instruction time, all of which are commonly used in the elementary classroom: direct instruction (DI), reading aloud (RA), cooperative reading activities, reading response (RR) activities, independent student reading (ISR), and miscellaneous reading activities, including some technology-based instruction.

Theoretical Background

The days of students learning to read and write on hand-held slates have come and gone. However, even though research has deemed certain reading instructional methodologies less effective, the methodologies are apparently still being used in many classrooms. Various collaborative and student-centered reading activities and approaches to learning have risen out of the time-honored philosophies of educational theorists like Dewey (1929), Piaget (1955), and Vygotsky (1957). The currently popular use in the classroom of social grouping activities and the use of real literature presenting rich language in a social context have grown naturally out of the social constructivist theoretical framework presented by Vygotsky and others, who believe that all language arts capabilities grow naturally through extensive exposure to socially interactive language environments. This research effort is informed largely by this social

constructivist framework, which is also the framework encouraged in most U. S. school districts. Judging from the activities reported by the teachers, this framework is also strongly favored in the districts where this research has been conducted.

Other theorists have studied how the human mind functions in terms of language arts development. Chomsky's psycholinguistic model (1957) suggests that humans are not born *tabla rasa* – devoid of knowledge or thought processes. Instead, he presents the theory that man comes into the world ready equipped, with cognitive functioning already at high levels and with the innate ability to learn language. His theory of language formation, the transformational generative grammar, is of interest to reading comprehension theorists who have postulated that textual language development follows the same basic process as verbal language development. The assumption is that, just as verbal language initially develops through witnessing verbal exchanges and interactions in real-life settings, the more advanced, textual language development can transpire most naturally and effectively in a similar setting involving human interactions in real-life settings. In text, such settings are found almost exclusively in literature. This is one of the interesting premises behind Stephen Krashen's input/comprehension hypothesis of literacy and second language development (Krashen, 2003).

Later, Anderson and Pearson (1984) were active in the development of the popular Schema Theory, which holds that readers actively construct meaning by connecting all prior knowledge with new information encountered in the text, allowing for development of new concepts as well as revision and improvement of existing understanding. Continued research has shown that persons of diverse cultural schemata, such as students from minority cultures, will often form variant interpretations and

misinterpretations of texts reflecting the schemata of the majority culture (Reynolds, Taylor, Steffenson, Shirey & Anderson, 1982; Steffenson, Joag-dev, & Anderson, 1979). These misinterpretations can result in feelings of frustration and inadequacy, especially in a classroom requiring the simultaneous reading, by the entire class, of difficult mono-cultural "classics." Building upon the schema theorist's earlier work, Wixson, Peters, Weber, and Roeber (1987), along with many other researchers, believe that textual meaning does not simply reside in isolated text, but exists in the form of an interaction among the reader, the text, and the reader's social context. Schemata theorists accept the fact that, to build upon existing areas of knowledge and competence, students must read on a regular basis (Beck, 1984).

Other literacy scholars in this same era have envisioned the process of reading and literacy development from a different perspective. They don't see the reading event merely as a process where a reader consumes a piece of literature and is somehow affected and changed (improved, developed, educated) by the experience. Rather, they see it as a transactional experience in which the reader is being affected by the literature while the literature is also being affected by the reader's unique perspectives (Rosenblatt, 1978). It is being filtered through and transformed by the reader's views and lifetime experiences, so that a piece of literature can become an entirely different creation within the mind of one reader than it becomes in the mind of another.

Whole language theorists, who in recent literature are more precisely labeled socio-psycholinguistic theorists, arising during that same general time frame, also believe that effective literacy development occurs within the context of the student's transactional engagement with entire works of actual literature. The socio-

psycholinguistic proponents are not at all satisfied with the test-preparation worksheets and skills-based curricula being used to teach the children to read. Weaver (1990) provides a good overview of the socio-psycholinguistic approach and the theoretical assumptions behind the approach, contending that students who do not interface with high-quality literature on a regular and extended basis will never develop the ability to read and interpret complicated texts. For example, Bird (1989) describes how the socio-psycholinguistic approach, including extensive independent reading from assigned novels, turns an entire Hispanic elementary school's reading achievement around from marginal to excellent.

Over the past twenty years, many reading researchers and educators have begun to reject the age old practice of learning to read by memorizing discreet "reading skills" taught in isolation. McGee (1992), for example, reviews some of the general trends in the literature-based reading revolution during the previous two decades. Davidson and Koppenhauer (1988), and Raphael and Au (1998) document that programs which have proven effective in fostering adolescent literacy have included the following important key ingredients: a) a high percentage of time spent actually reading and writing, b) skills learned in a literary context, c) sustained silent reading, d) comprehension strategies, and e) access to varied literature.

After comprehensive instruction in the basic mechanics of reading during kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, completely illiterate middle-grade students – those who actually cannot read or write at all – are extremely rare. Most who have problems reading can actually read, but are several grade levels behind. Reading level problems develop because, after the primary grades when students initially learn to read,

many are no longer provided with rich language environments and with reading materials and situations which are truly inviting (Harrison, 1994; Linek, Sturtevant, Rasinski, & Padak, 1991). As a result, many lose interest in reading activities altogether. The unwillingness of such students to continue reading – a condition known as 'aliteracy' – has become a serious, widespread problem, even more so among boys than girls (Millard, 1997; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997; Swann, 1992). More than one researcher has suggested that this problem has arisen due to a classroom focus on reading sub-skills, which they say has adversely affected student attitudes toward reading in general (Wilson, 1984).

Another problem area uncovered by researchers is that many teachers are not adequately prepared to use cooperative and language-rich environments where students participate in real reading activities involving quality literature. The debacle in California when literature-based reading instruction was mandated there is a case in point. Routman (1997) and Freeman, Freeman, and Fennacy (1996) show fairly conclusively that the California teachers responsible for implementing the program were also not adequately trained or equipped to implement it. Johnston, Allington, Guice and Brooks (1998) offer similar dismal findings after a five year study of the literature reading program in four different California schools from four different school districts. The teachers there have been expected to transition from one major paradigm to another without any kind of retraining or support. And most compelling of all, the researchers discover that the majority of teachers still had their literature in shrink-wrapped bundles and clearly had not used it at all.

With ubiquitous pressure stemming from state-mandated, high-stakes, criterion-referenced (skills-based), standardized tests, even after literature-based instruction was

mandated, "... classroom instruction changed little over the 5-year period" (Johnston, Allington, Guice & Brooks, 1998, p. 86). Although many states now *appear* to allow and even mandate the use of literature as an instructional medium, the tests they require tend to dictate the same old ineffective practices. Clearly, any realistic effort to implement a true transformation from predominately skills-based to predominately literature-based instruction would need to include extensive re-education of teachers, so they would understand that reading literature can also attain for them the desired test results.

However, in recent years, in the wake of the "Back-to-Basics" movement along with a nationwide move toward widespread, high-stakes, criterion referenced testing (emphasizing discreet skills rather than actual comprehension), a concerted effort has been made to push for ever increasing emphasis on many dubious literacy "skills" which have little relationship to actual literature comprehension and appreciation (Palardy, 1991). Of course, the best answer will always be a balanced approach where students receive ample decoding instruction in the primary grades followed by progressive exposure to literature in a socio-psycholinguistic context (Novick, 2002; Routman, 1997). A valid high-stakes testing plan would strive to assess for this kind of progressive literacy instruction.

Use of a Variety of Reading Instruction Methods in the Classroom

As any experienced elementary teacher will tell you, the students enjoy and have learned to expect a variety of teaching approaches so that the learning process does not become dull and predictable. More so perhaps than in any other school subject area, reading instruction comes in a myriad of forms. Literally thousands of articles and pre-

service educator's textbooks contain lengthy explanations for reading instruction approaches and ideas that can be used in the elementary grades (e. g., Ada, 2003; Barrera, Thompson, & Dressman, 1997; Carbo, M., 1996; Gunning, 2000; Temple, Martinez, Yokota, & Naylor, 2002; Tomlinson, & Lynch-Brown, 2002). For the purposes of this study, publications highlighting research in the following broad categories of reading instruction will be of particular interest: direct reading instruction, reading aloud, grouped activities, reading response, individual student reading time, and miscellaneous reading activities.

The Direct Instruction (DI) Method

Direct instruction, or "DI" as it is commonly called in the vernacular of reading educators, has been one of the most controversial modes of reading instruction for the past several decades. From an epistemological standpoint, proponents of DI assume that knowledge can be constructed in the classroom through direct, systematic instruction (Wells, 1998). Kameenui, Simmons, Chard, and Dickson (1995) provide a fairly thorough overview of DI and the research surrounding it as do MacIver and Kemper (2002).

DI began to receive more attention and more emphasis in many classrooms about 40 years ago after publication of the research findings and recommendations of Sigfried Engelmann and his fellow researchers. They developed a rather elaborate strategy for implementation of DI in the classroom which they called the Direct Instruction System for Teaching Arithmetic and Reading (DISTAR) program. For a more recent DISTAR

update, see Adams & Engelmann (1996). It appears, however, that Englemann has never published research in any refereed journal showing the positive effects of his method.

DI is commonly used in today's standardized-test-driven classroom to teach specific skills identified as test objectives, for example, phonemic awareness, phonic sounds, word recognition, sequential ordering, using context clues, comprehending the main idea, summarization, identifying fact versus opinion and cause and effect relationships, understanding author's purpose and point of view, generalization, drawing conclusions, making inferences, and many others. Patching, Kameenui, Carnine, Gersten & Colvin (1983) demonstrate early in the testing era that such direct instruction on separate 'reading skills' can actually raise test scores. The researchers conducted post-testing among three groups of students to assess for their awareness and understanding of specific reading skills. Before testing, one group received direct instruction in the specific reading skills to be tested; one group practiced in related remedial workbooks; and one received no instruction or teacher intervention whatsoever. This research raises two issues: first, whether direct instruction was simply the least of three evils, and second, whether the ability to regurgitate information about specific reading "skills" is a valid indicator of true literacy. Other researchers have also shown that testable reading "skills" and "strategies" can be mastered quickly through intensive DI (Din, 2000; Stevens, Slavin & Farnish, 1991). Short-term gains are particularly impressive, especially in at-risk, high-poverty schools (Silbert, 2002).

New Reform enthusiasts like E. D. Hirsch, with their emphasis on 'getting back to the basics,' are particularly zealous about spending more time directly teaching and drilling students on reading 'skills.' Hirsch strongly favors extensive, explicit DI

covering many skills such as phonemic awareness, linguistic rules, and vocabulary (Hirsch & Moats, 2001). Ashworth (1999) lists several benefits of DI versus simply allowing students to work independently in basal readers: She suggests it builds their decoding capabilities, raises student confidence, makes them more open to reading, gives the teacher daily opportunities to monitor individual student progress, and teaches immediate, systematic correction of errors by students. While DI does benefit students, it would need to be extremely interactive and literature-centered in order to do all the things on Ashworth's list, and many researchers are unconvinced that any amount of DI will result in significant, long lasting benefits (Coles, 2000).

Various studies have shown the value of DI in teaching disabled and at-risk learners, claiming that the approach enabled them to more quickly master essential reading skills. For example, Chall (1996a), in her comprehensive volume on the stages of literacy development, lists instruction in phonemic understanding as a foundational stage and explains that all children, including those from low income families and other at risk groups, must have adequate instruction in this area to insure they are ready for greater reading challenges. Branwhite (1983) reports that 14 elementary-age children, all far behind in reading skills, have shown greater improvement after direct instruction than after receiving other forms of remediation specifically prescribed to meet their literacy needs as measured by individual literacy diagnoses. However, some researchers are not as enthusiastic about the idea of using more DI among at-risk readers after finding that remedial reading classes often neglect to include much time for real reading, concentrating instead on DI in basic skills (Sanacore, 1990).

Most proponents of DI have suggested variations in the approach according to the desired outcomes. Roehler and Duffy (1982), for example, recommend different DI approaches when encouraging reading for pleasure versus reading to find information or reading to develop vocabulary or comprehension strategies. Another specific use for DI is in teaching children to comprehend anaphoric relationships (Baumann, 1986).

DI in Phonemic Awareness

One benefit of DI mentioned by numerous researchers is its utility in the primary grades K-2 for imparting decoding skills and phonemic awareness skills. Snider (1990), for example, determines that direct instruction in phonics, using Carnine's and Silbert's "Direct Instruction Reading" approach, is more effective in developing essential skills than doing lessons in the basal reader. There exists a continuing debate between proponents of direct phonics instruction, versus those favoring a transactional, sociopsycholinguistic approach involving more independent and group reading time, which they stress will lead to the children's acquisition of "embedded phonics" naturally rather than synthetically (Dahl, Scharer, Lawson, & Grogan, 2001). The debate has continued for several decades, with no end in sight, and has resulted in the publication of many thousands of related books and articles. It is not within the scope of this research to enter into that debate. Much of the current research acknowledges that DI in phonics and letter decoding is essential in the primary grades (e. g., Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999); however, there are many researchers and educators who believe that this level of DI in discreet reading skills of all kinds should decline significantly in later grades after initial decoding skills are mastered (Cramer & Schubert, 1979), and there are others who favor a greatly reduced emphasis on general DI in phonics, preferring instead

that embedded phonemic awareness be developed through exposure to authentic literature and other socio-psycholinguistic activities (Brumer, 1998; Freppon & Dahl, 1998; Moustafa, 1998; Powell & Hornsby, 1998; Richgels, Poremba, & McGee, 1998). The general consensus among most educators is that phonics instruction must be properly timed to taper off soon after kindergarten (Au, 1998). One area examined by the current teacher survey will be changes in direct phonics instruction times from grade level to grade level.

Regardless of the decades of debate about phonics, recent research has shown that the majority of primary grade teachers still see the need for extensive phonics instruction (Groff, 1991; Shaffer, Campbell, & Rakes, 2000). A meta-analysis of 38 research studies examining the effects of systematic phonics instruction versus non-systematic or no-phonics instruction has shown that systematic phonics instruction is quite effective in improving reading capability (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001). This research yields an extremely comprehensive and convincing analysis of many rigorous quantitative research studies on phonics instruction. Using a meta-analysis quantitative approach, Ehri, et al., examine the findings from 38 experimental studies involving treatment-control comparisons between systematic phonics instruction and non-systematic or no phonics instruction, concluding that the systematic instruction is more effective in teaching beginning readers as well as in remediating reading problems among older students.

The International Reading Association, a National organization generally respected by both phonics and whole reading proponents, has published reports encouraging direct phonics instruction, yet also urging teachers to embed such instruction

in a rich environment of literature and reading (International, 1997). Most researchers and educators tend to agree with this integrated approach and encourage varying amounts of DI for phonics, embedded in a context of meaningful reading (Dahl & Scharer, 2000; Groff, Lapp, & Flood, 1998). Well known reading researcher, Stephen Krashen (2002), for example, favors phonics, but as little of it as possible to get the child into reading initially. This approach is nothing new, but was already being recommended nearly 30 years earlier (Artley, 1977; Lamb, 1975).

In the past few years, with "Back-to-Basics" enthusiasts exerting political pressure on school districts to use more DI in phonics and to get away from the whole language approach, more and more is being written by researchers and educators disgruntled about the impact it is having in the classroom (e. g., Manning, Manning, & Kamii, 1988; Meyer, 1999). Some go so far as to suggest that the DI phonics instruction movement has been fomented by a conspiracy of "right-wing Christian fundamentalists" (Patterson, 2000). Ironically, a couple of decades earlier, it was just this kind of groundswell of research and published articles – in those days calling for *more* phonics instruction, not *less* – which helped to give the Back-to-Basics movement its momentum in the first place (for example, Groff, 1980).

Another recommendation common among researchers and educators favoring phonics DI is to incorporate a high degree of variety in the instruction (Stahl, 1992; Stahl, Duffy-Hester, & Stahl, 1998). Researchers recommend not only variety but a logical progression in phonics instruction, allowing for scaffolding of knowledge as the child climbs in reading skills (Grossen & Carnine, 1993). However, there are many differing

viewpoints as to what sequence is most appropriate (e. g., Ediger, 1996; Ericson & Juliebo, 1998; Murray, 2002).

DI & Guided Instruction in Specific Sight Words

During a student's tenure in the primary grades K-3, much of her/his reading instruction centers around memorization and fluency of sight words – words which are very common, but which cannot be readily sounded out using phonics (Browder & Xin, 1998). Learners are trained to recognize sight words as holistic units without attending to individual letters or letter blends within the words (Groff, 1994). This knowledge building is generally accomplished during the various phases of alphabetic development (Ehri, 1995), as teachers review common sight words daily and as they drill students and allow then to drill one another on the target words (Greene, 1994).

Browder and Lalli (1991), after analyzing 20 years of research in sight word instruction among at-risk children, conclude that the instructional practices commonly associated with sight word acquisition include the following: errorless procedure, in which the correct response is strongly emphasized in preliminary instruction so as to minimize the possibility of erroneous responses; prompt elimination, where the prompt designed to encourage correct response is eliminated; stimulus fading, in which a correct-response-prompting stimulus such as a picture or color-coding is added, then gradually faded via reduced intensity or frequency; time delay, where the teacher waits a specified number of seconds before providing the correct response in order to minimize incorrect guesses (time delays can be progressive with longer and longer delays); easy to hard discrimination, in which the child must, at first, choose from an array of words obviously very different from the target word (correct response) to make it easier to select the

correct word – then the array of distractors becomes closer and closer in structure and appearance to the correct response word; and trial and error with feedback, where the student receives immediate feedback for responses – either praise for correct responses or some form of error correction procedure following incorrect responses.

There is a variety of controversy concerning the teaching of sight words. One area of contention among the experts is the question of which words should be taught as sight words and at what point in literacy development such teaching should take place. The old Dolch List of Basic Sight Words (Dolch, 1941), initially developed back in the 1930's, has been a mainstay in primary classrooms for 65 years. Comparisons have been made (Johns, 1974; Johns, 1977; Lewandowski, 1979; Otto & Chester, 1972) between the efficacy of the Dolch list versus other more recent lists, such as the Great American and Pacific sight word list (Carroll, Davies, & Richman, 1971; Otto, Chester, & Mehling, 1974). The main criterion used by most to determine the effectiveness of the various lists is the frequency of occurrence of the listed sight words in randomly selected pages from sample basal readers. Otto and Chester (1972), rather than using sample basal reader pages, make correlations directly with words from the *American Heritage Word Frequency Book* (Carroll, 1972). In addition to considering word frequency, Lewandowski (1979) also analyzes the individual sight words on each list to determine which words might be better taught phonetically.

Another issue concerns the best methodologies for teaching sight words. For example, Farrington (1979) urges a social construction approach to sight word development. On the other hand, research indicates that a competitive environment is not conducive for learning sight words. Children placed under pressure to learn sight words

by having timed competitions on sight-word flashcards with other children or with a partner do not master the sight words as well (Gettinger & Fayne, 1981). Kaiser, Palumbo, Bialozor, & McLaughlin, (1989) find that using DI is more effective than using basal reader activities designed to develop sight words. Most educators advocate a variety of activities such as DI, basal activities, games, and visuals to reinforce sight words (Staten, 1972).

Also at issue is *when* in the literacy development process sight words should be taught. Proponents of extensive phonics instruction generally suggest that decoding skills should be firmly established before sight word reading instruction begins (e. g., Aaron, Joshi, Ayotollah, ELDsberry, Henderson, & Lindsey, 1999). Some even question whether the assumptions underlying the concept of sight words are erroneous and whether current strategies for teaching such words are producing optimum outcomes (Groff, 1974).

Regardless of the controversies, however, most primary grade level educators are actively incorporating sight words in their repertoire of daily classroom activities, both for instruction and assessment of literacy development (Northwest, 1996). Recent research has confirmed that these activities are benefiting the children. Australian researchers conducting longitudinal research find that early performance in reading individual sight words is a good predictor of subsequent reading performance. They recommend early remedial sight word vocabulary instruction for primary students who fare poorly in sight word recognition (Byrne, Freebody, & Gates, 1992). However, the researchers also recommend caution about relying too heavily on sight word instruction because, in the long range, the ability to phonetically sound out words becomes more

important, in terms of reading comprehension, than sight word acquisition. Each of the 159 primary students tracked in this longitudinal study was tested and placed into one of the following four categories: those above average in both sight word awareness and phonemic awareness (SP), those below average in both areas (sp), those above in sight words but below in phonics (Sp), and those above in phonics but below in sight words (sP). The Sp students scored significantly higher in reading comprehension in grades 1 and 2 than the sP students, but by grades 3 and 4, the opposite was true. In the higher two grades, the sP group began scoring significantly higher on comprehension than the Sp group. Thus, by third grade, a lack of phonetic skills began having a significantly greater effect on reading comprehension than did a lack of sight word skills.

DI in Individual, Non-Phonic Reading Skills

After the primary grades, the emphasis in reading instruction shifts from basic phonics skills to more advanced reading skills. Some of the suggested skills are quite specific whereas others are relatively general. For example, in the middle grades, teachers are encouraged to use DI to explicitly teach *general* reading strategies for increased comprehension – strategies such as reflection, probing, and open-minded reading (Lifford, Byron, Eckblad, & Ziemian, 2000).

Others call for more DI in certain specific reading skills. Guido and Colwell (1987), for example, would like to see more DI in the skill of summarization. In fact, DI in the reading skills of summarization and main idea is recommended more than any other specific skill (for example, Hare & Borchardt, 1984; Jitendra, Cole, Hoppes, & Wilson, 1998). Some feel that certain types of DI in reading skills should always be done

prior to reading as an "anticipatory set," primarily involving the reading skill of predicting outcomes (Cooter & Reutzel, 1987). DI in the reading skill of using context clues to figure out unfamiliar vocabulary is often recommended (Cunningham, 1980; Stahl & Shiel, 1992), particularly for content area with many technical terms (Greenwood, 2002). According to some researchers, yet another type of reading skill – making inferences – can also be fostered through direct instruction (Escoe, 1984; Pogrow, 1990).

Much of the research in DI to improve specific reading skills is comparative, comparing the effects of DI versus other approaches. For example, Patching, et al. (1983), compare student performance after using DI, after using workbooks with corrective feedback in specific skills, and after no teacher intervention. They found the most significant effects after DI intervention. As with DI phonics skills, when it comes to other reading skills, most educators and researchers seem to favor some integration of both DI and whole language in the classroom (Heymsfield, 1989; Stahl, 1998). Relying solely on DI without any actual student reading could be disastrous in the long run. While promising results materialize after brief DI treatments (for example, three weeks in Din, 2000), long range DI results have not been as impressive. A longitudinal study ranging from grades two through five in six Baltimore elementary schools reveals that students in DI reading intervention schools do not improve more than those in control schools (MacIver & Kemper, 2002). By contrast, a short-range DI reading intervention in South Carolina schools shows more dramatic improvement among students in treatment classes than comparison students (Darch, Gersten, & Taylor, 1987); however, the article provides no indication that any long-range effects were ever measured.

DI in Vocabulary Enrichment

One popular area for direct instruction is in vocabulary. Three main approaches have been encouraged by different researchers and educators for development of vocabulary: direct instruction, extensive reading, and vocabulary activities such as those prescribed in basal readers and content area textbooks. Compared to basal reader vocabulary activities, some research suggests that the DI approach has proven more successful in developing vocabulary, comprehension, and language (Ashworth, 1999). In addition to extensive reading and basal reader activities, recommended DI and guided instruction approaches for teaching vocabulary include individual vocabulary cards, semantic feature analyses, word analogies, word maps, the Frayer model, context relationship procedures, and word webs (Greenwood, 2002).

The main issue in the research is whether vocabulary is best developed through some type of instruction or through extensive reading. A fairly impressive body of research documents the role and value of vocabulary instruction in the elementary classroom (Herman & Dole, 1988). One researcher argues that, even among gifted students, who would be expected to read much more extensively than others, teachers should still have strategies for directly instructing the students on challenging new vocabulary words (Thompson, 2002). At the other end of the academic spectrum, at-risk and economically disadvantaged children and those with developmental delays and learning disabilities acquire new vocabulary more quickly through highly structured, didactic intervention than through student-centered activity-based interventions (Becker, 1977; Losardo & Bricker, 1994; Pany, Jenkins, & Schreck, 1982). Unfortunately, among U.S. students at all academic ability levels, the lexicons of functionally important words

is disturbingly limited and might well be positively affected by direct instruction (Zechmeister, Chronis, Cull, D'Anna, & Healy, 1995).

There is, as yet, no unequivocal indication in the literature as to whether or not DI in vocabulary actually develops the students' vocabulary better than simply reading more (Smith, 1988). Some research indicates no difference in vocabulary development between students receiving heavy vocabulary instruction with limited reading time versus a control group of students receiving heavy trade book reading but limited vocabulary instruction (Cohen & Mayer, 1975). Other research supports the assumption that DI enhances vocabulary development better than in-context reading or dictionary work (Eeds & Cockrum, 1985). Of course, it is not surprising that strong proponents of direct instruction also advocate plenty of DI in vocabulary development (Groff, 1981).

Most educators would seem to favor a balanced approach to vocabulary development, including ample reading time as well as vocabulary DI along with vocabulary enrichment activities (Gifford, 2000; Greenwood, 2002; Klesius & Searls, 1991). Holbrook (1985) perceives significant problems with excessive DI in vocabulary and recommends a greater variety of other more student-centered activities.

DI in Literary Components/Conventions

Beginning pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students who are still in the pre-reading stages of literacy development still need to learn about various aspects of literature, for example, what is the title, what is an author and what does (s)he have to do with the book, what is an illustrator, what are the parts of the book (front cover, back cover, spine), what is the right way to hold a book (right-side-up), how are the pages turned (one at a time, starting from the front cover and progressing to the back), and how

is the text arranged (horizontally, read from left to right). After this initial instruction in literary conventions, and after phonics and decoding skills are mastered, which normally takes place by the completion of first grade, students begin to receive more advanced reading instruction. Some of that instruction in the higher elementary grades involves learning about literary components and conventions. For example, many teachers allow their students to learn more about literary components such as plot and theme by letting them attempt to author their own stories, books, and movies (Cox, 1983; Hawkes, 1988; Stewig, 1987). One child's progress in understanding characterization, plot, setting, and other literary elements is evidenced in a longitudinal case study that follows her from age four through thirteen as she writes and illustrates her own stories (Sherman, 1989). Another fairly unconventional approach to teaching plot, setting, and characterization is by using popular comic books (Brocka, 1979).

However, more traditional methods of teaching literary terms and concepts, such as DI, are certainly more commonplace (Literature, 1968). Most educators recommend such instruction take place in conjunction with actual readings in literature to show how the literary devices are employed (Charles, 1997; Evans, 1982; Goldfarb, 1999; Manning & Manning, 1996b). Others, including the German educational researcher, U. H. Gerlach (1987), recommend using a combination of guided learning practices, such as worksheets on plot, setting, etc., prior to a reading and reading discussion. Another visual aid, the story map, is recommended for use when teaching story elements such as setting, plot, mood, and theme (Smith, 1990). A similar story organizer recommended to help students sort out complex stories and history lessons is the "storypath" (McGuire, 1997).

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud has been a tradition in classrooms for many centuries. It can exist in a variety of forms such as the teacher reading aloud to students, shared reading, sand students reading aloud for assessment and practice.

Teachers Reading Aloud to the Students and Shared Reading

Most elementary reading classes include a fair amount of out loud reading, both by the teacher reading to the students and by the students themselves. Guofang Wan (2000) provides a thorough but succinct history of reading aloud to students and of the research concerning this classroom methodology. It is logical to assume that more teacher-reading-to-students time would be expended in lower grade levels than in higher grades. It is predicted that the highest concentration of this activity will take place among kindergarten teachers. It is important to note that, although research has shown a high correlation between oral reading to children and later reading capability, empirical research, conversely, has demonstrated that too much oral reading by kindergarten teachers to their students can actually have a negative impact on their development of individual reading capability (Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, & Linn, 1993).

While excessive reading may indeed produce negative results, most researchers agree that at least a reasonable amount of oral reading is important, especially in the primary grades (Francis, 1987; Stinson, 2000). Studies have also clearly demonstrated that parents reading aloud to (and with) their own children at home can be correlated to the children's later reading development and motivation (Anglum, Bell & Roubinek, 1990; Bartolomei, 2000; Bus, Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Clarke-Stewart, 1998; Hall

& Moats, 2000; Teale, 1981). Even though it is anticipated that the practice of teachers reading aloud to children will probably be highest in primary grades, research suggests that reading to older students is also of benefit in terms of reading pleasure, attitudes, and skills as well as to deepen student experience and to foster classroom community (Woolsey, 1995).

Jim Trelease (1982, 1989, 1992, 1993, 2001) has long been a major proponent for reading aloud to children, even before his *Read-Aloud Handbook* was first published in 1982. His publications have provided excellent guidance for teachers and parents who wish to effectively read to their children, and he has helped to identify many of the benefits derived from doing so. Reading aloud to students, especially those in primary grades, is beneficial in a variety of ways. First, it allows the students to see a revered role model reading and obviously enjoying the process (Carbo, 1996; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003). Usova (1979) is one of the early advocates of "modeling" the enjoyment of reading, a behavior where the teacher reads whenever the students are reading instead of just doing paperwork. Another value of reading to students is that they can begin to develop an enthusiasm for books and the stories they contain before they know how to decode text (Butler, 1980). And finally, this method of instruction creates a memorable "literacy event" (Vacca, et al., 2003), which will remain indelibly imprinted on the children's impressionable minds, training them in the joy of reading and endearing them to literature.

Shared reading, as it is most often defined, occurs when a parent or teacher reads aloud while the child/children are gathered around, listening and looking at the pictures as the teacher reads and comments (Manning & Manning, 1996b). However, "shared

reading" is sometimes used as a synonym for "peer-tutoring" (Atherley, 1989). Some researchers further differentiate the practice into two classifications: typical shared reading, where the teacher reads aloud as the children look at the pictures and listen, and dialogic or interactive shared reading, where students are brought into a dialogue about the story through open-ended questions about what is happening, what might happen, and what they think of the characters and their behaviors. Among preschoolers from low-income households, the first category, typical shared reading, has been found to be more effective on measures of listening, comprehension, and detection of alliteration whereas dialogic shared reading is found to be more effective on a measure of descriptive use of language (Lonigan, Anthony, Bloomfield, Dyer, & Samwel, 1999).

Don Holdaway (1979, 1982, 1992) of New Zealand has been a major influence internationally in the practice he refers to as the "shared book" experience. Citing strong theoretical and research bases, he demonstrates that the process of sharing a book is consistent with the way learning naturally occurs – in a social, free interchange of ideas and perceptions, through dialogue and other forms of feedback. The shared reading instructional approach helps the students in various ways. It models for them proper reading behavior, encourages inclusive group discussion since all students are in the same place in the same text, and it helps students achieve proper pronunciation of unfamiliar words they have not had experience with orally (Mooney, 1994). Pre-emergent and emergent readers of different ages can learn what reading is all about and can begin identifying specific letter sounds and spelling patterns (Taberski, 1998). Another often-touted benefit of shared reading is that it improves the students' attitudes toward reading;

however, one eight-week study shows no such gain among inner city African-American first graders (Chandler & Aldridge, 1992).

It is important to note that, as with parental shared reading experiences, shared reading among teacher and students can and should take place even before emergent reading begins to form among the students (Elster, 1998a, 1998b). Prior to the development of any decoding skills, students can benefit from "reading" with the teacher and watching as pages are turned, and perhaps a finger runs along, following the text as the oral reading takes place and initiating emergent phonemic awareness (Stahl, 1992; Ukrainetz, Cooney, Dyer, Kysar, & Harris, 2000). Such early shared reading experiences are most effective when they revolve around familiar texts (Button & Johnson, 1997), when they are embedded in a wide variety of other literature-rich experiences (Herb & Bufalino, 1997; Sanacore, 1992), and when the selected books have a close text-picture relationship (Elster, 1998a).

Scarborough and Dobrich (1994a; 1994b) have stirred up a maelstrom of protest (e. g., Dunning, Mason, & Stewart, 1994; Lonigan, 1994) by suggesting, after reviewing several decades of research, that parent/child shared reading experiences prior to school attendance accounts for only 8% of the variance in literacy outcome measures after the children enter school. Regardless of the statistic proposed by Scarborough and Dobrich ample research exists to demonstrate that children who spend time in shared reading with their parents before they start in school and afterward, become capable readers more quickly (Bus, Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995). One of the reasons for their more rapid development in reading is because they begin school with a well established phonological awareness (Burgess, 1997). The impact of parent/child shared reading is even greater

than that of teacher/student shared reading, especially among low-income children (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998), although Lonigan's and Whitehurst's research methodology and related issues have been questioned by other researchers (Coe & Shelby, 1998). Those whose parents show affection during this shared reading experience are less frustrated and more engaged in classroom reading than those with less affectionate parents (Bergin, 2001). This is valuable information which might well be extrapolated to teachers and their manner and demeanor when participating in shared reading.

Shared reading can be a particularly valuable experience for young students with limited English proficiency. Even if such students seem quiet or reluctant to answer questions, and even if the classroom seems noisy, research indicates they are likely to be on-task and learning (Laframboise & Wynn, 1994). Shared reading experiences among ELD students have proven especially beneficial in enhancing reading motivation and achievement (Koskinen, et al., 1999). Shared reading with Big Books is quite effective in promoting reading skills development among Hispanic kindergarten students, and others whose early experiences with books is limited (Fayden, 1997). Regular, lengthy exposure to such books with large, readily accessible pictures tied to relevant text also assists such children in rapidly developing the English language skills needed to read texts with understanding (Anderson & Roit, 1996). Clearly, a great body of available research demonstrates that the ELD kindergarten students in the region of the current study can benefit greatly from shared reading experiences, and it is anticipated that the current research will show that local kindergarten teachers use this practice extensively.

Students Reading Aloud for Assessment and Round Robin

Asking students to read out loud has been a common practice since the dawn of education among the ancient Greeks and even earlier civilizations. In fact, reading out loud was more the expected norm in ancient times. St. Augustine noted with some surprise in 383 A.D. that the Bishop of Milan enjoyed reading silently to himself, suggesting that silent reading was not a common practice (Manguel, 1996). In the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s, reading out loud continued as a staple activity in the classroom.

The primary argument, in the available research, against extensive oral reading by students is that it tends to yield less growth in the development of overall reading comprehension and reading skills. Anderson and Wilkinson (1995) find that individual, silent reading results in better attentiveness than oral reading, and also improves discussion afterward. An important study in the Pittsburg, Pennsylvania Independent School District, concludes that reading achievement improvement, as measured by two different pre and post tests, is "not significantly influenced by oral reading or indirect activities" (Leinehardt, Zigmond, & Cooley, 1981, p. 355). The only key ingredient correlated to reading improvement in the study is individual, silent reading. Thus, it seems from the available research that, while reading aloud by students does have its applications in the classroom, such as for assessment of reading fluency, teachers must still avoid requiring students to spend much of their reading time in this approach.

Students reading aloud for assessment. One of the most compelling reasons found in the research in favor of asking students to read out loud is that it is an essential assessment tool for elementary teachers, who need to know the reading ability level and

the specific reading difficulties of each student (Martens, 1995). Asking a student to read loudly enough, so that at least the teacher may hear, enables the teacher to assess for proper decoding skills, miscoding errors, reading fluency, sight-word acquisition, and vocabulary automaticity (Morrow, 1995; Pinnell, et al., 1992; Price & Schwabacher, 1993; White, 1995).

One oral assessment approach is generally referred to as "miscue analysis" (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1987; Allen & Watson, 1976). As one might expect, the severity of miscues (and comprehension deficits) varies significantly from child to child, being higher among students with little or no prior knowledge in the subject matter being read (Taft & Leslie, 1985). The difficulty level of reading passages can have a major effect on oral reading error patterns (Alonso & Christi, 1980). Reading "primers" or basal reading texts are prone to have language so difficult, non-relevant and unfamiliar to many children that such reading texts are deemed by some to be counterproductive (Simons & Ammon, 1989), and this is of critical importance here and in other ELD regions where many elementary students are several grade levels behind in their reading ability (Ortiz, 1986).

Most school districts have established practices for miscue analysis using reproducible forms such as the Feedback to Oral Reading Miscue Analysis System (FORMAS) (Hoffman & Baker, 1981), the Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA) (Goodman, 1996; Martens, 1998), and the Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI) (Feeley, 1979). A less obtrusive manner of conducting miscue analysis involves the teacher silently reading over a student's shoulder as he or she reads aloud (Davenport & Lauritzen, 2002). Another specific manner of utilizing the approach involves having a

student read aloud the same text repeatedly during the school year – perhaps once each six-weeks – to track improvements and continuing problems (Martens, 1997).

Miscue analysis is an accurate and valid measure with respect to syntactic and semantic strengths of the students (Cunningham & Caplan, 1982); however, elementary teachers should exercise caution in relying too heavily on oral reading fluency as an indicator of reading ability because many students who can read passages out loud with apparent fluency still do not comprehend what they are reading (Englert & Semmel, 1981; Newman, 1978; Yuill & Oakhill, 1993). D'Angelo & Mahlios (1983) find that insertion and omission miscues cause little syntactic or semantic confusion and that overemphasizing their need to spend more time decoding and interpreting such miscues may be wasting the students' instruction time. Conversely, substitution miscues do tend to detract from both comprehension and retelling (Beebe, 1980). Regardless of existing research demonstrating the limitations of miscue analysis, the frequency of oral reading miscue errors is still a fairly adequate predictor of reading comprehension (Sadoski & Page, 1984) and the approach continues to be used as an assessment tool by most elementary teachers (Martens, 1995). A truly effective use of miscue analysis will also incorporate retelling (Anderson, 1985), so it will include a measure of comprehension.

Effectively utilizing miscue analysis might be somewhat more complicated in this region of over 90% ELD students because it might not always be clear whether a teacher is truly measuring reading proficiency or, in actuality, measuring only English language proficiency. Assuming the social constructivist framework of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1957), reading development will be strongly impacted by the social and cultural context of the region (Bloome & Dail, 1997), particularly when that social/cultural environment

is deeply embedded in a language other than that being read by the students. Teachers who are not raised in the environment where a particular dialect is used tend to object more strongly to miscues related to dialect (Tovey, 1979), which may also be significant in this region of "Tex-Mex," a form of Spanish spoken locally which is substantially different from both Spanish and English, especially since many non-bilingual teachers must be imported in order to find sufficient quantities of certified educators. Even when students can speak fluently in a second language, their reading fluency is more limited with a resulting increase in miscues (Coll & Osuna, 1990). Another consideration is that bilingual readers reading in English as their second language rely more heavily on context than those with more experience in the language and the ELD readers will perform better in miscue analyses when reading in contexts rather than reading lists of words (Wong & Underwood, 1996). Experienced bilingual teachers can use miscue analysis to assess each student's individual reading needs in both the first and second language (Crowell, 1995).

Specific training in the use of miscue analysis, in a classroom, where a teacher or preservice teacher can actually practice effective techniques, has proven very beneficial in enabling teachers to properly evaluate their students' reading abilities (Jongsma, 1978), a fact that might well be considered by teacher preparation universities. Such training is valuable in empowering teachers to effectively evaluate their students' reading behaviors and strengths (Davey & Theofield, 1983). At a minimum, preservice teachers and/or new-hires in a school district could be exposed to training manuals or articles which describe best practices in miscue analysis (for example, Goodman, 1995; Rhodes & Shanklin, 1990; Shuman, 1984).

Round-robin reading. During what is generally referred to as round-robin reading, students take turns reading out loud while the rest of the class listens (Fox, 1972). Unlike oral reading by experienced teachers during shared reading experiences, round robin reading is typically performed without any noticeable animation or enthusiasm, by students who are progressing slowly as they decode each word, and the result is that the reader feels embarrassed while all the other students become bored and distracted (Goldsmith, 1970; Standal & Towner, 1982).

The practice has become less common during recent decades because of self esteem issues among less capable readers. For example, Estes and Johnstone (1979) say they have discovered many ways to make children hate reading, including reading aloud round-robin style. True (1979) and Whisler (1976) report similar findings. Not only does round robin lead to downward trends in students' affective attitudes about reading, but it also fails to produce cognitive gains. Eldredge, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, (1996) conclude that shared reading is superior to round robin reading in the following three measured outcomes: oral reading errors, reading fluency, and comprehension. Lynch (1988) finds that among three reading instruction methods – round robin, listening, and silent reading – the round robin approach yields the lowest measured reading comprehension levels among fifth graders.

Most of the educators and researchers who have voiced objections to the use of round-robin reading practice are not opposed to oral reading in general; indeed, it appears that most such round robin opponents strongly favor many types of oral reading activities which are less threatening and more effective in fostering reading skills and a positive attitude about reading among the children. For example, Opitz and Rasinski (1998),

published an entire book, *Goodbye Round Robin: 25 Effective Oral Reading Strategies*, filled with ideas for reading aloud activities to use instead of round-robin reading.

Many teachers still ask students to read out loud, but exercise caution by excluding insecure readers and by requiring oral reading only in small groups of three or four students (Reichelderfer, 2001; Wolfgang, 1989; Wood, 1983). One first grade teacher has her students read aloud to 'silent partners' – their favorite stuffed animals, providing a very non-threatening situation (Crum, 1991). Johns (1982) recommends that students not be required to read aloud except when they are one-on-one with the teacher.

Research findings favoring the use of round robin reading are virtually nonexistent after the early seventies yet, despite all the negative research indicating the failure of round robin reading to improve student reading ability and attitudes, most teachers continue to use it to some extent as is clearly evident from the data collected in this current research. Fink (1980) and Hill (1983) also find that round robin is widely used, especially in content area reading exercises, but they recommend alternative approaches. Observations in 72 classrooms confirm that the majority of elementary teachers were still using round-robin reading in the 1990's even though better alternatives exist (Kelly, 1995). Ivey (2000), concerned with the continuing use of round robin, also calls upon school districts and teachers to shun this approach in favor of more effective instruction. Gill (2002) encourages teachers to use "reading conferences" instead of the traditional round robin reading. Based on the available research, teacher preparation institutions and school districts could reduce the extent of use of an ineffective and perhaps even counterproductive reading method by providing simple training in alternative methods, such as the 19 alternative instructional approaches suggested in Kuse

and Kuse (1990), as well as innovative and creative approaches such as the reading theater described in Wolf (1998).

Grouped/Interactive Reading Activities

Nearly 2,500 years ago, Socrates used the Socratic method of open-ended questioning to elucidate and draw out the latent concepts already in the minds of his students (Seeskin, 1987). More recent educational theorists such as Vygotsky (1957), Piaget (1955), and Dewey (1929) have surmised that knowledge is constructed, ideally, in a social context. Based upon these teachings, 20th Century educators began to use a huge assortment of collaborative practices. Over the past 30 years, cooperative grouping of students has become a common practice in elementary classrooms (Goldman, 1997). Linda DeGroff (1995) suggests that, because language and learning are socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1957), children should be encouraged to spend time interacting with their friends and associates whether nearby or far away, writing and reading constantly. This, she believes will teach them to write and read for authentic purposes. Hispanic ELD students have also shown reading improvement through cooperative activities (Prado-Olmos, Szymanski & Smith, 1993).

Paired/Peer-Tutor Reading

A commonly used grouped reading instruction method is known as paired reading (Topping & Lindsay, 1992a). The approach can be used not only in the classroom but at home as well, where parents are encouraged to conduct paired reading activities with their children (Miller, Robson & Bushell, 1986; Pumfrey, 1986). However, for the purposes of this study, the approach under consideration will be limited to in-class time

spent in reading activities, so the focus of reviewed literature will only be on peer-paired reading. In this approach, two students are paired together and they take turns reading together from the same text (Topping & Lindsay, 1992b).

Paired reading can be accomplished by two students of similar reading ability, and this is often advisable, particularly when the teacher wants paired children with higher reading abilities reading more difficult materials, while less capable reading pairs can be reading easier books together (Topping & Lindsay, 1992b). However, perhaps most reading pairs consist of one strong reader, who acts as a peer tutor, and one struggling reader, who is being tutored (Topping, 1989; Winter, 1986). In schools where inter-grade collaboration is possible, older students are sometimes called upon to act as peer-tutors for younger students (Fuchs, et al., 2001; Steiger & Hong, 1998; Wolfgang, 1989). Wheeler (1983) finds that older students who are struggling readers make the best pair-tutors because they are more sympathetic and eager to help the struggling primary-grade readers. This more-capable-peer approach is an example of the Vygotskyan theoretical construct in which, within a "zone of proximal development" or ZPD, a more capable peer assists a less capable peer and brings him/her along in academic or intellectual development (Vygotsky, 1957).

Studies have shown significant reading gains after the implementation of peer-tutoring reading programs (Topping, 1987). Primary students have also improved after a 12-week peer-reading program, but those gains are lost after students return to individual, silent reading (Atherley, 1989). The peer-tutoring version of paired reading has proven beneficial not only for the low reader within the pair but for the stronger reader as well. Researchers have learned that the peer tutors actually show greater development during

paired reading experiments than did the children being tutored (Topping, 1987). However, this is probably due to the fact that more capable students generally tend to develop faster regardless of the academic activity they are involved in.

Another important finding is that ELD students benefit and demonstrate steady improvement both in reading fluency as well as accuracy as a result of their participation in paired reading (Li & Nes, 2001). This finding is of particular relevance to the current study because almost all of the students are ELD Hispanics. When English is not the first language, students will face a variety of reading difficulties, and research indicates that children with reading difficulties are helped more by peer tutoring than by parental paired reading and tutoring (Winter, 1986). This is also of considerable relevance among the target population because most parents in the region can neither speak nor read and write in English so parent-child paired reading at home is not possible. In addition to ELD students, other at-risk categories of students have shown reading growth during paired reading (Sanacore, 1990).

Regardless of the measured benefits of paired reading, however, the approach should not be relied upon too heavily to the point that it will begin to seem dull to the children. Most educators recommend that paired reading be utilized in combination with many other reading instruction activities during the typical school day (Lee-Daniels & Murray, 2000; Swanson, 1990).

Cooperative Grouping with Three or More Students

A wide variety of cooperative groupings, for example, interest groups, ability groups, tutorial groupings, needs groups, as well as random, social, and team groups (Wood, 1987), can be used in the classroom. Marr (1997) provides a fairly

comprehensive review of cooperative learning and related research. The Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) program encourages both reading and writing in cooperative groups (Male, 1989). One of the practical advantages of cooperative grouping is that, when there are insufficient reading resources to be used by the entire class – for example, the teacher only has sets of four or five books, then the teacher can rotate the smaller sets from one cooperative group to another until all students have eventually been exposed to all available resources (Mermelstein, 1994).

A much more important advantage is that it improves student performance. Students working in these small, cooperative groups outscore students receiving whole-class instruction on a variety of measures of higher-order thinking (Sharan, Ackerman, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1979). Students in small groupings also score higher on measures of achievement than those working individually (Armstrong, Johnson & Balow, 1981). An experiment conducted by Rojas-Drummond, Hernandez, Velez, and Villagran (1998) also demonstrates that primary students working in collaborative reading groups (treatment students) show markedly higher advancement in their development and promotion of self-regulatory strategies for comprehending and learning from text than do students using other classroom activities (control students).

Students working collaboratively in reading groups also learn many cooperation and social skills in addition to their improvements in reading (Gut & Safran, 2002). First graders working together in reading groups, for example, demonstrate improvements in their ability to ask one another for assistance and information (Wilkinson & Dollaghan, 1979). Students receiving explicit instructions in help-giving prior to collaborative grouping exert significantly greater efforts to help their peers (Fuchs, Fuchs, Kazdan, &

Allen, 1999). If students are kept in the same groups for long periods of time (weeks or months) as they move through major projects such as reading entire novels together and developing associated presentations for the class, they learn to work cohesively as a group (Kinnish, 1993). Armstrong, Johnson & Balow, (1981) conclude that non-handicapped students also grew in interpersonal attraction and cooperative behaviors toward handicapped students after working together in these groups.

The key to success is to use a wide variety of cooperative groupings and activities which challenge and effectively engage the children with their reading. Many such activities and groupings are described in Weisendanger and Bader (1992). Bromley and Modlo (1997) also offer detailed descriptions of many effective cooperative learning structures and activities. Slavin (1999) also provides an overview of two cooperative learning programs, each of which recommends a variety of collaborative activities. Cooperative reading activities can be particularly beneficial when students are reading in content areas where vocabulary can be more challenging (Karnes & Collins, 1997; Montague & Tanner, 1987; Murray, 1990).

As with paired reading, these grouping are often composed of students at varied reading levels so that they may learn from each other (Madden, 1988). One study finds that having older students (third & fourth graders) reading to small groups of primary students teaches the younger students important reading skills and improved their reading attitudes; plus it teaches older students to plan lessons and take responsibility for younger students (Schneider & Barone, 1997). With inclusive, heterogeneous class composition mandated, cooperative groupings are valuable because they provide peer-assistance for struggling readers (Slavin, Stevens, & Madden, 1988). Such gains among struggling

readers are greatly enhanced when teachers also use complementary instruction practices like discussing collaboration, preparing students to read and helping them during the collaborative reading process, and providing opportunities for student response (Fitzharris & Hay, 2001). Feeney (1992) also believes that cooperative groupings allow slower readers to soar educationally.

Students struggling to learn in a second language demonstrate remarkable growth in conjunction with collaborative study. During such an activity, the students are involved in a variety of reading and conversational strategies which help them to progress in language development as well as reading (Freeman & Freeman, 2000b; Prado-Olmos, Szymanski, & Smith, 1993). Unfortunately though, the conversations among ELD students are not often open dialogues where ideas are freely expressed, but more often tend to mimick ideas and beliefs discussed in advance by the teachers (Prado-Olmos, 1994). The Bilingual Cooperative Reading and Composition (BCIRC) program, developed by Margarita Calderon of Johns Hopkins University, improves the achievement and test scores of ELD second and third graders working together in groups of four (Calderon, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998). Klingner and Vaughn's Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) model (1998; 1999) also fosters growth in comprehension levels, content learning, and English language acquisition for ELD students working in cooperative groups. Even ELD students with learning disabilities show improvement with minimal adult support after cooperative learning experiences (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996).

Reading Response Activities

Abundant literature supports the use of extensive reader response activities, allowing students varied and creative ways to express their opinions and reactions to what they have just read. This review discusses the two most popular reading response approaches – discussing and writing about what has just been read – and, in a final section, briefly mentions many other response approaches which are used to add variety but which are not as common, day to day, in the typical elementary classroom.

Reading/Writing Connection (Journaling, etc.)

It has been demonstrated by ample research that there is a strong relationship between reading ability and writing ability. Specifically, those who read more are able to write better (Barrs, 2000), but it has also been shown that writing about what has just been read also helps to develop better reading comprehension and other reading skills. Over the past 40 years, language arts teachers have begun more and more to tie reading to writing (Putnam, 1994). Dozens of scholarly articles are now being published annually about the benefits in elementary classrooms of using written responses to reading and the relationship between the parallel development of reading and writing skills. A great many varied approaches have been suggested for incorporating written reader response activities. Manning and Manning (1996a) succinctly describe 58 different suggestions for eliciting student literature responses, and almost all their suggestions involve writing.

Students need not write directly about material they have just read. They may respond in more creative ways. For example, second graders who have just read a couple of short biographies could write a biography about someone they know (Oxendine, 1989). They could also read a few books of fiction, then author their own books

(Ohanian, 1998). Or they could write their own poetry after reading selected poems (Nye, 1997). The possible variations are infinite. Specific suggestions for incorporating written response into the elementary literature program are much too numerous to discuss comprehensively; however, the following articles contain a good cross-section of the many thousands of excellent suggestions found in the related literature: Beyersdorfer & Schauer, 1989; Blatt & Rosen, 1984; Frenier, 1996; Fu & Lamme, 2002; Graves, 1989; Malcolm, 1992; McClure & Zitlow, 1991; Perretti, 1989; Stephens, 1989; Stoneham, 1986; and Woods, 1986.

Of course, the most commonly used reading/writing response approach is the simple reading journal, where students keep a personal journal and write down their responses to the reading each day (Au & Scheu, 1989; Fulps & Young, 1991; Keefe, 1995; LoPiccolo, 1989). Some educators and researchers prefer to refer to the student response journal as a "book diary" (Steen, 1991), and other terms have also been suggested, but the principle remains the same. Students respond personally and sometimes emotionally, in writing, to the material they have just read. Poetry is one of the most emotionally stimulating forms of reading, and for this reason, many teachers use it to promote genuinely responsive journaling (McIntosh, 1989).

Research indicates that one of the most significant benefits of the reading/writing response is that the process of written composition enhances deeper comprehension of the reading text (Vardell, 1983). Another benefit often mentioned is that written responses encourage higher order thinking in relation to the text (Farnan, 1989, Gambell, 1986; Langer, 1982). Marzano (1990) argues that having the students write responsively in cooperative groups is especially helpful. Flood and Lapp (1994) explain in detail how

working in supportive discussion & writing groups helps students socially construct meaning. Spiegel (1998) argues that literature response groups, featuring cooperative writing-response activities, should become part of a balanced elementary literacy program.

Class Discussion of Reading Material

For millennia teachers, using what has been referred to as the 'Socratic method,' (Dillon, 1982; Seeskin, 1987), have asked their students to respond to discussion questions designed to motivate student-centered critical thinking (Angeletti, 1991) and to evoke student insights. A typical language arts or reading classroom environment features extensive classroom discussion related to literature recently read by the entire class or smaller reading group.

Such discussion can produce a wide variety of learning among elementary children. For example, various researchers argue that class discussion of literature and other reading material can help elementary school readers in the following areas of learning: developing a strong narrative voice among readers as they explore their own realities (Mikkelsen, 1989), exploring diversity and sharing related personal experiences (Mathis, 2001), socially constructing meaning (Dugan, 1997; Flood & Lapp, 1994; Lehman & Scharer, 1996), fostering a sense of tolerance and discouraging bias and cruelty (Rowell, Goodkind & Henshaw, 1999) developing a sense of humor (Zingher, 2002), deeply appreciating literature and being affected by it (Murphy, 1998), listening to others and learning to accept differing viewpoints (Zalesky, 1997), reinforcing the students' sense of pride for their race and gender (Sims, 1983), and overcoming social anxieties and concerns (Strehle, 1999).

Most educators would emphasize the necessity of students actually reading the literature before any discussion and not trying to use class discussion in lieu of independent student reading (e. g., Tunkle, Evan & Anderson, 1999). And, of course it is also essential that the teachers themselves read the children's literature carefully before entering into any discussion with the class (Vardell & Jacobson, 1997). The class discussion that follows can then be used to extend and assess the learning and the comprehension of material read by both the students and the teacher (Leone, 1994).

Some educators see the reading of literature as a transactional process through which the students' knowledge and conceptual framework is constructed by and adapted to new information and viewpoints introduced by the materials being read (Beach, 1997). Following up with class discussion then allows the student to further develop, elaborate, and both broaden and deepen their understanding through social construction as they transactionally incorporate the views and responses of others to the same reading (Dugan, 1997).

Other Response Activities

Many forms of reading response, above and beyond discussion and writing, have been employed in the classroom, for example, dioramas, field trips, skits, drawing, poster-making, and countless others. While these miscellaneous approaches are much less common than discussion and writing, they are still of considerable importance because they add variety and therefore interest and motivation to the students' reading time. The following short list contains scholarly articles describing just a few productive activities in this catch-all category: Martinez & Nash, 1991; Murray, 1994; Smith & Herring, 1996.

Although somewhat dated, Smith and Park (1977), remains one of the most comprehensive resources for elementary reading instruction. Their very lengthy volume includes recommendations for hundreds of response activities including dramatizations, felt-o-grams, oral or written book reports, peep shows (the students work together to build the display box and draw the flip pages), creating radio/television programs, puppets, flannel boards, box theaters, etc. Blatt and Cunningham (1981) have written an entire book describing in detail dozens of ways the elementary teacher can incorporate varied response activities, also featuring music, art, drama, and kinesiology. Another book by Phyllis Whitin (1996) explains how students can respond through visual expression, primarily sketching. This is especially helpful among emergent readers who may not yet be very comfortable with detailed written responses, but it is also very popular among older students. Perhaps the broadest coverage of varied literature responses is contained in a book edited by Roser and Martinez (1995), which contains 21 chapters authored by 37 prominent reading researchers and educators. Another good resource, containing general elementary reading instruction guidelines, but with an emphasis on quality response activities, is Brown and Stephens (1996). Sloyer (1982) devotes an entire volume to specific, step-by-step instructions for including drama in elementary reading response. Kelner (1993) is also devoted entirely to creative ways of using dramatic response.

In addition to the many books available, countless scholarly journals have also concentrated on various elementary reading response approaches. Short, Kauffman and Kahn (2000), suggest the use of a variety of response activities to keep the students' engagement with reading fresh and exciting. Among their recommendations are artwork,

dramatic performances such as skits, and musical performances about the reading material. Schulz (1992) describes one highly effective teacher's use not only of participatory drama response, but also of inviting classroom visitors who had professions related to stories the students are reading or who have lived through experiences similar to those found in the stories. Polette (1991) recommends responding by reading another story or book which is related to the first. The possibilities are virtually infinite for those willing to seek out new ideas. For example, in a single article, a dozen teachers take turns sharing their favorite creative reading response and enrichment activities (Morrow, et al., 1995).

There may be even more opportunity for variety when responding to non-fiction. Jorgensen-Esmaili (1990) describes a variety of ways for responding to social studies content area readings including bringing in an album of related period/era photographs for children to examine and discuss, examining artifacts from the bygone era under consideration, having the students create their own story or mystery set in the historical era, and visiting a historical building made and used in that era, or taking some other type of field trip such as to a nearby battle site. Morrow, et al. (1995) propose many creative ways of motivating young readers through fun response activities such as inventing products related to the stories, telling the stories with a different ending, eating the same foods found in the stories, creating imaginary conversations they could have had with main characters, dramatic skits, and illustrating the actions they read about. Of course the variations are as endless as the tales the children could read in class. McGowan, Guzzetti, and Kowalinski (1992), advocate the reading of related historical trade books (fiction) when studying history, and they suggest this be followed by the students doing

activities such as creating character charts, dioramas, and forming clubs related to the reading and the era. Millstone (1995) suggests that, when studying ancient Greece (civilization, literature, mythology, and culture), students should be given opportunities to create related murals, cartoons, dioramas, puppet shows, epic poems, maps (for example, of the journey in *The Odyssey*), etc. The true key, whether the reading is content area related or mainstream fiction, is to offer daily variety, not doing the same activities over and over until the children tire of them.

Guided and/or Independent, Individual, Silent Student Reading Time

Both guided and independent reading practice over long time periods improve reading ability (Cullinan, 1992). In a government study, Foertsch (1992) concludes that more assigned reading and more reading time, whether in the content area or novels and stories, results in better reading achievement. Studies show that reading practice – a student-centered activity – is more effective than lecturing on sub-skills and attempting to deliver complex bodies of knowledge about reading – a teacher-centered approach (Block, 1993; Cox, 1999; Danielson & LaBonty, 1994). Some whole language enthusiasts believe individual reading is the only valid way to master reading and that direct instruction in reading skills is without value. Some suggest that the so-called "reading skills" have been arbitrarily named into existence by educational theorists through the years, and the best approach is to disregard them and get students into prolonged, daily reading of relevant, ability-level-appropriate literature (Funk & Funk, 1992).

One researcher (Guthrie, 1981) traveling to New Zealand to discover how it has become the nation with the highest reading comprehension and reading achievement scores in the world, observes that typical students are required to read for an average of two hours every day in school and another hour at home. He is also struck by the quantity and wide variety of children's literature titles available in all the classrooms. There are many other educators who know from experience that reading interesting material is by far the best way to develop as readers (Cash & Young, 1991; Davidson & Koppenhaur, 1988.)

Independent Student Reading Time (literature, nonfiction, etc.)

Independent student reading can take place in a variety of ways. It can involve reading from fiction or nonfiction, followed by Accelerated Reader quizzes to insure completion and comprehension. Or the student reading can be followed by discussion, book reports, book talks, journal entries, or a thousand other reading response/assessment activities. Or, in many cases, it can take place with no follow-up assessment or response at all. The key is that it is done independently, with most of the reading time uninterrupted by teacher intervention or guidance. And many independent reading enthusiasts would also stipulate that truly independent reading most allow students to freely select their own reading materials without being required to read certain texts. For example, Stephen Krashen (1995), argues that the free, independent reading of self-selected texts is the most effective way for second language learners to learn the target language and become stronger readers in that language.

ELD students who read extensively have significant academic advantages over those who seldom read, including improved reading strategies, knowledge of texts,

acquisition of English vocabulary and grammar, general language learning, positive attitudes toward reading, and an awareness of cross-cultural values (Strong 1996). Predominately Mexican-American high school students in Los Angeles, asked to identify from their elementary years the most effective instructional strategies that made it easier for them to become language proficient, chose reading of literature more often than any other instruction (Thompson, 2000). Researchers have shown that ELD students not yet fully capable of speaking English can still be expected to read simple English texts with successful comprehension and with attendant growth in reading and English-language fluency (Barrera, 1983).

A vast body of research attests to the effectiveness of using silent, independent reading to develop both the reading skills as well as the English language skills of students for whom English is a second language (Freeman, 1992). A paper presented at the 1996 World Conference on Literacy describes and summarizes the results of much of the empirical reading research with ELD children from around the world. The researchers' central finding is that independent, silent literature reading practice results in mastery of both speaking and reading ability in the second language (Elley, Cutting, Mangubhai, & Hugo, 1996). Carrell and Carson (1997) report that, for many instructors of ELD students, a combination of intensive and extensive reading is optimum. Grabe (1995), argues that extensive reading in a second language develops vocabulary, motivates students for further reading, increases knowledge in general, improves reading comprehension and language skills, and lays the groundwork for future student-centered learning and language development. Hough, Nurss, and Enright (1986) show that frequent story reading develops both English language competence as well as reading

skill and comprehension. This is all especially pertinent information for educational leaders in the Rio Grande Valley, where school districts expect that over 60% of students entering Kindergarten know little or no English.

Guided Student Reading Time

Guided reading differs from independent reading in that the students' reading is carefully guided by the teacher. Initially, the teacher guides the reading process by selecting suitable materials of appropriate grade level, content, variety of genre, etc. (Pinnell and Fountas, 2002). Then, as the students read, their progress is closely monitored and guided by the teacher through various intervention techniques including such things as pre-reading, student-centered discussion (Skidmore, Perez-Parent & Arnfield, 2003) to build relevant background knowledge, vocabulary enhancement discussions (Hoyt, 2002; Smith, 2003), strategic grouping of students during guided reading (Chevalier, Del Santo, Scheiner, Skok, & Tucci, 2002; Feagin, 1999), motivational steps, predictions, and questioning (Mooney, 1995a), comprehension checks (Byrd & Westfall, 2002), and introduction at key points in the reading process of related artifacts, illustrations, activities, or student-manipulated expository materials (Villaume & Brabham, 2001).

Thorough guided reading instruction is of critical important in the primary emergent reading grades (K-1), especially among children who may be at risk for timely literacy development (Bruce, Snodgrass & Salzman, 1999), but it is also highly effective in the upper elementary grade levels (Mooney, 1995b). It is also critical when the students are expected to tackle challenging texts with unfamiliar vocabulary, including most non-fiction such as chapters from the science textbook (Fredericks, 2003).

Research indicates that a balanced reading program which incorporates a substantial amount of guided reading yields significantly higher gains in reading achievement (Dymock, 1998; Swann, 1997). Fountas and Pinnell (1996) and Burns (2001) provide a very thorough overview of guided reading instruction in the elementary classroom.

Accelerated Reading (AR) Time

The AR program's computerized book quizzes are used extensively in elementary schools to assess for overall comprehension and book completion of self-selected novels, stories, and articles (Chenowith, 2001; Persinger, 2001; Poock, 1998). As soon as a student completes a book, he/she requests an AR test, which the teacher administers using an in-class computer or a computer in the school library. This assessment approach has proven effective in the majority of research studies reviewed. For example, Turner (1993), working with middle school reading underachievers and utilizing extensive independent reading throughout an entire school year, finds the Accelerated Reader point system to be a great motivator. Turner uses computerized Accelerated Reader quizzes to test for completion and comprehension of each book, and provides appropriate rewards and recognition. Dual pretests and posttests show a mean improvement in comprehension of over 10% after adjusting for the maturation of subjects. Another study shows that the use of incentive prizes for AR points significantly increases annual growth in reading scores as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (Vantuyl, 2002).

Some researchers and educators object to the use of Accelerated Reader for a variety of reasons, arguing (1) that because the AR quiz system is tied to rewards, it sends the wrong message to students about the proper motivation for reading (Carter, 1996), (2) that AR usage does not significantly increase the amount of reading by

students (Pavonetti, Brimmer, & Cipielewski, 2000), (3) that AR implementation is not a significant factor in relation to "value-added achievement" (Chaney, 2002), (4) that AR usage does not have an overall positive effect on the reading achievement of at-risk students (M. T. Gibson, 2002), (5) that it teaches children that reading is a competitive, test and reward-based activity (Stevenson & Camarata, 2000), (6) that the approach is not theoretically sound and has not been adequately supported by research (Biggers, 2001), (7), that the program does not produce lifelong learners (Prince & Barron, 1998), and (8) that fifth grade AR users actually show less reading growth than non-AR users (Melton, 2002).

However, hundreds of other studies, including almost all of the related experimental studies yielding empirical data, present more promising findings. For example, an experimental study among randomly selected third graders shows a significant difference in comprehension between treatment and control groups, indicating a significant improvement attributable to AR reading (Facemire, 2000). Another experimental research project shows significantly different pre-test/post-test gains between third, fourth, and fifth grade students accumulating many AR quiz points and those who accumulate fewer points (Howard, 1999). Morse (1999) reaches the same conclusions for first, second, and third graders. Steele (2003) also finds statistically significant gains associated with AR usage among second graders. Castillo (2002), working with Mexican-American ELD third graders in yet another experimental study, concludes that the use of AR significantly improves reading comprehension scores. Another study (Kortz, 2002) shows that there is a strong correlation between AR usage and state-mandated standardized reading test scores for ELD third graders here in Texas.

Vega (1999), administering AR over almost an entire school year among predominately ELD students, records significant improvement in reading abilities, with 63% of the subjects testing below grade level in the pre-test and only 20% below grade level on the post test. In the largest experimental group measured in the studies reviewed, Barton (2000) finds that AR reading significantly improves reading gains, as measured by the ITBS, among high-SES fifth grade females, both Blacks and Whites. Vollands, Topping, & Evans (1999) also find that AR usage yields reading achievement gains superior to both regular instruction as well as an alternative intensive reading method, particularly among female students. Topping and Fisher (2001) report that, among 9 British schools implementing AR for the first time in this pilot study, reading gains considerably greater than normal gains, as measured by norm-referenced tests, are statistically significant well beyond the $p = 0.001$ level. The authors of two qualitative studies also claim that interviews, observations, and focus groups among fourth and fifth graders show AR usage positively impacts students' reading habits, attitudes, and comprehension (Moore, 2003; Rogers, 2000).

Regardless of all the conflicting arguments for and against the use of AR in the classroom, a pilot survey I administered to 250 area teachers a year ago reveals that 100% of elementary teachers in the region, in classes above the kindergarten level, are using the AR program at least to some extent in their classrooms. Thus the approach must be included so that the extent of its use can be measured.

Non-AR Student-Selected Fiction Reading

Volumes have been written about the pitfalls of using literature to improve students' reading skills. One article succinctly summarizes many of these difficulties,

pointing out the following problems with the literature-based reading approach: (1) For directed reading, some students may have already read the selection recently; (2) For independently chosen reading, students will tend to select materials inappropriate for their age (or perhaps any age) – oftentimes including materials which are violent, gruesome, horrific, gang-related, or sexually oriented. Of course if the teacher encourages selection from her or his own in-class library of books, such inappropriate selections are greatly reduced; (3) Integrating reading skills training into a literature-based lesson can be much more demanding and time consuming for the teacher than simply sticking with the canned program in a basal reader; (4) It may seem like there is just too much out there to choose from (and perhaps too much for the teacher to keep up with and preview); and (5) some students may grumble and say that everything they have to choose from is boring (McAloon, 1993). But despite these obstacles, the article's author remains convinced of the effectiveness of the literature-based approach and recommends good ways to offset the difficulties. Humphrey (1997), Isaacs (1990), Kim and Krashen (1997), and Slaughter (1994) also voice the same sentiment concerning the need for literature books in the reading classroom.

The principle behind the literature-based reading instruction model is that practice makes perfect. In *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, an important, fact-finding report commissioned by the U. S. government, several of America's foremost authorities on reading state that, "Reading is a continuously developing skill. Reading, like playing a musical instrument, is not something that is mastered once and for all at a certain age. Rather, it is a skill that continues to improve through practice" (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 17). Many other educators and researchers also agree that reading

is an acquired skill that must be developed through practice, like playing basketball or the violin, not a set of facts, reading skills or objectives that can be memorized, resulting in reading ability (Beck & McKeown, 1999; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Wood & O'Donnell, 1991). Recent studies indicate that children are reading only about seven to eight minutes per school day on the average (Cooter, 1999, p. 891). Some reading teacher guides (for example, *Teachers*, 1990) recommend brief periods of independent reading, but suggest that some teachers may grumble about the monumental chore of getting students to read literature for just ten minutes at a time.

A fundamental difference between independent reading and teacher-directed lectures, worksheets, and other skills-based activities is that independent reading is student-centered while the other approaches are teacher-centered (Rafoth, 1999). According to Rafoth, part of the reason why independent reading is so successful in creating self-motivated and self-directed learners is that pupils learn through practice to think for themselves, work at their own pace, re-read as necessary, and respond with their own thought patterns. Students who participate in extensive independent reading activities are free from an instructor's "over-domination" and have, in effect, many teachers, in the form of various authors, who supply them with new insights and perspectives as they move from author to author in the process of becoming well-read.

Many reading educators and researchers, feel that students should spend most of their total reading instruction time actually reading independently (Atwell, 1987; Fielding and Pearson, 1994). A study of 300 nationally recognized "Blue Ribbon" elementary schools reveals the importance of literature reading in a quality education, finding that 70% of them reported using literature extensively, often as the basis of their entire

reading program (Kletzien, 1996). Hepler (1982) documents some very encouraging results from a one-year study of fifth and sixth graders in which the students devote the last full hour of every school day to the enjoyment of independent reading. This reading practice should occur every day in school (Au, Mason, and Scheu 1995).

Children who are given time for reading books which *they* have chosen will develop a sense of personal ownership of their reading time and of the literature they have selected, and this will affect their desire to read and the joy they find in the reading process (Lesesne, 1991; Turner, 1992; Virgil, 1994; Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1993). The results of such an approach will be reading improvement. In a study in the upper grades of a Southwest Texas Elementary, researchers find that children in an experimental multi-age group, using extensive literature-based reading, improve in grade level reading ability three times as much as a control group still using basal readers – the highest gainers being bilingual students (Mackey, Johnson & Wood, 1995). Another article reports that, in many important ways, reading children's literature provides better support than working in standard reading textbooks (Ralston, 1990).

Reading literature in the classroom has proven to be particularly beneficial for ELD children in development of both reading skill and English language acquisition (Elley, Cutting, Mangubhai, & Hugo, 1996; Freeman, 1992; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Hough, Nurss, & Enright, 1986; Krashen, 1993a; Krashen, 1993b). Many researchers consider fiction superior to nonfiction in its capability of language acquisition because they argue that language is initially learned in a social environment (Fillmore, 1986) similar to the settings found in realistic fiction stories with believable characters (Huck, 1977). Anderson and Roit (1998) believe that, when the goal is second language development,

textual learning is actually superior to verbal learning among ELD students because spoken language is fleeting, while textual language can be reread and reflected upon. Other researchers who have also reported on the various benefits of literature-based instruction among ELD students include Dupuy, 1996; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Huddelson, 1985; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Pilgreen & Krashen, 1993; Raemer, 1996; and Strong, 1996.

Independent/Guided Reading in Non-Fiction

Educators and researchers have often observed that non-fiction (expository) text is more challenging for typical readers than narrative text (generally fiction), especially for ELD students and other at-risk readers. This is true for a variety of reasons. Student readers surveyed by Eng (2002) report that narrative texts are more understandable, easier to focus upon, and elicit more memories. After observing the reading behaviors of students, Philbrick (2002) suggests that elementary level nonfiction is more challenging because it contains technical vocabulary and unfamiliar formats and organizational patterns. Her findings indicate that teaching the students metacognitive reading strategies (predicting, questioning, thinking aloud, and summarizing) improves their comprehension of such texts. As might be expected, nonfiction is not as popular and, therefore, not selected as often for reading by students (Graham, 1988), especially among the female elementary readers (Gali, 1995). The least popular categories include biography, newspapers, magazines, and science (Graham, 1988).

Even though nonfiction seems more difficult for many students, most educators understand that nonfiction reading is of critical importance because it not only provides reading practice but also helps build the knowledge schemata necessary for advancement

to higher levels of reading and understanding (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). O'Kelly's (1999) research demonstrates that, when children's fund of knowledge (schemata) about a particular subject or concept is quite small or non-existent, the reading of nonfiction fills that void much more quickly than fiction related to that same subject or concept. Nonfiction reading helps to develop schemata in such areas as understanding divergent cultures (Glimpse & Ashton, 1992), reducing violence (Banaszak & Banaszak, 1997), learning about insects and arthropods (Dunn, 1990), American history (Briggs, 1994; Farest, Miller, & Fewin, 1995), and social studies perspectives (Suratinah, 1999).

Teachers and researchers have prescribed a variety of creative ways for making nonfiction more palatable for young readers. One effective approach teachers use to instill an appreciation for and desire to read nonfiction among students is to read aloud from nonfiction texts (Dreher, 1999; Medows, 1997; Moss, 1995; Taberski, 2001). Another recommended method (Kelly, Moore & Tuck, 1994) is the use of reciprocal teaching, wherein teachers begin the nonfiction reading lessons by modeling four comprehension strategies – questioning, predicting, summarizing, and clarifying vocabulary and concepts – while leading a discussion of the text (Vacca, et al., 2003). McMackin (1998) suggests using content-related narrative picture books and related nonfiction magazine articles to make upper elementary students initially comfortable with expository text patterns. Israel (2002) advocates using an abbreviated form of the Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) "constructively responsive reading" approach. She recommends that readers learn to employ two shifting strategies – making liberal interpretations and consciously looking for useful information – as a way to improve overall reading comprehension or difficult texts. Perry (2001) finds that students are

more motivated to read nonfiction when the writing is relevant, that is, meeting their real world needs, when they are encouraged to generate questions, make comments, and find connections during the reading, and when the nonfiction instruction includes a variety of shared, guided, and independent reading and writing experiences.

Different students benefit more from different types of nonfiction. For example, ELD students can benefit from reading relevant, Hispanic nonfiction and fiction. Rasmussen (1996) reports that 80% of Mexican-American 6th graders indicate increased levels of self esteem after reading such materials. Listings of helpful elementary grade nonfiction texts can be found in a large number of sources (e. g., Bodart, 1991; Greenlaw, 1978; Zarnowski & Smith, 2000).

Reading in the Basal Reader

After reviewing basal readers, past and present, it seems evident that they are improving in terms of readability, relevance, interest, and format (Cassidy, 1987; McCarthey, et al., 1994). Jacobson (1996) reports that teachers and principals surveyed are satisfied with their basals' literature selection and treatment of reading skills. Other research reports also favor the use of basals but recommend variations from the lessons suggested by the basals (Moser & Perez ,1992). However, basal readers are still considered by many researchers and educators to be less effective than freely selected reading in children's literature trade books (Brown, Blasi, Fu & Altwerger, 1996; Pleta, 1996)

Some see basals and their accompanying teachers' manuals not as merely passively ineffective materials but as a sinister effort by publishers to control the way reading is taught in America. Crawford (1995; 1997), for example, claims that basal

reader publishing houses have encoded their teachers' manuals with a rationalized ideology of reading pedagogy in an effort to subvert the users' concept of reading instruction so that they believe such instruction amounts to nothing more than a faithful application of basal materials. Bloome & Nieto (1989) agree that basal instruction provides a "pervasive context" by which reading instruction methodology is defined, and they also suggest that the basals marginalize some categories of students and do so in ways that make the basals harder for them to comprehend. Shannon (1989) also believes that basal publishers have taken control of the American educational system and goes on to say that the basal are turning teachers into mechanized classroom managers rather than true, critically thinking teachers. Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas (1993) provide data that would seem to support the views of the basal conspiracy theorists. They describe how their survey among elementary teachers demonstrates that, even though teachers claim beliefs in favor of trade literature reading and other independent, student-centered instructional methods, their actual classroom practices reveal a strong dependence on basals and basal-directed methodology.

A wide variety of other arguments have been made against the use of or over-dependence on basals. Many proponents of socio-psycholinguistic instruction find fault with basals primarily because they concentrate on reading skills and not on real reading, and this they feel is ineffective in helping readers make sense of text (Harste, 1989; Otto, 1989). Moss & Newton (2002) are disappointed with typical basal readers because less than 20% of the pages they contain include informational (expository) literature, which they argue is necessary for proper development of reading skill and general knowledge. Durkin (1990) feels that the material she examines does not allow the flexibility teachers

need to provide individual instruction needed by many children. Bottomley, Truscott, Marinak, Henk, and Melnick (1999) find that the impact of literature-based instruction on students' attitudes toward reading is superior to the impact of basal-based instruction. McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, (1995), on the other hand, find that the extent of teachers' reliance on basal readers is not a factor in determining student attitudes toward reading. Smith (1993) contends that historical fiction provides more historical content information than basal readers and provides it in a way that is easier for students to remember. Popular children's author, Jane Thomas Resh (1987) writes about her disappointment when a basal publisher incorporates one of her books but changes and simplifies the language.

Researchers have argued that typical basal syntax is too difficult for many students, resulting in frustration and negative attitudes about reading (Enz, 1987; Owen, 1986), and Lehnert and Johnson (1984) add that the syntax difficulty is not graduated from story to story as the class progresses through the text during the school year. After analyzing basals from three decades, Perry & Sagen (1989) have determined that they are becoming more and more difficult, and they feel that this is becoming an exclusionary factor for at-risk children when all are subjected to instruction from the same text.

Some researchers favor the use of basals but with some qualifications (Cunningham, 1984; Tierney, 1984). Some have cautioned educators and school districts to take a more active role in selecting the best available editions. Tulley (1991) concludes that the only effective selection process is one which allows the teachers to choose which prospective basal would include the materials best suited for their students. Sippola (1994) recommends a specific assessment tool which will allow districts to

evaluate the degree to which basals meet whole-language criteria. Other researchers (Smith & Saltz, 1987) have accepted the basal reading concept as a good one, but only if the teacher is motivated and innovative enough to also use additional materials and methods to meet the unique needs of individual students. Antonacci (1988) also objects to the basals' vocabulary controls and readability formulas, and urges teachers to use outside texts along with their basals.

Despite the fact that the majority of researchers have voiced objections to the excessive use of basal readers, experts agree that most of the reading instruction time in America continues to be devoted to basal-based activities (Educational, 1977; Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, 1988; Muther, 1985).

Some researchers seem to wholeheartedly favor the extensive daily use of basal readers, workbooks, and worksheets. Many of those publishing the most favorable articles have served as editors of basal series or have, in some other way, gained substantial livelihood through basal publications, for example, Cunningham (1984), Farr (1984), Osborn (1984), and Pearson (1984). Others like Beck (1984) have resigned themselves to the assumptions that basals are the medium through which reading is learned in America and that those wishing to improve the state of the art of reading instruction must therefore concentrate on improving these texts. The premise underpinning many of the arguments presented by basal reader apologists is that these texts contribute form and structure for teachers who otherwise may have no comprehensive and systematic game plan for teaching reading in their classrooms, that the texts allow "for comprehensive and systematic instruction" (Shannon, 1989, p. 32).

In truth, because of the way the survey instrument in the current research is organized, much if not most of the time teachers put in other categories, such as group activities and direct instruction, will also include activities prescribed directly from their basal readers. In the instrument, this category, "Independent/guided reading in the basal reader," is intended to include only actual independent reading time in the basal. The purpose of the current research is to assess how much time is spent in different *types* of reading instruction, not to determine the curricular *sources* of those activities. Such a measurement would require a completely different type of instrument.

Reading in Content Area Texts

It is crucial for students to begin reading content area texts in the earliest grades (Shellard, 2001); however, such texts can be particularly challenging for some elementary students (Baumann, 1983; Chall, 1996b; Ciborowski, 1995; Coyne, 1981; Murray, 1990), because they are expository and contain a much higher proportion of unfamiliar, technical words, many of them being multiple-meaning words expressing less familiar meanings (Cregan, 1989). Another major cause for the increased difficulty is that the typical content area textbook uses significantly fewer "tropes" – a technical word for analogies, similes, and metaphors – than are used in trade books (Freeman, 1996). To overcome this challenge, Greenwood (2002) recommends a healthy combination of direct vocabulary instruction and wide reading in the content area. Ediger (2001) encourages teachers to assist students in their understanding of science texts by first making sure they have a working knowledge of difficult vocabulary and concepts before they are asked to read the text. Winters (2001) advocates the use of "vocabulary anchors" for elementary students studying in content areas. Vocabulary anchors are visual aids, for example

pictures pulled from the Internet, to provide a graphic anchor of the concept or word which students will not easily forget. Hittleman (1985) discusses six types of illustrations most often used by elementary content area textbooks and warns that, even with illustrations, if the children do not have the words in their familiar lexicon, they still need to develop the ability to verbalize the information before they will truly understand it.

Many researchers exploring content area instruction have expressed the need for integrated reading and content area instruction. Such pedagogy can be even more helpful when the fiction and nonfiction readings are successfully linked together by the teacher in interactive activites such as Venn diagrams, webbing, activating prior knowledge, etc. (Camp, 2000). Holloway (2002 provides a good summary of nine such reports. Some researchers advise combining content area instruction with fiction reading in related literature (Akerson, 2001). Heubach's quasi-experimental research (1998) indicates that such a combination improves fourth graders' motivation to learn. Ivey (2002) and Taberski (2001) would both like to see literature being used in combination with teachers reading aloud to students from content-related texts and students reading and responding to similar texts independently. Teachers can also use read-alouds as an opportunity to help students begin to distinguish between fact and fiction (Brabham, Boyd, & Edgington, 2000).

A number of problems in content area reading instruction have been reported by researchers. Allington (2002) conveys what is perhaps the biggest complaint among educators concerning content area texts, which is that the reading levels do not match the lower reading levels of the students. He would like to see a multileveled curriculum allowing for more individualized content area reading opportunities. Peacock and

Weedon (2002) express concern over an observed lack of instruction in retrieval strategies. Even students who can comprehend the text have difficulty retrieving information when necessary because they have not been trained to use the indices or to scan for headings or highlighted terms.

Researchers have also recommended some creative ways to overcome the difficulties associated with content area reading. Schneider & Jackson (2000) describe the use in class of "process drama" involving students in dramatic scenes related to the content area, which is particularly effective in bringing social studies reading to life for the students. Goerss (1998), Johnson & Giorgis (2001), and McMackin (1998) all suggest incorporating picture books and other literature into the content area classroom and giving the children time to read them, and each provides a fairly comprehensive list of such books, related to specific content areas. McNeive (1985) finds that having students write brief summaries of social studies text readings is effective in raising comprehension among 6th graders ($\acute{\eta}$ = 0.40) but not effective for fourth graders ($\acute{\eta}$ = .22) to a statistically significant degree. Teachers can also use collaborative strategic reading (CSR) activities, mentioned in the "cooperative grouping" section above, where students can work together to decipher difficult content area text (Vaughn, Klingner, & Bryant, 2001). This, researchers argue, would be particularly useful for ELD students (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). Bukowiecki's research (1999) appears to support the hypothesis that, if elementary students' creativity is unleashed in writing student-directed free-responses pertaining to their reading in social studies, then their comprehension will improve. Avelar La Salle (1991) also reports that specific instruction (given in Spanish) in

metacognitive comprehension strategies improves ELD bilingual student performance in both Spanish and English.

Various researchers have pushed for the use of SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite, and review) reading and study approach to improve comprehension and retention of content area texts among elementary school readers (Bailey, 1979; Curry, 1984; Slade, 1984). Wander (1996) actually measures the quantitative effects in terms of (1) fifth-grader perceptions about their reading/study effectiveness and (2) quality of student questions on a question-generation task required of participating students. Two treatment groups – an SQ3R group and an SQ4R group (using SQ3R plus reflection) – each had statistically significant improvements in both measures, compared to the control group.

Research indicates that beginning teachers do not enter the classroom thoroughly prepared to teach content area reading (Spor & Schneider, 2001). Spor and Schneider (1999) also learn through a survey of teachers – including experienced teachers – that fewer than half of them are familiar with effective content area teaching strategies and even those who are familiar did not often use them. In an earlier study, Grierson (1996), after finding the same dismal lack of awareness of content area reading strategies among early elementary grade teachers, also learns that specific staff development and mentoring designed to alleviate the problem doesn't seem to have a significant effect! Perhaps as a consequence of inadequate instruction due to the teachers' lack of awareness in this area, many Hispanic and Anglo elementary students demonstrate inadequate knowledge and utilization skills to comprehend the structure, organization, and graphical features in their social studies text (Rodero, 1986), and their social studies grades and performance is strongly correlated with their skills at processing the text. Primary

teachers are key players in the battle to improve content area performance because teachers need to prepare their students from the earliest grades in overall reading comprehension. A longitudinal study (Howlett, 1987) demonstrates that general reading ability among first graders has a statistically significant, very high correlation with their performance in content area classes when they are in junior and senior high school ($p = 0.52$).

Completing Assignments in Reading Workbooks/Worksheets

Just as direct instruction is often used to prepare students to pass state-mandated standardized tests, worksheets, workbooks, and other activities recommended by adopted reading textbooks are often used to drill and reinforce the same kinds of prescribed standardized test reading objectives and strategies. Researchers in the late 1970's observe that 70% of reading instruction time is generally spent on skills-based seatwork, usually workbooks or worksheets (Fisher, et al., 1978).

Some researchers have been enthusiastic about the uses of workbooks and worksheets. For example, Jean Osborn (1984), herself the author and editor of a number of workbooks, sees the approach as a valid way to achieve classroom management. When the teacher is busy leading small groups, other students can work on worksheets. Unfortunately, however, many teachers regularly distribute the same worksheets among all their students (Mason & Osborn, 1982). Students with limited reading skills are then just as frustrated with the one-size-fits-all worksheets as they are with other texts they can't understand (Anderson, 1981). Although Osborn recommends careful review and some precautionary guidelines for teachers, in her 1984 article she seems to recommend worksheets as a virtual panacea that can be used to evaluate student learning, for practice,

review and synthesis of material, to teach students to work independently and follow directions, to familiarize students with test formats, to give students a sense of accomplishment, to allow for short homework assignments where parents can see their child's progress, and to add variety to lessons. Yet most researchers unaffiliated with workbook publishers have suggested that real trade book literature offers much more variety (Shannon, 1989). Levary (1990), relying heavily on Osborn's (1984) review of workbooks and worksheets, also advocates their continued use although with Osborn's same reservations.

Most research findings, however, have been very negative concerning any amount of workbook/worksheet usage. Durkin (1984) observes that workbooks include too much unimportant, dull information that sometimes is inaccurate. Decker (1986) suggests that teachers can make reading relevant again and bring back the joy of reading if they will bring in fun trade books and throw out all the skills-based workbooks and worksheets. Two years after her article embracing worksheets with few reservations, even Jean Osborne (1986) labels such worksheets as dull, ineffective, and much overused. Later studies have found that students in elementary grades are almost never expected to read without interruption for more than ten minutes at a time (Cooter, 1999), and when they do read, it is most often from assigned reading materials taken from adopted subject area workbooks, skills-building worksheets, and such (McGee, 1992).

One of the greatest concerns expressed by researchers is that those students who probably need the most help with their reading, and those most likely to already have negative attitudes about reading being boring – the struggling remedial readers – are the very ones most likely to be stuck working on the dull worksheets on a daily basis.

Allington, recent president of the International Reading Association, along with other researchers, found that teachers in five remedial reading classes in four different school districts did almost nothing but giving their students worksheets and workbooks to keep them busy, with limited teacher/student interaction and no real reading (Allington, Stuetzel, Shake, & Lamarche (1986).

Martinez, Libby, Allen and Teale (1991, p. 45) have carefully calculated all of the costs associated with the use of skills worksheets and workbooks, including purchase of curriculum and duplication of worksheets, and have estimated that these skills-based seatwork materials are costing $53.38 per student each year, and that did not even factor in the cost of purchasing basal readers. For a typical fourth grade teacher with 22 students, foregoing the purchasing and duplication of worksheets and other skills-based paperwork would free up about $1,175 per school year that could be used to build up an in-class library of fun and interesting books.

Scores of alternatives have been suggested for use in the classroom instead of ineffective worksheets. Michael Ford (1991) offers a "five-step cure" for teachers addicted to the daily habit of keeping their pupils busy with worksheets. The idea may sound like an attempt at humor because it is reminiscent of the 12-step cure for alcoholism and other forms of addiction. Nevertheless, Ford's recommendation is valid because many teachers truly find it hard to move away from the worksheet habit.

Technology-Based Independent/Guided Reading

Elementary schools are now equipped with computer labs; plus many classrooms contain multiple computers where children can receive 'individualized' instruction. Teachers no longer limit their use of computers merely as diagnostic and remedial tools, but now use them for actual mainstream literacy instruction (Dermody & Speaker, 2002). The increasing use of computers in reading instruction has introduced several new issues into the elementary classroom (Ediger, 1998), including the effects of technology among very young learners (the age category that tends to use computerized reading instruction most often), the selection of appropriate and effective reading instruction software, the safe use of the Internet, and the inevitable changes in classroom environment.

Some school districts have invested in various literacy-enhancement software programs designed to help students – particularly pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade students – to overcome specific gaps in reading and reading readiness capabilities. In fact, much more time is spent on school computers by pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students than by those in higher grades although some research indicates that higher grade levels could benefit significantly. For example, a study of 1,746 fifth graders in Florida finds significant differences in reading achievement among students spending more time on school computers (Bohannon, 1998); however, no cause/effect relationship can be assumed. Ouyang (1993) also reports significant computer-assisted reading gains, more so among upper elementary grades than among primary grades. Ouyang reports reading achievement scores at an impressive 0.495 standard deviations above the norm for students using computer-assisted instruction (CAI). Birch (2002), reporting on the effects of the Delaware Challenge Grant, which places computer

software and technology both in the elementary schools and the students' homes, documents significant improvement in both reading and math scores for second and third graders. Another study of 58 students in grades K-4 reveals that issuing computers for students to borrow and take home results in significant gains in reading achievement (Scott, 1996).

An earlier study, on the other hand, shows that computer-assisted reading instruction is not effective and that basal-based instruction is significantly more effective (Angkurawaranon, 1994). A second study that same year also reveals no significant positive effect of computerized instruction, in terms of overall academic achievement among third to fifth grade students (Woods, 1994). Still, it seems likely that much has changed in the area of technology-based reading instruction since 1994.

Reading Trade-Book Literature on Computers

Through a broad variety of sources, countless thousands of volumes of computerized children's literature are now commercially available to school districts (Carlough, 2000; Matthew, 1995). A single CD ROM can hold hundreds of books, from simple picture books to challenging literary classics. Rather than turn the pages of a printed text, students simply click on a book title from the CD and begin browsing through the pages. There are some benefits to this approach because the CD-ROMS, which are not usually handled by the students, can last much longer than printed texts which must be held in the hands of the children. However, the academic benefits of these computerized books, compared with simply reading from a normal book, are not particularly significant (Carlough, 2000; Matthew, 1995).

Many of the programs presenting computerized trade books are interactive, allowing students to participate and to answer questions about the story as they progress through it. Doty (1999) shows that, for the group of second grade students in her study, this interactivity can lead to significant improvements in comprehension of what the students are reading. Many such books, referred to as 'talking books,' actually interact verbally with the reader (Lewin, 1998). Most of these talking books target earlier grade levels with emergent readers who might not be able to read written questions or prompts (Labbo, 2000; Underwood & Underwood, 1998). A British study (Lewin, 1997), examines the effectiveness of available talking books computer programs and offers an evaluation framework whereby educators and researchers can measure the cognitive and affective benefits of such programs.

Reading trade books online, such as talking books, can be a viable alternative to the continuous use of computer programs which stress very structured tutoring in reading sub-skills (Underwood, 2000). A variety of approaches can be used to get more students involved in this process, even when there are only a few computers in a classroom. For example, many teachers choose to allow small groups (six or fewer) to participate together as they move together through a talking book or some other form of interactive trade book (Eisenwine & Hunt, 2000). Such approaches can also be used effectively among ELD student populations and can prompt more linguistic interactivity (Liaw, 1997).

Reading Non-Trade-Book Materials on Computers

Elementary students, especially those in Pre-kindergarten through first grade, are viewing more and more of what they read on computer screens. Remediation is not the

only useful application for reading software at these early grades. One quasi-experimental study, using primary-grade middle-class students (a category not normally considered at-risk for literacy), measures statistically significant gains for participating students (Stone, 1996). Much of the material viewed in primary grades is intended to promote reading and reading-readiness skills. For example, Reitsma and Wesseling (1998), both university professors in Amsterdam, report success using a computer program they have created to teach kindergarten students letter-blending skills essential in emergent reading. Another new multimedia program improves on-task behavior and motivation among emergent readers learning beginning reading and spelling skills (Van Daal & Reitsma, 2000). A study in Tennessee (Garland, 1995) finds that only female first and second grade students show significant reading gains after using a combination of tutorial (skills drills) and techniques applications (word processing, desktop publishing, cartoon caption writing).

The choice of appropriate and effective software is of paramount importance among districts with limited resources. Ample studies have sought to winnow through the thousands of available software programs to find those that are truly the most effective. Many factors may determine how well the materials are received by the children (Walker & Reynolds, 2000). As fast as the market is changing and developing, any analysis of current software will be obsolete within a few years. The following is a list of some good, fairly current, and seemingly unbiased, scholarly reviews of available software: Blok, Oostdam, Otter & Overmaat, 2002 (reviews 42 studies of CAI programs); Case & Truscott, 1999; Castellani & Jeffs, 2001; Drake, 2001; Hall, Hughes & Filbert, 2000 (provides a fairly comprehensive review of 17 different programs designed for

students with learning disabilities); Hallett, 1999; Kloza, 2000 (includes some suggestions for cost-free software); Miller & Simkins, 2002 (provides web addresses of reading/math instructional software); Reinking, Labbo, & McKenna, 2000; Shakeshaft, Mann, Becker, & Sweeney, 2002 (also provides a good list of organizations which screen elementary instructional software).

Much of the extant commercial software is marketed as a tool for improving reading test scores. One such software program, recently tested using 122 Florida fourth graders, produces measurable test score improvements (Wright, 2002). A hefty portion of the software that would seek to improve reading skills is intended for use specifically by students with reading disabilities (learning disabilities which impact literacy development capabilities). Some CAI software is used to improve the rate of reading with comprehension, when the child's reading disability affects reading speed, and the results have been favorable (Hebert, 2000). Others use speech synthesizers to transform text into verbal speech so that reading disabled learners can find out instantly what a challenging word sounds like (McCullough, 1995). Some researchers recommend computer-guided practice as an intervention method to improve reading fluency among low readers (Mastropieri, Leinart & Scruggs, 1999). Autistic pre-schoolers also benefit from CAI, spending more time on task and learning more words than they do with traditional text reading (Williams, Wright, Callaghan, & Coughlan, 2002). Nicolson, Fawcett and Nicolson (2000) note that an interactive CAI program (RITA) serves as an effective supplement to normal instruction among children at risk of reading failure. Elsewhere, first-graders identified as having reading disabilities or being at risk for reading failure improve dramatically in phonemic awareness, spelling, and word

identification after only 16 weeks using a CAI intervention (Howell, Erickson, Stanger, & Wheaton, 2000). A study of 73 Spanish children reveals that children with dyslexia have more difficulties and make less progress than non-dyslexic poor readers when both categories of students use CAI to improve reading skills such as word recognition (Jimenez, et al., 2003).

There are also some strong indicators that exposure to CAI improves scores longitudinally. Students in an integrated (math/reading) CAI program over three years show promising literacy development (Isernhagen, 1999). Not only do the effects accumulate over lengthy exposure to CAI, but a limited-duration treatment of children with reading problems, using an effective CAI program, can produce effects which are still evident one and two years later (Olson, Wise, Ring & Johnson, 1997).

Various commercial reading software programs have targeted many diverse reading skills. Some are used for measurement (assessment) of reading skills (e. g., Singleton, Thomas & Horne, 2000), but many others are intended to actually teach the skills, and many of these have achieved limited or no success. One CAI intervention in Alabama seeks to improve the elementary students' critical thinking, but does not produce significant results (Campbell, 2000). Another program uses ten to twelve hours of CAI intended to improve phonological awareness among 183 low-achieving first-grade readers, but without any results (Mathes, Torgesen & Aller, 2001).

One area of major concern in border regions, such as the region where this current research is being conducted and in other (primarily urban) regions with predominately Hispanic populations, is the gap between the literacy development of ELD and non-ELD students. Many computer programs have been produced in attempts to offset that

disparity. One such program has proven successful in a California elementary in raising the vocabulary and word familiarity among first grade ELD students (Sanders, 1999). A Florida study using another software program with integrated math/reading instruction (SuccessMaker) also finds a high correlation between the amount of time both ELD and non-ELD students spend on the computer and their reading skills improvement (Perez, 1998). However, a British study of SuccessMaker finds no discernible difference in reading gains between students who use the program and those who don't (Underwood, et al., 1996). Another CAI program, Writing to Read, used in a Hispanic South Texas region (Kingsville) near the location of the current study, produces significant improvements both among ELD students in bilingual classes and those in regular classes (Midobuche, 1996). A later study of Writing to Read shows similarly encouraging gains (Rogier, Owens & Patty, 1999). One older program has been used, with tremendous success, to supplement the literacy and language development of ELD students in elementary schools with ELD populations too small to justify separate bilingual classrooms (Edmunson, 1996). The program produces statistically significant gains at all grade levels but is most effective in grades three and six (effect sizes of 0.4 and 0.5, respectively). More recent studies in South Texas and California measure significant reading improvements among ELD kindergarten and first-grade students with the Waterford Early Reading Program (Alfaro, 1999; Camacho, 2002). Even when ELD students are only using computers to play educational computer games after school, it seems that their need to read instructions as they progress through each game benefits them academically (Mayer, Quilici & Moreno, 1999).

Aside from commercial software designed to enhance reading skills, many teachers are now using the web as a platform for students to practice their reading skills (Kreul, 2001). Students can practice both their reading skills and research skills as they search for information on the Internet although this does not necessarily result in disciplined inquiry (Gibson, 2002). Some researchers believe that web exploration is especially beneficial among ELD's in terms of developing academic skills in English as well as critical reading strategies (Ganderton, 1998; Reinhardt & Isbell, 2002). The Internet-based iREAP program also allows students to develop critical thinking skills and to think from different perspectives (Manzo, Manzo & Albee, 2002). The web can also be used as a platform through which adult tutors can assist struggling elementary readers (Chambers, Abrami, McWhaw, & Therrien, 2001; Kinnucan-Welsch & Arnold, 2000; Meyer, et al., 2002).

Many websites are designed to be used in various forms of literacy development. Some web-sites are specifically oriented to be used in conjunction with a particular children's book (trade literature book), book series, or popular children's story, so that children can learn more about the characters, authors, settings, etc., and can participate in special activities related to the book's content. Lindroth (1996) and Sherman & Ammon (1998) provide good, though now somewhat outdated lists of such sites. Another site, developed by graduate students at George Mason University, is intended for use by children with reading disabilities (Bannan-Ritland, Egerton, Page & Behrmann, 2000). Patterson and Pipkin (2001) describe seven web sites which interact with young learners and can motivate reluctant readers along with three web sites that will send them on "WebQuests" which can improve both their reading and research skills.

Regardless of personal opinions concerning the relative value of reading from the Internet versus reading from 'bona fide' literature, the fact remains that most of the actual reading children and young adults engage in is now done on the web. Many educators are astute enough to use this to their advantage, employing the Internet as a tool to motivate, reward, and challenge young minds. Some are even beginning to structure their reading instruction specifically in order to equip their students with the strategies they will need to navigate and utilize the web (Sutherland-Smith, 2002).

Audiotape-Assisted Reading

The use of audiotapes to accompany the reading process has been used for many decades, especially for reading remediation among students who are reading considerably below grade level and for those who are reading in a language other than their native language. Some research also suggests that this approach helps to develop better listening skills among the general student population (Moody, 1989). Much of what was once accomplished using audiotapes, in terms of vocalization of text, is now being done with various computer-based audio/video programs (Mechling, Gast & Langone, 2002; Mostow & Aist, 1999; Scrase, 1997; Scrase, 1998)

Hickey (1991) reports that, when native English speaking elementary students reading in Irish (Gaelic) listen to audiotapes as they read, it facilitates their comprehension and language pronunciation in the second language. Beers (1998), using a qualitative approach, describes positive comments from upper-grade elementary ELD students concerning the ways audiotaped books had motivated them and taught them to enjoy reading more. Even Stephen Krashen (1995), one of the strongest proponents of independent student-reading for development of literacy skills, especially among ELD

students, agrees that the use of audiotaped materials can promote student interest in the language they are learning.

An experimental study of the effects of audiotape-assisted reading among children with reading difficulties yields mixed results. Conte and Humphreys (1989) find that, while the audiotape-assisted readers show greater gains in oral reading proficiency, the control group students, reading only from basal readers, show higher gains in word-attack skills. They measure no significant differences in the areas of silent reading skill, comprehension, or sight-word recognition. Wheldall (2000), in an experimental study using a larger group of low-readers, all already involved in an intensive literacy intervention program (MULTILIT), reports no improvement in reading skills among students supplementing their intervention with audiotape-assisted reading. Carbo (1981) concludes that audiotapes can be of benefit to slow readers only if the tapes are paced slowly enough that the emergent readers can actually keep up and read along in the text simultaneously with the audio.

When it comes to normal literacy development, one of the most seriously at-risk categories are students from low socio-economic (SES) backgrounds. Nearly 100% of the students in the region where this survey is distributed qualify for free breakfast and lunch at their schools because of low SES. Sudzina and Foreman (1990) use pre-tests / post-tests to demonstrate that low SES first graders using recorded books as a supplement to the regular basal reader program show improvements in vocabulary, comprehension, word-attack skills, and oral reading skills.

Oral English Language Development

Although oral English language development activities are not necessarily directly involved with reading instruction, they are still very important for reading readiness among children, the vast majority of which enter school with little or no English language skills. Through extensive reading in the second language (English in this case), elementary ELD students can greatly improve both English language skills as well as reading skills (Gee, 1999; McCloskey, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The basic methodology of this research study was a teacher survey. The survey sample was chosen using random cluster sampling. Although individual teachers were not randomly selected, the campuses were randomly selected. Data were statistically analyzed using ANOVA comparisons.

Research Design

The research design is quantitative, using the cross-sectional survey method. Survey methodology has long been used to conduct scholarly research (Babbie, 1973; Booth, 1889; Fisher, 1935-1960; Guilford, 1936; Rowntree, 1902; Wright, 1997). Although survey responses are often rather subjective and, therefore, subject to error and inaccuracy, researchers have know for many decades that the resulting data, if collected carefully with a well-devised instrument, are generally valid and reliable (Thurstone, 1929). Likert (1932) has also demonstrated that these subjective measurements can be scaled in such a way that respondents may choose from a along a spectrum of ranked responses, such as "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly disagree." In the current research, the survey allowed respondents to choose from a Likert scale of times (minutes per week) spent in each of the 25 reading instruction methods.

Historically, much survey research has been conducted within the educational community (Bock, 1997; Fleming, 1935; Hull, 1928). Some of the mentioned surveys are conducted through interviews and through telephone contact; however, many are also simply left in the teachers' campus mailboxes or distributed to them at staff meetings without any researcher/respondent contact. This mailbox approach does have disadvantages, primarily in reduced response rates, but it also has advantages. Researchers learned long ago that the insertion of human interviewers into the research process introduces considerable bias, in the form of both biased interviewers as well as biased responses by respondents wishing to make a positive appearance (Friedman, 1942).

In recent decades, teachers have been inundated with research surveys, some by firms representing commercial enterprises, but most by scholarly researchers (for example, Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2001; Middleton & Murray, 1999), and some of these teacher surveys are specifically seeking data concerning reading instruction methodologies used by elementary teachers. However, many of the research surveys are aimed at ascertaining to what extent one particular reading instruction method is being utilized; for example, Masztal and Smith (1984) look specifically at the extent teachers know about and use the informal reading inventory (IRI), Mohler (1993) measures the teachers' use of authentic children's literature, and Rieckhoff (1997) looks specifically at the extent teachers know of and use Durkin's (1981) cognitive psychology model of reading when teaching specific comprehension strategies.

Others studies are geared to measure broader trends of classroom instruction, for example, the general use of whole-language approaches (Dean, 1997; Mahony & Archwamety, 1996), literature-based instructional approaches (Traw, 1998), usage of

adopted basal readers Hoffman, et al., 1998), and constructivist literacy learning (Lenski, Wham, & Griffey, 1998). Still others are aimed at assessing teacher *attitudes toward* (Guimares & Youngman, 1995; Rich & Pressley, 1990) and *knowledge about* (Howe, Grierson & Richmond, 1997; McKinney, Fry & Pruitt, 1997; Spor & Schneider, 1999)) reading instructional methodologies. Some studies have focused on only certain categories of elementary teachers, such as teachers nominated by their administrators as being the most effective (Pressley, Rankin & Yokio, 1996; Rankin-Erickson & Pressley, 2000). Others are limited to only the most popular reading instruction methods (Zalud & Richardson, 1994).

Only one study (Jivaketu, 1996) has been located which targets teachers in ELD classrooms. Jivaketu's research was fairly limited in scope, with a research instrument which focused more on ELD instructional practices than reading instruction. The reading instruction portion of the survey consisted mainly of broad instructional areas such as socio-psycholinguistic instruction and schema-theoretical instruction, rather than having the broad categories broken down into smaller subunits. For example, socio-psycholinguistic instruction can include many smaller categories. In the current research 16 of the 25 individual reading instruction practices fall within the broad category of socio-psycholinguistic reading.

Instrumentation

I prepared a teacher survey (see Appendix A) and field tested it through a pilot study. The survey requests eight teacher-demographic data – 1) School, 2) District, 3) Years of teaching experience, 4) Gender, 5) Educational level, 6) Teacher certification

status, 7) Grade level taught, 8) Class designation whether all-subjects, language arts only, or math/science/social studies only, and 9) Class designation whether specifically designated as regular non-bilingual or bilingual/dual language. The survey then asks respondents to estimate the average amount of minutes their students spend weekly in each of 25 different reading instruction activities.

Pre-test (Pilot)

I first conducted a pre-test survey, including only 13 reading instruction methods, among 250 elementary teachers in the following school districts: Hidalgo, Donna, and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo. Pretest surveys (pilots) are essential to insure the final version is thorough, clearly worded, and that respondents will be willing to participate. Fowler (1984) suggests that all questionnaires should be pre-tested no matter how experienced the researcher. A very high response rate of 85% (212 of 250) was achieved.

Sample Selection

The survey was initially distributed to 481 teachers, with 334 surveys completed and returned. After surveys were returned, I found that 42 had been filled out by persons who either were not regular core classroom teachers (for example, coaches, self-contained special education, etc), or who were upper grade elementary departmentalized teachers with no responsibility for reading instruction (for example, math/science only). Instructions had been left with the school secretaries not to distribute the surveys to these teachers; however, it was not surprising that they received them anyway. These 42

surveys were excluded from consideration among the survey data. The overall response rate was determined using the following formula: (334 – 42) / (481 – 42) = 66.5%

The sample included teachers who are in school districts within Hidalgo County and Cameron County, Texas. In these two counties, both of which are situated along the Rio Grande river separating Texas from Mexico, the combined elementary student population is 95.53% Mexican-American Hispanic (Region One, 2003), with 63.4% of them beginning pre-kindergarten or kindergarten with limited or no English language skills (Region One, 2003). Within Hidalgo and Cameron County, there are approximately 6,195 core teachers, instructing 130,088 students in grades preK-5 at 212 elementary schools. Please see breakdown per county on Table 2 (Region One, 2003).

Table 2

Elementary Campuses/Students in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties

Cameron County			Hidalgo County		
District	Elem.	Students	District	Elem.	Students
Brownsville	32	23,692	Donna	11	6,246
Harlingen	15	7,817	Edc.-Elsa	4	1,908
La Feria	4	1,449	Edinburg	23	12,303
Los Fresnos	6	3,574	Hidalgo	3	1,659
Point Isabel	2	1,269	Idea Acad	1	138
Rio Hondo	2	1,019	La Joya	15	11,574
San Benito	10	5,085	La Villa	1	283
Santa Maria	1	257	McAllen	19	11,873
Santa Rosa	1	543	Mercedes	4	2,341
Valley High	1	281	Mission	11	8,541
	73	44,986	Monte Alto	1	331
			Progreso	2	1,167
			P-SJ-A	25	13,863
			Sharyland	4	3,490
			Vall. View	3	1,452
			Vangrd Ac.	1	119
			Weslaco	10	7,814
				138	85,102

Total Students Per Grade (All Campuses)

Gr.	Cam. Students	Hid. Students
PK	4,991	9,604
K	6,528	12,751
1	6,984	13,109
2	6,709	12,830
3	6,661	12,516
4	6,572	12,377
5	6,541	11,915
Total	44,986	85,102

Randomness of selection is extremely important to insure the sample is representative (Malhotra, 1996). Rather than randomly selecting from among the 6,195 core teachers in the two counties, I, along with two assisting witnesses, randomly selected 20 of the 212 elementary schools and distributed surveys to all of the teachers in the 20 randomly selected schools. Because selection is still completely random, this form of sample selection, known by researchers as cluster sampling (Rossi, Wright & Anderson, 1983), is a frequently used approach for random selection of subjects (Rea, 1992), and is often the only feasible and economic sampling approach (Levy, 1991). This research used what is known as "simple one-stage cluster sampling" (Hansen, Hurwitz & Madow, 1953) because the clusters (schools) were randomly selected, but teachers within each school were not then randomly selected. Instead, *all* assigned core teachers were surveyed at the 20 selected schools.

In some studies, clusters are exactly equal (each containing the same number of subjects), but most cluster sampling studies are measuring clusters of unequal sizes (Kish, 1995), and this inequality tends to reduce the reliability of resulting data unless effective adjustments are made to insure all subjects have an equal likelihood of being randomly selected. This is true because clusters representing 10 subjects would have the same probability of selection as clusters representing 40 subjects, hence each subject would not have the same probability of selection. To overcome the problem of inequality of cluster size, I weighted each school according to its size, more specifically according to the number of assigned students since this has a direct correlation with the number of assigned teachers. For every 100 students assigned, a school's name was added once to the pool for selection. For example, if a school had 113 assigned students, the school's name was

printed and placed into the hopper one time (113 / 100 = Approx. 1). If a school had 1288 students, the school's name was printed and placed in the hopper 13 times (1288 / 100 = Approx. 13). Thus, every teacher in the population had the same probability of selection because all 212 elementary schools had been weighted according to the number of teachers assigned.

Actually it was not the actual campus name that was placed in the hopper, but its code number. Each of the 212 elementary schools were given a code according to its district – for example, the alphabetically first elementary on the Brownsville District list was coded "BR01" and the 25th campus on the Brownsville District list was coded "BR25." In this manner each school name was made equal in size so that I would not have a higher probability of grasping schools and districts with larger names when I randomly selected school names from the hopper.

The code of each campus was printed the corresponding number of times, according to the number of teachers assigned. All printed school codes were then cut up into identically sized pieces of paper and placed into a hopper. I then thoroughly mixed the hopper. I then randomly drew out 20 school names, carefully remixing the hopper between each selection. One large campus (with its code in the hopper nine times) was drawn twice, so the second slip was discarded and an additional code was drawn out. It was estimated that this selection process would yield between 450 and 500 core teachers.

After schools were selected randomly, I approached the district superintendents were for permission to canvas the teachers on selected campuses. After permission was granted, the same procedures for distribution, follow-up, and selection were followed as described in the "Pre-test (Pilot)" section above.

Data Collection Procedures

I used a researcher-authored survey instrument, distributing it to local area elementary teachers, asking them to estimate the average amount of time (minutes per week) their students spend in each of 25 different reading instruction practices. The survey was not intended to measure all of the non-instructional things teachers must do to insure their students receive adequate reading instruction. Many things teachers do in that regard, such as record-keeping, observation, modeling, questioning, lesson preparation, etcetera, were not included in the survey. The survey was intended to measure the time the average *students* actually spent in each reading instructional mode, not the overall time teachers spend preparing for and keeping track of reading instruction. Please see the survey instrument at Appendix A. Answers for each measured reading instruction method were quantitative (number of minutes), allowing for extensive statistical analyses after data were gathered.

After getting the UTPA Institutional Review Board's approval for distributing the survey, I gained approval from the assistant superintendent for elementary curriculum in each of the ten districts where campuses had been randomly selected. Then I contacted the principals of each of the 20 selected campuses to let them know that the superintendent had approved the study and to make sure they also approved, with assurance given that if they did not approve, their campus would be excluded. All of them approved the study. Then I visited each campus, where I first sought to establish a rapport with the front office secretary (whichever one was responsible for making daily announcements). I then either placed the surveys myself into the campus mailboxes of all core teachers, grades K-5, or

asked the secretary to place them into the boxes, or turned them over to the principal for distribution at their next staff meeting, whichever the administrator or contact person preferred. The term "core teachers" was intended to exclude coaches, music teachers, art teachers, pull-out special education teachers, and all other staff not acting as lead teachers in core classrooms.

Inside the envelope containing the survey, I inserted a large candy bar or a few smaller treats such as Hershey's Kisses ™ as a non-monetary reward for participation. Many researchers and marketing experts have explained the efficacy of non-monetary rewards in increasing response levels for surveys, especially mail-box surveys where there is no personal contact with prospective respondents (Denton, Tsai, & Chevrette, 1988; Denton & Tsai, 1991). Surveys were left at the campuses for two weeks.

In addition to the candy, to increase response rates, I also called back weekly and spoke with the campus secretary who does the announcements, asked her/him how many surveys had been turned in, and asked her/him to please make a reminder announcement. Two days before picking up the survey, a third call was made, asking for another reminder announcement. Then, finally, the day the surveys were to be picked up, a fourth and final call was made a couple of hours before the campus was to be visited for survey pick-up, letting teachers know they only had two hours. Reminders are also strongly correlated with increased mailbox response rates (Yammarino, Skinner, & Childers, 1991).

And finally, the clarity of the wording of survey items is crucial, both in terms of response rates as well as the validity of resulting data (Payne, 1951). Even with the incentives, reminders and clear wording, however, it was anticipated that the actual survey would yield a substantially lower response rate than the pilot survey because it was twice

as long as the pilot study survey. The one-page pilot survey had only 13 categories while the two-page actual survey had 25 categories. Plus, there were additional demographic data requested. Mangione (1998) demonstrates that response rates are substantially higher with shorter surveys. However, with incentives and reminders, even a lengthy mailbox survey that is attractive, clearly worded, and professional in appearance can generate response rates around 70% (Dillman, Carpenter, Christensen & Brooks, 1974).

In addition to the survey data collected in the first phase of data collection, campus academic performance data will also be collected when it becomes available, in terms of 2004 TAKS reading scores for third through fifth grade students at campuses where the survey was administered. These data will be correlated to instructional times at each campus at that time. However, these TAKS data were not available soon enough to include these comparisons in this report. Few reading achievement tests are administered in earlier grades, and those districts that do use reading achievement assessment in the earlier grades use a variety of instruments (ITBS, CAT Stanford, etc.), so valid comparisons in early grades would be difficult to make.

None of the research studies mentioned in the "*research design*" section above proceeded beyond the survey phase, to measure student reading achievement data, in an attempt to correlate time spent in specific reading instruction practices with gains in academic achievement. However, authors of other studies have attempted to correlate reading instruction practices with reading achievement and other outcomes. For example, Shin (1999) correlated teachers' reading instruction practices with students' reading growth; however, the study was focused primarily upon students with learning disabilities (65.4% of subjects) and the study only measured specific instructional behaviors, for

example, frequent progress monitoring and instructional modifications indicated due to learning disabilities. Thus, the Shin study was not a comprehensive review of the minutes spent by students in all reading instruction modes but was, instead, a survey of particular teacher monitoring and modification behaviors in response, primarily, to LD student needs.

As in the Shin study, V. H. Williams (2001) sought to correlate reading instruction methodology with student achievement in reading, but found no significant correlation. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered using a computer assisted instructional evaluation program to measure student reading achievement growth. Unlike the proposed study, however, the Williams study used a pre-designed set of "multiple methods" of reading instruction as an experimental intervention rather than measuring ongoing instruction methods using a comprehensive survey scale. S. J. Williams (1987) also correlates student reading achievement with different instructional methodologies, but in this case, it is measuring the achievement of students who get to choose their own mode of instruction versus the achievement of students who have no choice in instructional approach. Over a five-year period, students in the methods preference group showed significantly higher gains in reading achievement.

From the wealth of survey data and research findings available in the area of reading instruction, it may seem that the question of reading instruction methods and their impacts may have already been researched enough; however, it appears that no study to date has comprehensively measured how much time students spend across the broad spectrum of reading activities.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analyzed in an effort to find trends from grade-to-grade, from district-to-district, and from campus-to-campus. Teacher demographics were also analyzed to measure the effect of demographic variables on their instructional methods. Three teacher demographics were analyzed to determine their impact on instruction: years of teaching experience, educational level, and gender. Detailed analysis was also conducted in an effort to compare the instruction times of non-bilingual classroom teachers compared with teachers of classes labeled bilingual.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In addition to a rich body of general knowledge, the research yielded significant findings, in terms of variance among instructional methodologies, in the following four areas: a) Statistically significant variance between regular and bilingual classes, b) Statistically significant variance among grade levels, c) Significant variance among districts at each grade level, and d) Significant variance among campuses at each grade level.

General and Demographic Data Categories

There were a total of six broad instructional categories, each with two or more subcategories, for a total of 25 subcategories. Teachers were asked to estimate the number of minutes each week they spend in each of the subcategories of instruction. The six broad categories and their subcategories were as follows (Acronyms for each broad category and subcategory are the same used in all tables and figures on subsequent pages):

1) Direct Instruction (DI), with the following subcategories

a) DI in phonemic awareness and other decoding skills (DI.PHON)

b) DI in specific sight words (DI.ST.WD)

c) DI in specific non-phonics reading skills (TAKS objectives such as main idea, context clues, author's purpose, fact/opinion, etc.) (DI.SKIL)

d) DI in vocabulary enrichment (DI.VOCAB)

e) DI in literary components/conventions (plot, theme, etc.) (DI.LIT)

2) Reading Aloud (RA)

a) Teacher reading aloud to students (RA.TCHR)

b) Shared reading (aloud with children) (RA.SHARE)

c) Students reading aloud for assessment (miscue analysis, IRI, running record, etc.) (RA.ST4AS)

d) Students reading aloud for practice (round robin) (RA.ROUND)

3) Grouped/Interactive Reading Activities (GR)

a) Paired/peer reading (GR.PAIR)

b) Group activity with three or more students working together (GR.3PLUS)

4) Reading Response Activities (RR)

a) Reading/writing connection (journaling, etc.) (RR.RDWRT)

b) Class discussion of reading material (RR.DISCS)

c) Other response activities (for example, dioramas, skits, music, drawings, field trips, and any other response activity related to readings) (RR.OTHER)

5) Guided Independent Reading (Student read times) (GU)

a) Accelerated reading time (reading AR-testable books) (GU.AR)

b) Non-AR testable, student-selected fiction reading (GU.NONAR)

c) Silent pleasure reading in non-fiction (GU.SILNT)

d) Guided or independent reading in the basal reader (GU.BASAL)

e) Guided or independent reading from content area materials (GU.CNTNT)

f) Work/reading in workbooks or worksheets (Normally for TAKS-prep)

(GU.WRKSH)

6) Other Less Common Reading-Related Activities

a) Technology-based reading (T)

i) Reading trade-book lit. on computers (T.TBCOMP)

ii) Reading non-trade-book materials on computers (T.NTBCOM)

iii) Audiotape-assisted reading (T.TAPES)

b) Additional oral English language development activities not already covered in earlier categories (ORAL.ELD)

c) Miscellaneous reading seatwork not classifiable in any earlier category. (OTHRSEAT)

Instructional Times: All Grade Levels Combined

When all grade levels at all campuses are combined, the following figure displays the overall mean of minutes of reading per week in each broad category for all teachers surveyed. Please note that direct instruction and student reading time (independent and guided) are the two categories where most reading instruction time is spent:

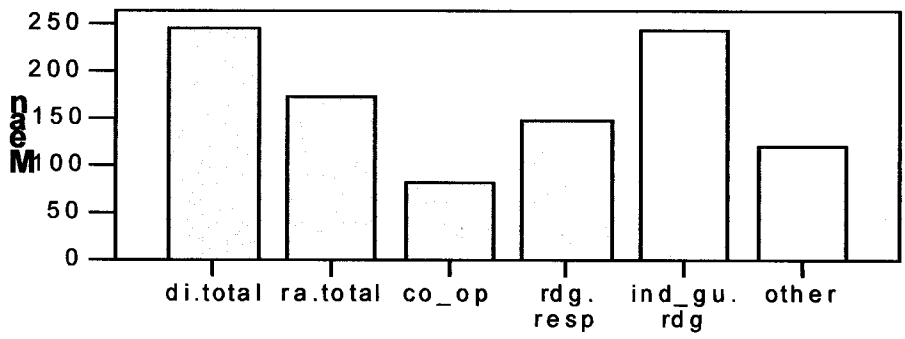

Figure 1. Mean number of minutes per week spent in each of the six broad categories of reading instruction: All grades combined.

Figures two through seven display mean minutes per week, all grades combined, for individual areas of instruction within the broad categories:

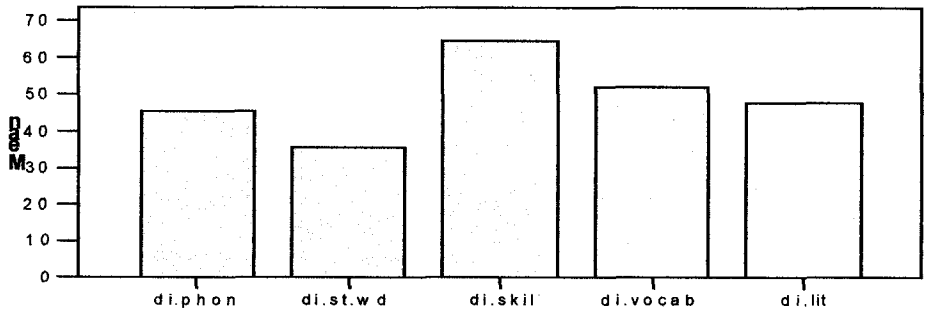

Figure 2. Mean minutes per week, all grades, in five direct instruction categories: phonics, sight words, TAKS skills, vocabulary & literary conventions.

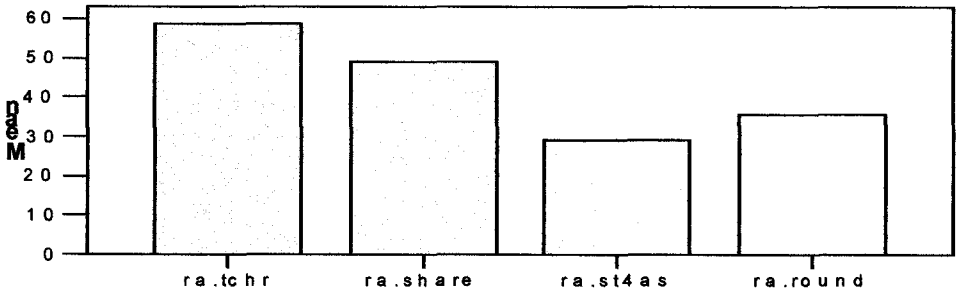

Figure 3. Mean minutes per week, all grades, in four out-loud reading categories: teacher reading to students, shared reading, students reading for assessment, and round-robin student reading.

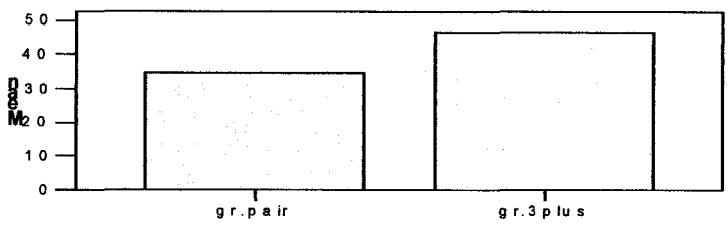

Figure 4. Mean minutes per week, all grades, in two cooperative reading categories: paired reading and group activities with three or more students.

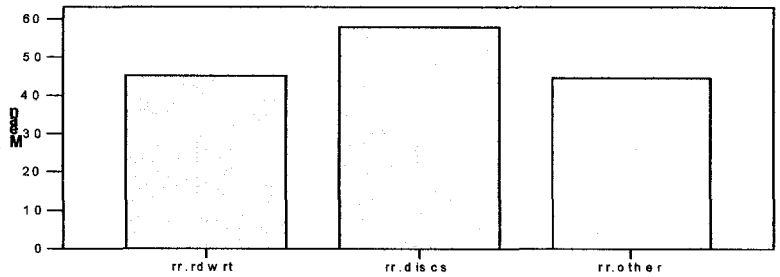

Figure 5. Mean minutes per week, all grades, in three reading response categories: writing about readings, discussion of readings and miscellaneous reading response activities.

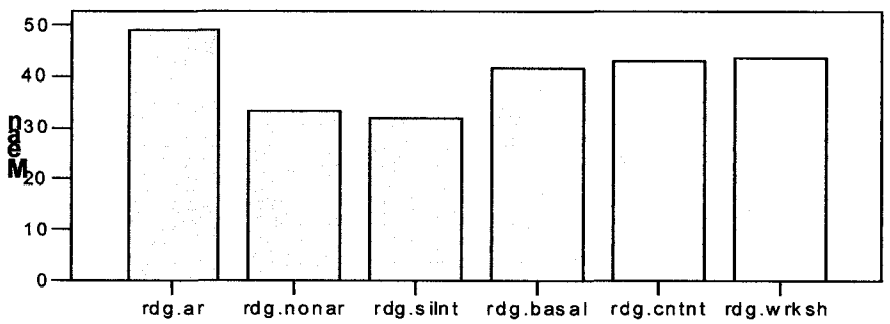

Figure 6. Mean minutes per week, all grades, in six independent and guided student reading categories: Accelerated Reading (AR), non-AR fiction reading, non-fiction, basals, content area texts and worksheets/workbooks.

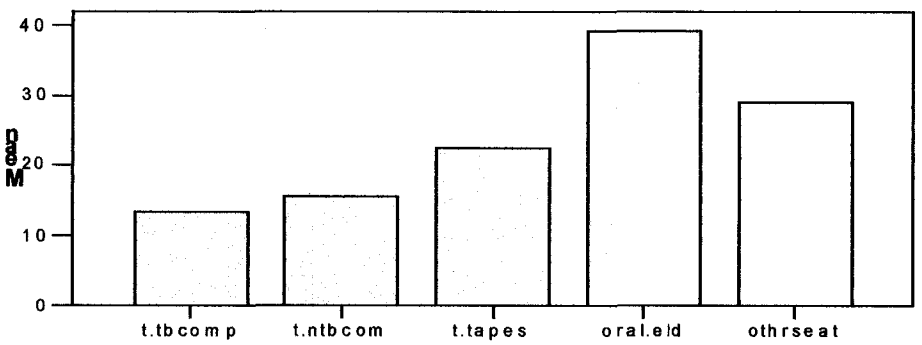

Figure 7. Mean minutes per week, all grades, in five miscellaneous reading categories: reading trade books on computers, reading non-trade book materials on computers, audio-tape assisted reading, oral English language development, and other miscellaneous independent seatwork.

An important indicator of the quality of reading instruction is the ratio of time spent in student-centered instruction compared to teacher-centered instruction. Roughly twice as much time is devoted to student-centered instruction at surveyed campuses:

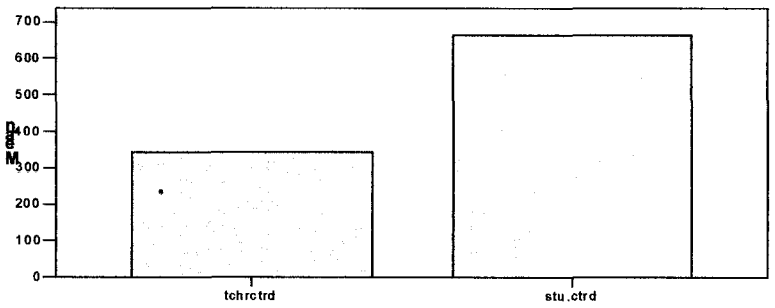

Figure 8. Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Instruction, all grades

Variance in Instruction Times Among Grade Levels

As one would expect, there is significant variance among the seven measured grades levels in terms of reading instruction times. Please note that, in all figures and

other data presentations, the grade-level numbers presented represent the various grades as follows: 1 = Pre-Kindergarten Classes; 2 = Kindergarten; 3 = First Grade; 4 = Second Grade; 5 = Third Grade; 6 = Fourth Grade; 7 = Fifth Grade.

Certain measured campuses have compartmentalized instruction in grades four and five. Participating teachers who identify themselves as teaching only social studies, math, or science were removed from the sample. Only those teaching all subjects, or some combination of subjects including reading instruction, were considered. This affects data collected on certain survey items as will be discussed.

Figures nine through fourteen exhibit the amount of time spent at each individual grade level in each individual type and broad category of instruction:

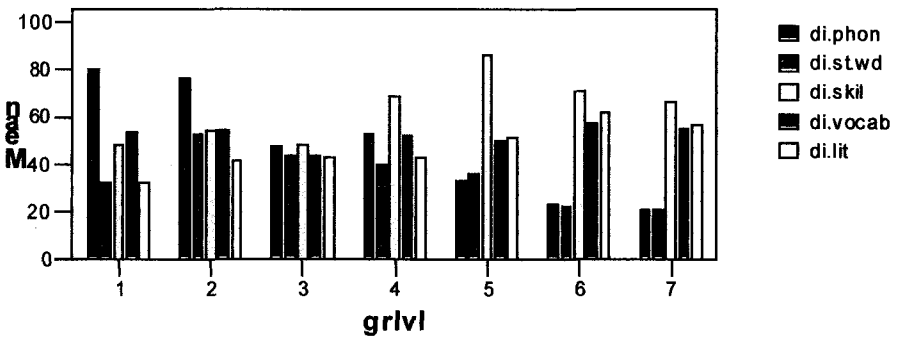

Figure 9. Mean minutes per week, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above), in categories of direct instruction: Phonics, sight words, TAKS skills, vocabulary, literary conventions.

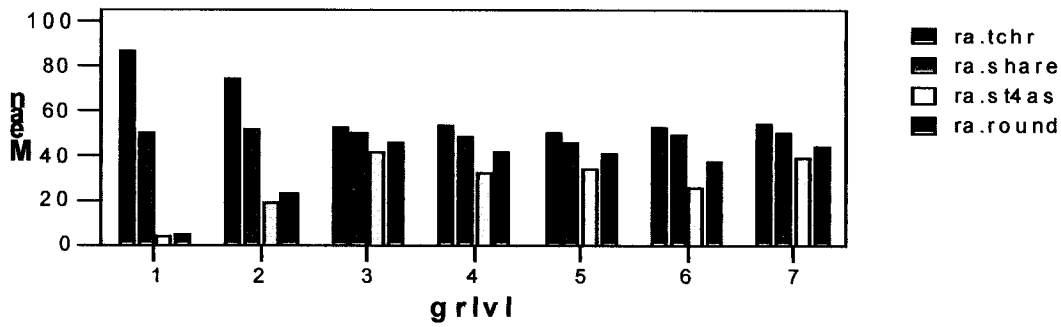

Figure 10. Mean minutes per week, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above), in categories of out-loud reading: Teacher to students, shared, for assessment, round-robin.

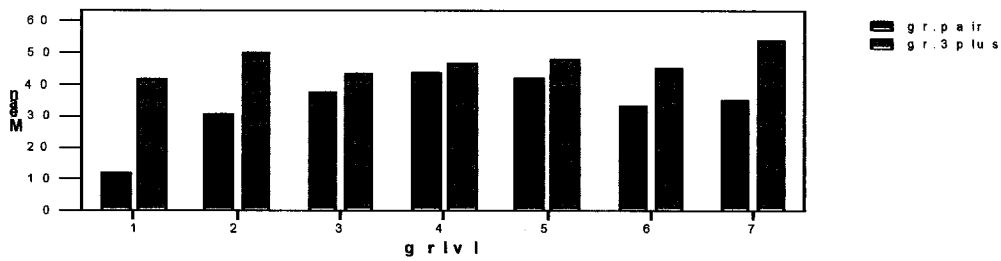

Figure 11. Mean minutes per week, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above), in categories of cooperative reading instruction: paired, groups of three or more.

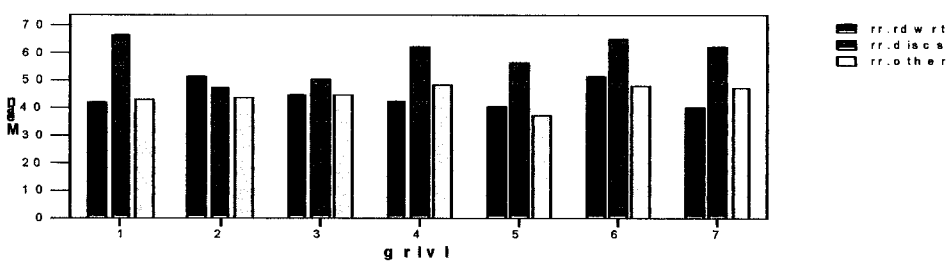

Figure 12. Mean minutes per week, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above), in categories of reading response activity: writing about readings, discussion of readings, other miscellaneous reading response.

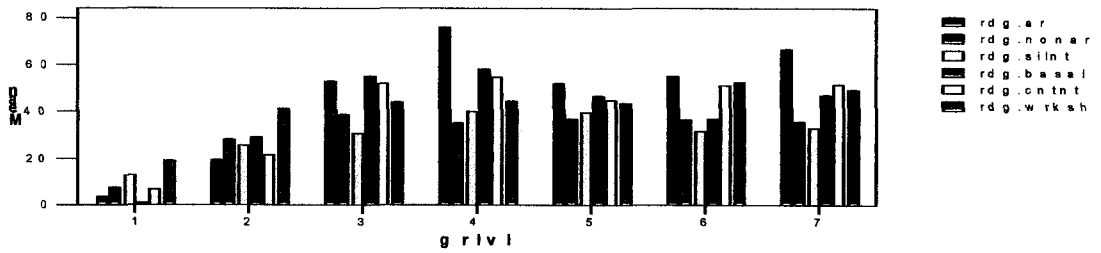

Figure 13. Mean minutes per week, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above), in categories of independent or guided reading time: AR reading, Non-AR, nonfiction, basal, content area texts, worksheets/workbooks.

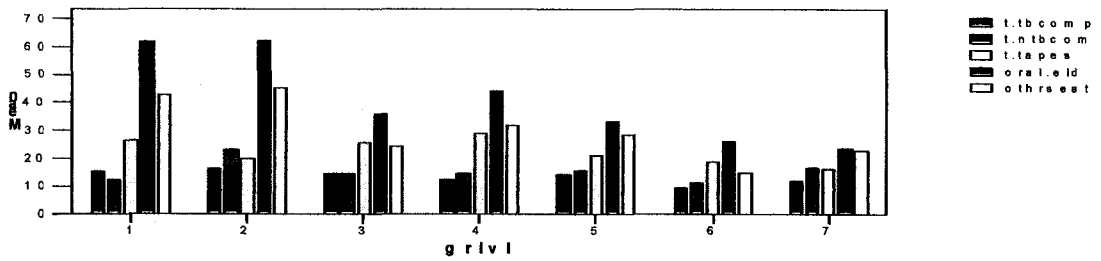

Figure 14. Mean minutes per week, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above), in misc. reading instruction: trade books on computers, non-trade material on computers, audiotape-assisted, oral English language development, misc. seatwork.

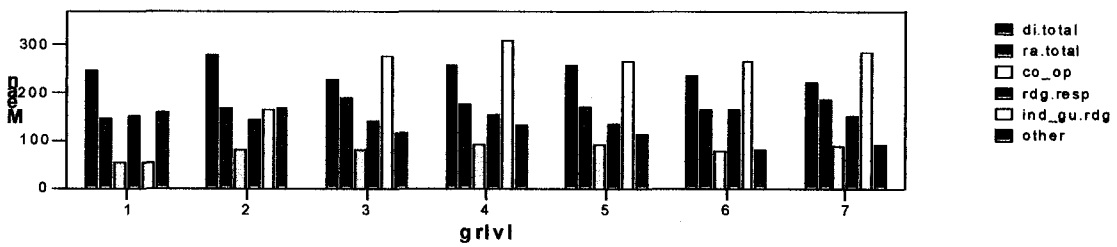

Figure 15. Mean minutes per week, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above), in the six broad categories of reading instruction: direct instruction, reading aloud, cooperative, reading response, independent and guided student reading, miscellaneous.

Other areas of possible interest revealed by grade-to-grade comparisons include total reading instruction time, the average time students are actually reading, and student versus teacher-centered instruction:

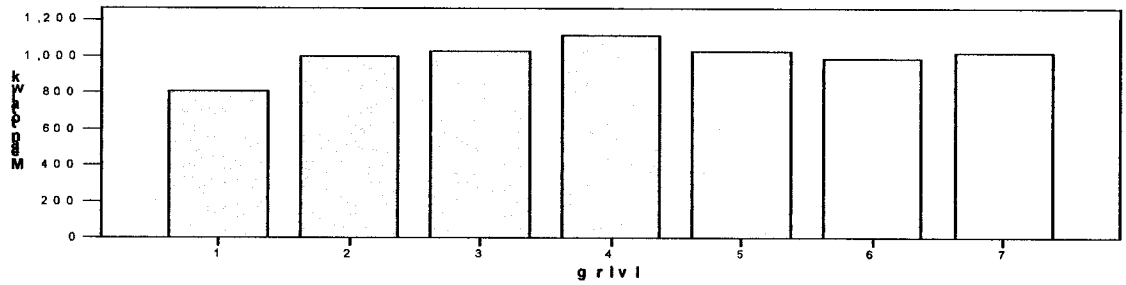

Figure 16. Total mean minutes per week in all categories of reading instruction combined, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above).

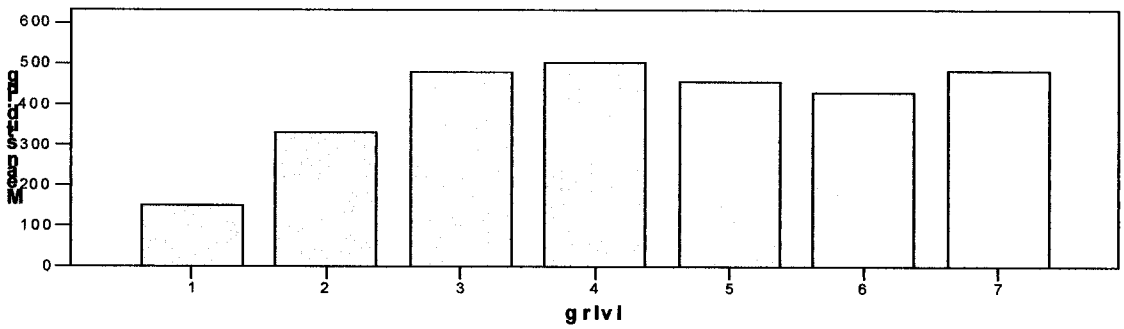

Figure 17. Total mean minutes per week in all categories where students are actively reading, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above).

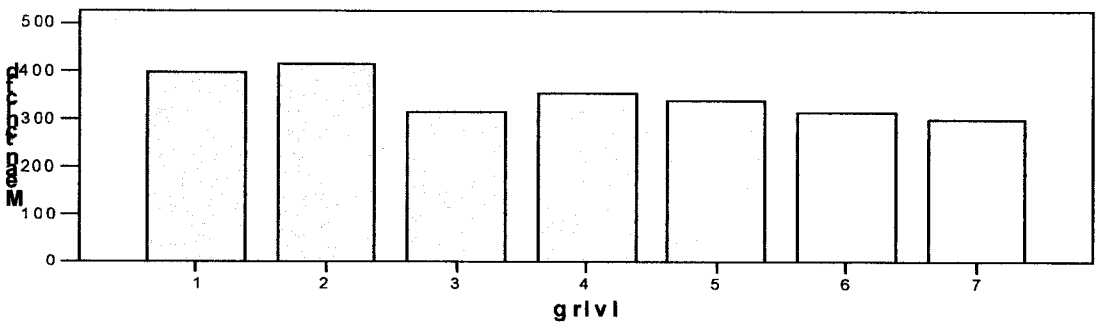

Figure 18. Total mean minutes per week in all categories where instruction is considered teacher-centered, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above).

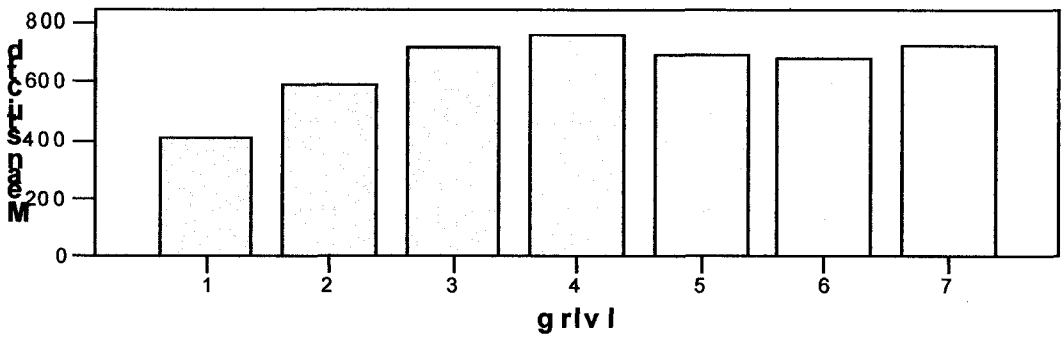

Figure 19. Total mean minutes per week in all categories where instruction is considered student-centered, grades pre-k (1 above) through five (7 above).

Grade-to-grade comparisons have also been made for each individual area of instruction. While there are statistically significant differences among grade levels for many of the individual areas of instruction, the only instructional area with a significant linear relationship for the grade levels was direct instruction in phonics, for which there was an η (eta) coefficient of 0.614. The following table reflects grade-to-grade comparisons for each type of reading instruction:

Table 3

Mean Minutes per Reading Instruction Category at each Grade Level

	Pre-k	Kinder	1	2	3	4	5
Direct Instruction:							
Phonics	80.38	76.14	47.49	52.67	32.77	22.77	20.91
Sight Words	32.58	52.57	43.41	39.60	35.81	22.69	21.18
TAKS Skills	48.15	53.98	48.59	68.88	86.60	71.40	66.82
Vocabulary	53.35	54.69	43.69	52.19	49.72	57.29	55.00
Lit. Conventions	32.54	41.71	42.59	43.09	51.09	61.56	56.82

(Table 3, Continued)

	Pre-k	Kinder	1	2	3	4	5
Reading Aloud:							
Teacher Reads	86.62	74.29	52.67	53.33	49.87	52.71	54.24
Shared Reading	49.88	51.48	49.92	48.19	45.57	48.73	49.73
Student Assess	4.23	19.19	41.73	32.40	33.77	25.69	38.96
Round Robin	4.62	22.71	45.96	41.74	40.34	37.29	44.39
Cooperative:							
Paired	11.92	30.57	37.43	43.60	42.04	33.40	35.21
Three + Students	41.62	50.02	43.45	46.67	48.00	45.15	53.91
Reading Response:							
Written	42.00	51.45	44.71	42.28	40.40	51.29	40.21
Discussion	66.38	47.36	50.27	62.19	56.19	65.13	62.12
Miscellaneous	43.16	43.62	44.73	48.49	37.36	48.21	47.36
Student Reading:							
Accelerated Rdg	3.85	19.31	53.14	76.05	52.15	55.04	66.82
Non-AR Fiction	7.81	28.33	38.94	35.56	37.30	36.60	35.61
Non-Fiction	12.88	25.69	30.96	40.00	39.83	31.94	33.24
Basal Reading	1.04	29.00	55.27	58.16	46.85	37.31	47.24
Content Rdg	6.92	21.50	52.20	54.72	45.13	51.35	51.79
Rdg Worksheets	19.23	41.48	44.14	44.47	43.83	52.33	49.24

(Table 3, Continued)

	Pre-k	Kinder	1	2	3	4	5
Miscellaneous Rdg:							
Tr. Bks on Comp.	15.38	16.24	14.59	12.56	14.15	9.33	12.12
Non-TrBk Comp	12.50	23.17	14.39	14.49	15.70	11.44	16.61
Tape-Assisted	26.27	19.86	25.69	28.93	20.89	18.96	16.21
Oral Eng Dev	61.62	62.12	35.65	44.12	33.13	25.98	23.48
Other Seatwork	42.77	45.19	24.29	31.86	28.72	15.04	22.97

Teacher Demographics Comparisons:

Various items of demographic data were collected from each teacher, including educational level, total years of teaching experience, and gender. The educational levels start off low among pre-K teachers and increase until first, grade, then drop considerably in second grade. Third grade teachers report the highest educational levels with over 20% of surveyed third grade teachers reporting they have advanced degrees. Please note that all teachers surveyed reported at least a Bachelor's Degree. The percentages shown on the following figure indicate what portion of teachers at each grade level reported also completing a Master's degree.

The middle chart shows mean years of teaching experience at each grade level. It seems of interest that the most experienced teachers are teaching in the earliest grades. The final figure shows the percentage of male teachers at each grade levels. Findings of interest here include the complete absence of any male teachers in pre-kindergarten classrooms and the steady increase in the percentage of male teachers in higher grades. The only exception to this increase is fourth grade where the percent of male teachers

drops instead of increasing above third grade percentages. The following figures display teacher demographic data by grade level and by district:

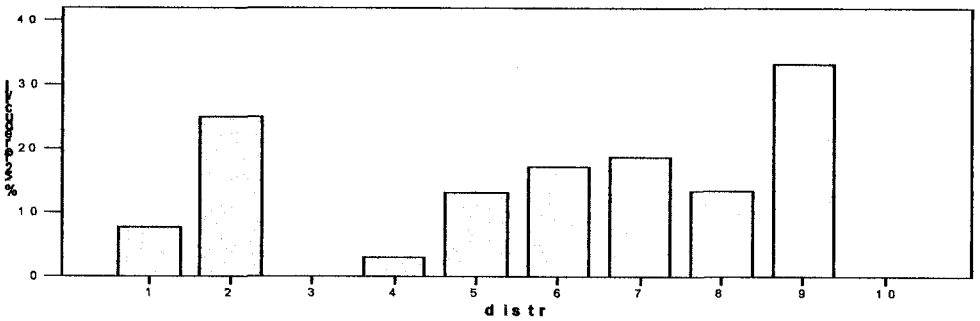

Figure 20. Percentage of participating teachers holding Master's Degrees by District: All grades combined.

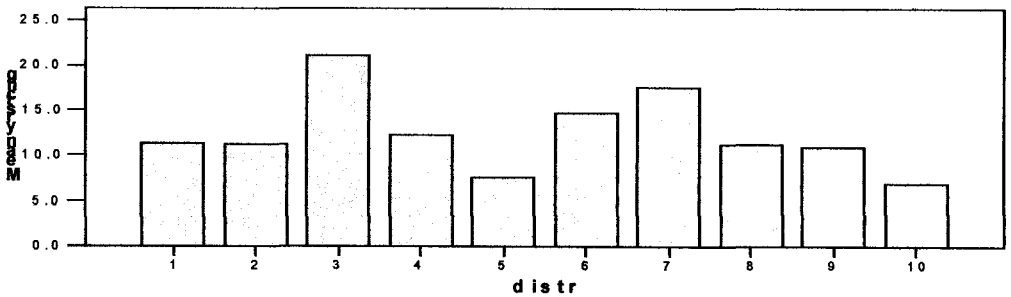

Figure 21. Mean years of teaching experience by District: All grades combined.

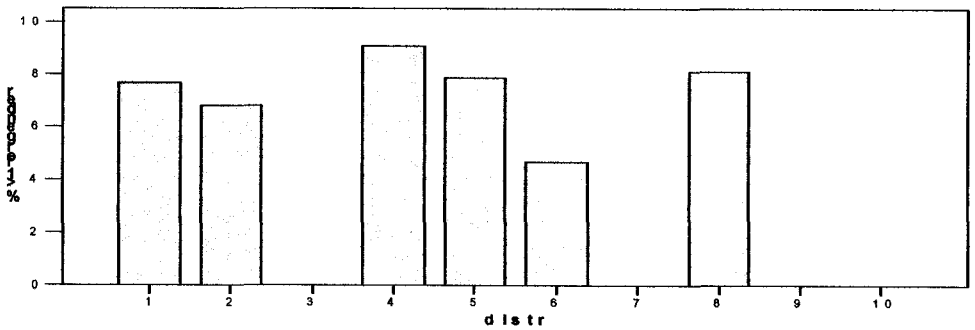

Figure 22. Percentage of male teachers by District: All grades combined.

Variance Between Bilingual and Non-Bilingual Classes

By far the most significant finding in this study was the substantial variance between the amount of time teachers of bilingual-labeled classes are spending in reading instruction compared to the time being spent in non-bilingual classrooms. Specifically, teachers identifying themselves as teaching non-bilingual classes report spending, on average, more minutes every week in reading instruction than do the teachers who identify themselves as instructors of bilingual or dual-language classrooms. For example, first grade non-bilingual teachers spend just over three hours more in reading instruction every week than the bilingual class teachers. These variances are more extreme at certain grade levels, including first grade, a key literacy-acquisition year.

While there are areas of statistically significant variance at each grade level, this analysis will focus on the two grade levels with the most areas of variance – first grade and fifth grade – and will discuss the possible effects of such large variances at these two grade levels. A preliminary look at some of the demographics of bilingual instruction in the region reveals that the district-to-district administration of the bilingual program is far from uniform. Districts may report more uniform figures concerning their percentages of bilingual/dual language classrooms versus regular, non-bilingual classrooms; however, the manner in which the teachers identify themselves in this anonymous survey may say more about the teaching methods they employ than the labels attached to them by their districts. The following figure shows the percentage of core teachers (all grade levels combined) in each district, identifying themselves as teachers of specifically bilingual or dual-language classes. For example, three times as high a percentage of teachers at one district (Dist. 2), compared with another nearby district (Dist. 4), are reporting that they

teach in classes labeled bilingual/dual-language. Please notice that an ANOVA comparison of variance among districts shows statistical significance even at the .000 level:

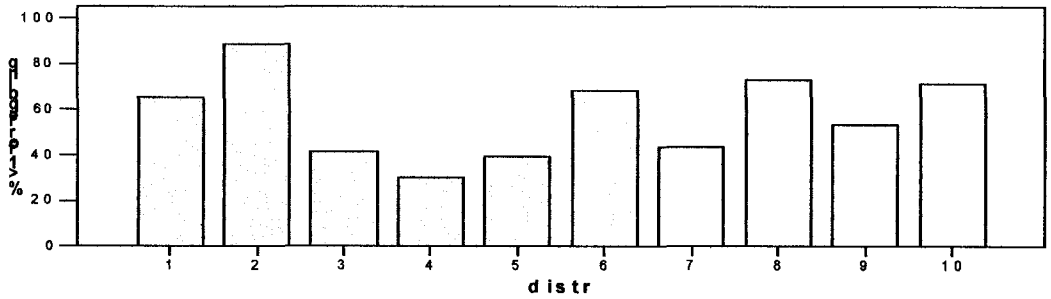

Figure 23. Percentage of participating teachers identifying themselves as teachers of bilingual-labeled classrooms, by District: All grades combined.

As would be expected, the earlier grade levels have higher percentages of bilingual classes to address the needs of the majority of students who enter school with little or no English:

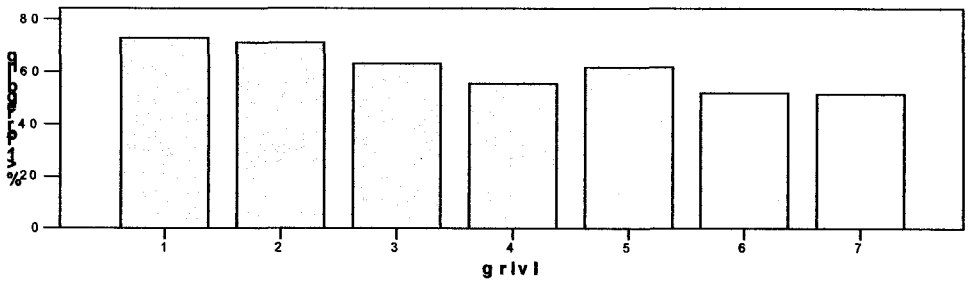

Figure 24. Percentage of participating teachers identifying themselves As teachers of bilingual-labeled classrooms, by grade.

Comparison of First Grade Bilingual Versus Regular Classes

As mentioned previously, there is a very significant difference between regular versus bilingual/dual-language classes in terms of overall reading instruction. An average regular class spends 1,141 minutes receiving various kinds of reading instruction while an average bilingual/dual-language class received only 959 minutes. Certain broad categories of instruction in particular are very significantly lower in bilingual classrooms, for example, first graders in regular classrooms are receiving 45% more direct instruction. This variance is significant at the .001 level; η (eta) coefficient = .447. The following figures display statistically significant areas of variance between regular/bilingual reading instruction times:

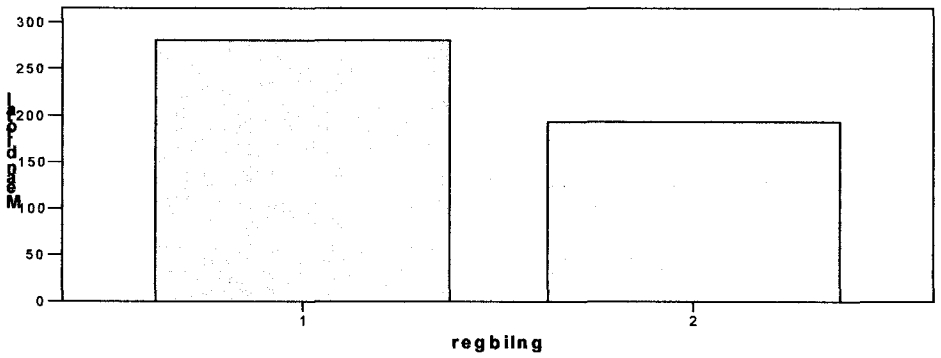

Figure 25. Mean minutes per week of combined categories of direct instruction, grade 1, among Regular students (1 above) versus bilingual students (2 above).

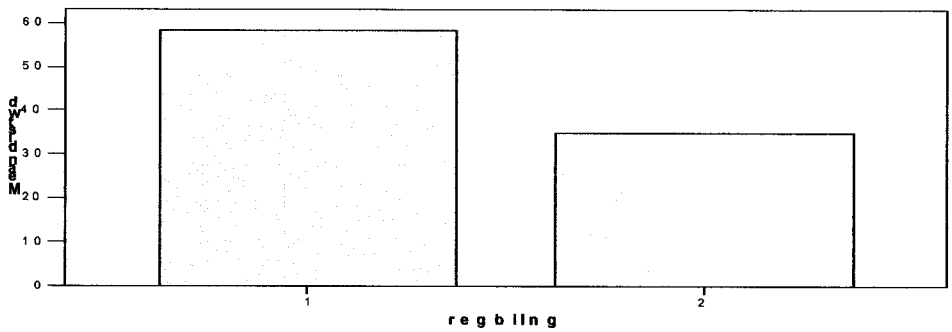

Figure 26. Mean minutes per week of sight word instruction, grade 1, among Regular students (1 above) versus bilingual students (2 above).

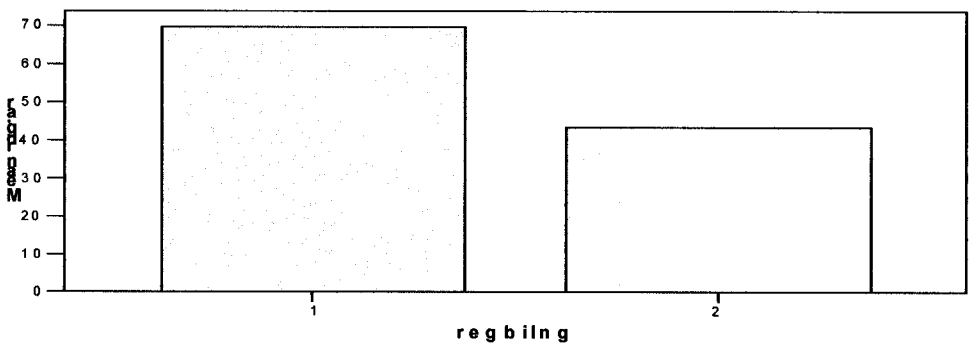

Figure 27. Mean minutes per week of Accelerated Reading time, grade 1, among regular students (1 above) versus bilingual students (2 above).

Table 4 on the following page contains data for all categories of reading instruction with statistically significant variance between means of bilingual classes versus non-bilingual classes:

Table 4

ANOVA Comparison of Bilingual Versus Non-Bilingual Means for Minutes per Week in Selected Categories of Reading Instruction Among Grade One Classes

Instruc. Category	Biling. Mean	Non-Bil Mean	% dif	F value	Signif. Level	η (eta)
Dir Instr Sight Words	34.74	58.33	68	16.937	.000	.515
Dir Instr Vocabulary	37.45	54.44	45	8.355	.006	.389
Dir Instr Lit Conventions	34.42	56.67	65	15.741	.000	.501
Dir Instr All Categories	193.97	280.56	45	11.738	.001	.447
Written Rdg Response	39.71	53.33	34	5.055	.029	.312
Student Accelerated Rdg	43.55	69.67	60	5.126	.028	.314

Comparison of Fifth Grade Bilingual Versus Regular Classes

Like first grade bilingual students, fifth grade bilingual students apparently receive significantly lower amounts of key reading instruction. The only exception to this trend is in the area of sight word instruction – a form of instruction normally used extensively in the primary grades only, in an effort to prepare beginning readers for the academic rigors of later grades, including the increasingly difficult content area texts they will be expected to read with automaticity and comprehension. However, for bilingual classes in this study, much of this sight word instruction is apparently being delayed until fifth grade. Please note on the previous page that time spent in first grade sight word instruction is 68% greater for the regular students than for the bilingual students. By the time the bilingual students reach fifth grade, they are finally receiving this essential instruction – more than two-and-one-half times as much of it as the non-bilingual fifth

graders are receiving. The following figure displays sight word data reported by fifth grade teachers:

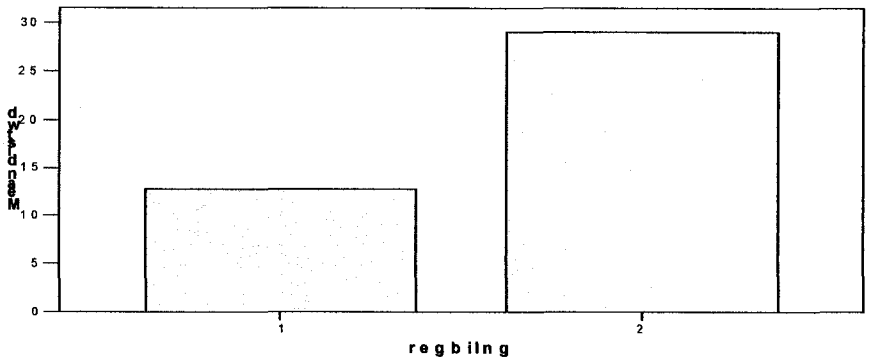

Figure 28. Mean minutes per week of direct sight word instruction, grade 5, among regular students (1 above) versus bilingual students (2 above).

Aside from sight word instruction, however, fifth grade students appear to receive substantially fewer hours of reading instruction each week. Table 5 on the following page contains examples of statistically significant areas where fifth graders in bilingual classes receive less instruction than students in regular, non-bilingual classes. The final row displays the data for all 25 categories of reading except for sight word direct instruction:

Table 5

ANOVA Comparison of Bilingual Versus Non-Bilingual Means for Minutes per Week in Selected Categories of Reading Instruction Among Grade Five Classes

Instruc. Category	Biling. Mean	Non-Bil Mean	% dif	F value	Signif. Level	η (eta)
Dir Instr in Rdg Skills	56.18	78.13	39	4.767	.037	.365
Dir Instr in Vocabulary	42.06	68.75	64	9.135	.005	.477
Shared Reading	40.65	59.38	46	4.404	.044	.353
Round Robin Reading	32.06	57.50	79	6.549	.016	.418
Discussion Rdg Response	51.18	73.75	44	7.037	.012	.430
Misc. Reading Response	34.88	60.62	74	8.711	.006	.468
Accelerated Reading	43.82	91.25	108	6.640	.015	.420
Content Area Text Rdg	42.06	62.12	48	4.858	.035	.368
All Cat. of Rdg Aloud	153.88	222.81	45	4.683	.038	.362
All Cat of Rdg Resp.	126.94	173.88	37	6.331	.017	.412
Indep. Stud. Rdg Time	389.35	578.25	49	9.227	.005	.479
(Total Instr)–(St Wrds)	844.53	1167.25	38	8.574	.006	.465

All other grade levels, not just first and fifth, showed remarkably lower reading instruction times for bilingual classes than for the regular classes in various categories of instruction; however, the first and fifth grade variances were the most extreme, so this presentation of data has focused on these two grades.

Evidence of Teaching to Accommodate High-Stakes Testing

Another finding from the surveys is that many teachers seem to be teaching specifically to accommodate the TAKS testing that takes place at their grade level. For example, third grade teachers spend considerably more time teaching TAKS reading objectives, most likely in an effort to prepare the students for the TAKS reading test, which is first administered at that grade level. Fourth grade teachers, on the other hand, are devoting significantly more time to written responses to readings than do the third or fifth grade teachers surveyed, with the ANOVA mean comparison significant at the .026 level. This probably stems from the fact that fourth graders are the only elementary students to take the TAKS writing exam. The following figures depict these data:

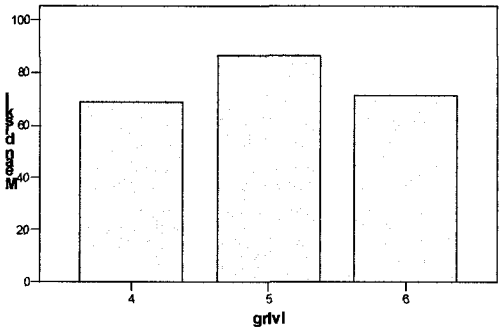

Figure 29. Mean minutes per week of TAKS skills instruction, grades 2-4.

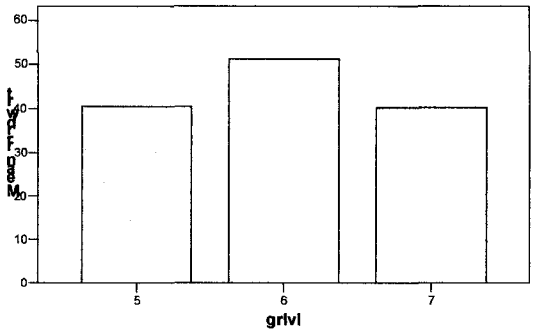

Figure 30. Mean minutes per week of written reading response, grades 3-5.

Of course, to make time for the additional TAKS preparatory instruction at the third grade level, other areas of reading instruction must necessarily be diminished. For example, the category encompassing all types of reading response except discussion and written response was significantly lower among third graders than for second and fourth

graders (ANOVA mean comparisons significant at the .025 level). This category contains some of the most creative and motivational reading response activities including drama, art, field trips, dioramas, and other engaging activities which are likely to leave lasting impressions on the children concerning the joy and adventure of reading. The figure below shows the disparity between the time spent in this category of instruction at the three grade levels:

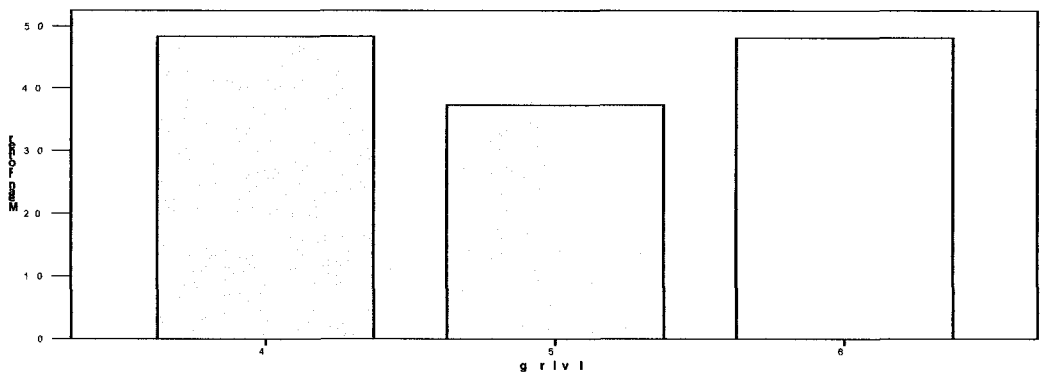

Figure 31. Mean minutes per week of miscellaneous reading response activities, grades 2-4.

According to survey responses, the area of independent, student centered reading activity where significantly more time is spent than any other actual reading time is the category called accelerated reading, where students read book (both fiction and non-fiction), then take computerized quizzes to insure completion and basic comprehension. Because of the comparatively large amounts of time spent in this type of reading, it is an important contributor to the average students overall reading time each week. Unfortunately, however, a comparison of second through fifth grade accelerated reading time shows that, in the two key testing preparatory years – third grade, where the first

reading TAKS is taken and fourth grade where the only elementary writing TAKS is taken – the level of accelerated reading is significantly lower (ANOVA mean comparison significant at the .033 level). The following figure of grades two through five clearly reveals this disparity:

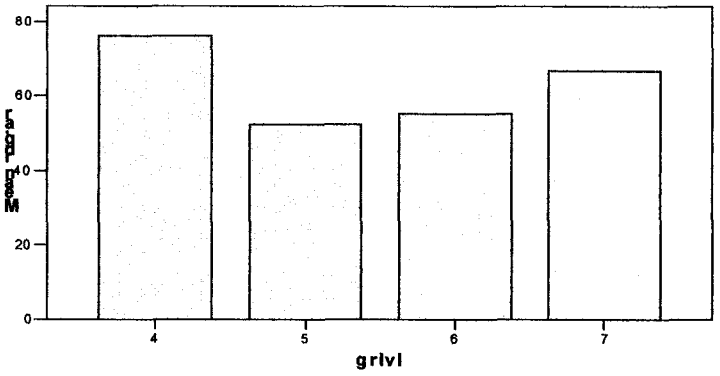

Figure 32. Mean minutes per week of independent Accelerated reading time, grades 2-5.

It would appear that there is a significantly variant degree of emphasis on TAKS preparatory instruction methods from district to district. For example, teachers in one district are spending nearly ten times as many minutes every week, on the average, teaching TAKS objectives in the third grade as do their counterparts in another district. The same kinds of variance can be seen for the use of written reading responses at the fourth grade levels. The following figures depict these data concerning instruction minutes per week:

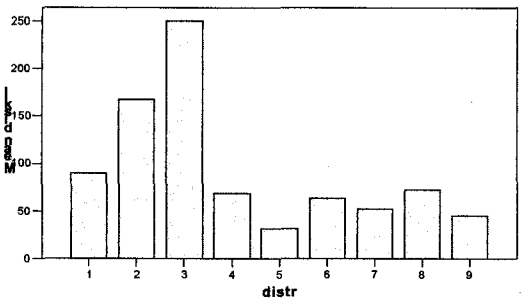

Figure 33. Mean minutes/week of TAKS skills instruction, grade 3, by district.

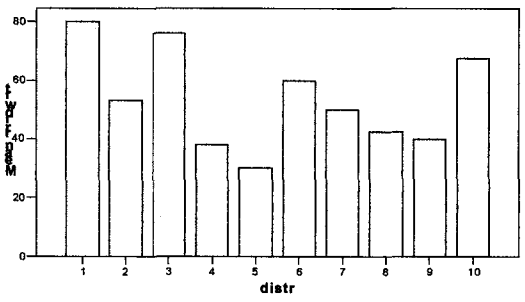

Figure 34. Mean minutes/week of written reading response, grade 4, by district.

Variance among Instruction Times by Demographic Teacher Variables

Aside from the types of classes taught, and the campuses, and districts of assignment, the following three additional demographic data were collected for each teacher:

1) Years of teaching experience
2) Educational level (Bachelor's versus Master's degrees)
3) Gender

Findings Related to Years of Teaching Experience

In order to analyze variances in instructional methodology among teachers with different amounts of teaching experience, it is necessary to analyze the data at each grade level because different instructional methodologies are more appropriate and common at different grade levels.

Pre-kindergarten. In the pre-kindergarten level, two instructional methodologies are much more common and are used in larger amounts than at the higher grades. These two methods of instruction are the use of computers and additional oral English language development activities. Computers are used more among these youngsters specifically for reading instruction because a variety of software programs have been purchased by the districts to enhance reading readiness, phonological awareness, sight-word recognition, etc. Many of the programs function like games and can be quite popular among the children. Oral English language development is more common at this level because this is their entry year and the majority have little or no English language ability – a key component in English reading readiness.

The data show that teachers with more years of teaching experience allow their students fewer minutes each week to use computers than their less experienced counterparts allow. On the variable of reading trade books (fiction picture books at this level) via computer, ANOVA mean comparison yields variance which is significant at the .015 level, and correlation yields a Pearson's η of -.330. This is negative, of course, because as years of experience increases, use of instruction time in this area decreases. Likewise, on the variable of reading non-trade book materials (for example, software phonics games) via computer, ANOVA mean comparison yields variance which is significant at the .042 level, and correlation yields a Pearson's η of -.408.

There was an even more significant variance in the amounts of time devoted to additional oral English language development according to years of teaching experience. ANOVA mean comparison shows that the variance here is significant at the .004 level. However, with a Pearson's η value of only -.187, the linear correlation between this

variance and the number of years of experience is not as distinct. In this grade level where such instruction might logically be expected to dominate classroom activities, it is important to understand what factors contribute to the time spent in this area. Other variables may be affecting the variance or the relationship; however, other teacher demographic variables appear to produce very little variance. Even the variable of bilingual classes versus non bilingual only shows variance significant at the .219 level. It would appear more likely that there is some non-linear relationship between years of teaching experience and additional oral English language instruction. Additional research is recommended to further explore this area.

Kindergarten. A large number of instructional methods, compared with years of teaching experience, yield statistically significant variance. Time spent in direct instruction in phonics has always been a major bone of contention among literacy experts, and lately even among political figures. It would appear from the data that more experienced teachers use substantially more direct phonics instruction: ANOVA significant at the .004 level, Pearson's η value of .319. This is a variance of great significance because kindergarten is considered the pivotal year for mastery of phonemic awareness skills. In fact, all forms of direct reading instruction may be less in vogue among newer kindergarten teachers. For example, direct instruction in guided reading skills and direct instruction in non-phonic reading skills are also significantly higher for more experienced teachers (ANOVA sig. at .011 and .032 levels respectively).

Another instructional method used in larger amounts by more experienced kindergarten teachers is out-loud reading by the teacher for the students (ANOVA sig. at the .001 level). However the correlation is not entirely linear because the Pearson's η

value is only .167, which would explain only around 3% of the variance in a linear relationship.

Perhaps the most significant variance occurs in the broad category of reading response. More experienced kindergarten teachers allow significantly more time for both of the most common forms of reading response (*Written* – significant at the .011 level, Pearson's $\eta = .225$; and *Discussion* – significant at the .002 level, Pearson's $\eta = .253$). The overall category of reading response, including all three subcategories is significant at the .013 level with a Pearson's η value of .244. And the overall time spent in reading, including all 25 methods of reading instruction shows variance at the .034 with a Pearson's η value of .186, indicating that kindergarten teachers with more years of experience spend significantly more time teaching reading than teachers with less experience.

First grade. There are not as many areas of statistically significant variance among first grade teachers as there are in kindergarten. All four areas showing statistically significant variance revealed negative r values, indicating that the more experienced teachers used those methods less. The four areas are direct instruction in phonics (ANOVA sig. at .018), round robin reading practice (ANOVA sig. at .029), independent reading time from the basal reader (ANOVA sig. at .000), and total independent reading time (including all six subcategories of independent reading) (ANOVA sig. at .032). The Pearson's η values do not support linear relationships between years of teaching experience and the instructional variables with the exception of overall independent reading (r = negative .304), indicating that more experienced first grade teachers are not allowing as much time for the students to read on their own.

Second grade. Second grade teachers' surveys reveal only one area of variance – written reading response time (ANOVA sig. at .010; $\eta = .265$, indicating that more experienced teachers allow significantly more time for written response activities). There is also a significant variance when all three types of reading response activities are combined, but this variance disappears when written response is removed.

Third and fourth grade. No significant variance is measured.

Fifth grade. Data reported by fifth grade teachers reveal significant variance in several instructional categories: Direct instruction in vocabulary (ANOVA sig. at .004, $\eta = .227$); shared reading (ANOVA sig. at .036, $\eta = .184$); students reading aloud for assessment (ANOVA sig. at .046, $\eta = .006$); accelerated reading (ANOVA sig. at .017, r = negative .213, indicating more experienced teacher spend less time doing this); and total out-loud reading (teacher and students) (ANOVA sig. at .029, $\eta = .055$). The only two areas of variance with effect sizes worthy of notice are vocabulary instruction (.052) and accelerated reading (.045).

Years of Teaching Experience by District and Campus. There is a very high variance among districts in terms of the mean years of teaching experience reported by their teachers (ANOVA sig. at .000); however, because districts were arbitrarily assigned identification numbers for the purposes of this study, there is, of course, no linear relationship between district identification numbers and years of experience. There is also noticeable variance in teaching experience among campuses, but the variance is not statistically significant. The following figure reveals the variance that exists among districts:

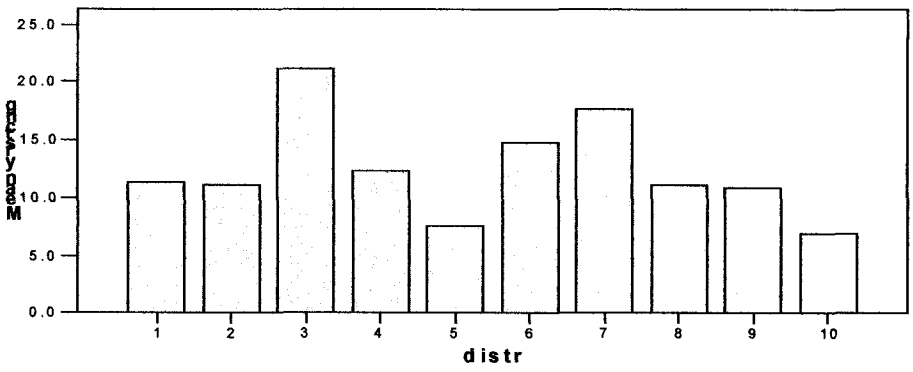

Figure 35. Mean years of teaching experience of participants by district.

Findings Related to Teachers' Educational Level

Although the survey gives teachers the opportunity to choose from among three levels of education (Master's, Bachelor's, and less than Bachelor's), all completed surveys indicate either Master's or Bachelor's degree educations. The following are findings for comparisons of educational levels against instructional methodologies at each grade level:

Pre-kindergarten. Teachers with Master's degrees at this grade level spent more time in the following four areas and less time in no areas of reading instruction:

Direct instruction in sight words	significant at .046; $\eta = .395$
Reading aloud for assessment	significant at .032; $\eta = .421$
Paired reading activities	significant at .001; $\eta = .604$
Content area reading	significant at .023; $\eta = .445$

Direct instruction in sight words is an important area of instruction among pre-kindergarten students, especially during the second half of the school year. Perhaps this variance is an indicator that pre-kindergarten teachers with higher educations are

exhibiting higher expectations for their students. Having students reading aloud for the teacher to assess any developmental difficulties is another area of high expectation for children this young, but not an area that should be avoided by the second half of the pre-K year if students are progressing rapidly in literacy skills. In similar fashion, the better educated teachers appear to be falling more in line with the finding in the literature cited earlier – that very young children can begin sharing their reading experiences in pairs even before they are actively reading. Even if emergent readers are simply looking at picture books together, the paired reading experience is important, especially in creating a positive attitude toward reading. The final area of variance, content area reading, would seem beyond the grasp of these four and five year olds; however, pre-kindergarten teachers, interviewed after the survey, indicate that the time spent here is an indication of a literature-rich environment with the students handling and looking through and some even beginning to read from a variety of picture books in the content areas including nature books (science), counting books (math), and historical, biographical, as well as behavioral books (social studies) being perused daily.

Kindergarten. Less variance is observed in this grade level, with only one instructional area showing statistically significant variance (non-AR fiction reading; significant at the .035 level), and the effect size is negligible.

First grade. In this grade level, there is only one statistically significant variance in the area of students reading aloud for assessment (ANOVA significant at the .032 level; $\eta = -.307$). Here, with formal testing data and other forms of written assessment available and practicable by students at this grade level, the more educated teachers are

actually relying less on oral reading for assessment although they are still using it to a substantial degree.

Second grade. Second grade teachers with Master's degrees report using two methods of instruction significantly more than their less educated counterparts. Statistically significant variance is found in the following two areas: Direct instruction in phonics, with ANOVA comparison significant at the .000 level and an η value of .536. Two Master's-degreed teachers interviewed after the survey indicate they spend more time teaching phonics because they find many of their students still have not been completely grounded in phonemic awareness skills, and they need to insure they do not proceed into higher grades without this essential scaffolding. They also use significantly more paired reading – ANOVA comparison significant at the .002 level with an η value of .460.

Third grade. Third grade teachers with higher degrees report using less class time for student discussion response (ANOVA significant at the .007 level with an η value of -.388). One third-grade teacher interviewed after the survey suggests that the children need to spend more time receiving direct instruction in reading skills to prepare them for their first reading TAKS test, which may explain the reduced reading discussion time.

Fourth grade. Fourth grade teachers with higher degrees report allowing more time for students to read trade books (fiction), both in hard copy as well as on computers. Non-AR fiction reading ANOVA variance is significant at the .028 level, with an η value of .304. ANOVA variance for reading trade books on computers is also significant at the .030 level, with an η value of .301.

Fifth grade. Fifth grade teachers with higher educations, conversely, report spending less time in two areas, including one of the very areas where the fourth grade Master's-degreed teachers spend more time, and both of the areas involve independent, student-centered reading practice time. Non-AR fiction reading ANOVA variance is significant at the .017 level, with an r value of -.414. Content area text reading time ANOVA variance is significant at the .035 level, with an r value of -.369. The second statistic is not really remarkable in view of the fact that many of the fifth grade classes are compartmentalized, teaching only language arts or math and science or social studies separately. Surveys from respondents who did not have any responsibility for teaching language arts are excluded and are not included in these data.

Education levels by district and campus. Considerable variance exists between both districts and campuses in terms of the educational levels of participating teachers. No causality can be assumed; however, higher educated teachers do seem to be concentrated in the districts with higher teacher salary scales. The following figures show the assignment percentages of Master's degreed participating teachers by district and by campus:

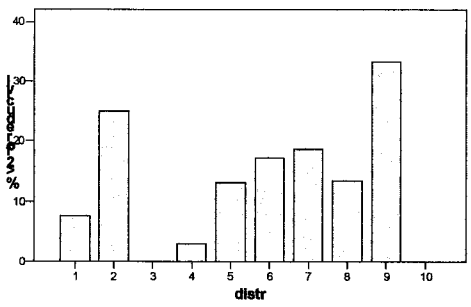

Figure 36. Mean percentage of Master's degreed teacher-participants, by district.

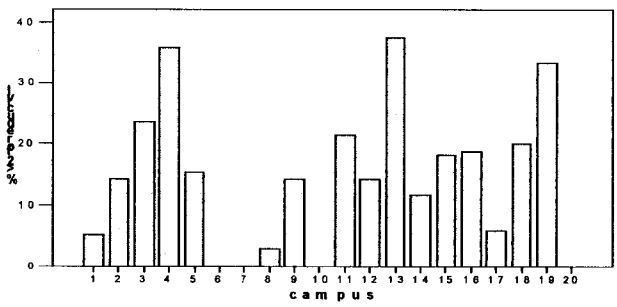

Figure 37. Mean percentage of Master's degreed teacher-participants, by campus.

Findings Related to Teachers' Genders

It was hypothesized that the teachers' genders would have an impact on their modes of instruction because in the pilot survey, one of the districts used extensively was a small district on the border with Mexico which had a relatively high percentage of male elementary teachers, and their modes of teaching showed some variance from the female instructional methods in the pilot study. However, none of the randomly selected campuses in the final study are from that same district, and no statistically significant variance is measured between the teaching methods of male versus female teachers. The only finding of any interest related to teacher gender is the fact that male teachers are not commonly teaching the earliest primary grades, either because they prefer the higher grades or because the administrators placing new teachers prefer to have them in the higher grades. No causality for this trend can be assumed. See the following figure presenting the by-grade percentages of male teachers responding to the survey (this figure and related discussion are also found at pages 111-112 under grade-to-grade comparisons):

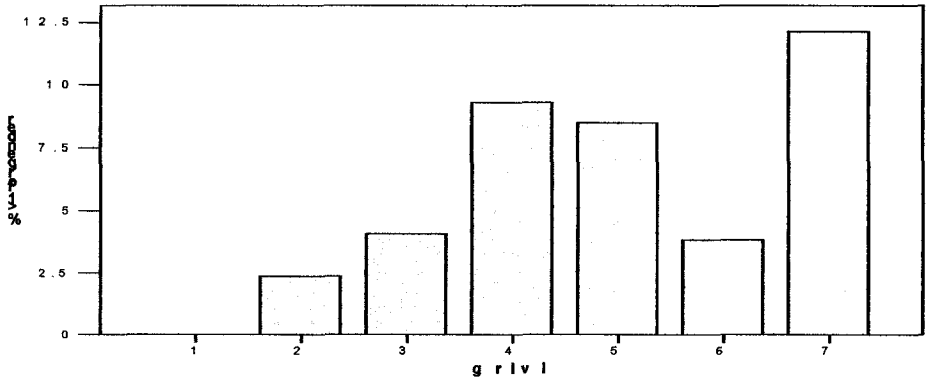

Figure 38. Mean percentage of male teacher-participants by grade.

Reading Instruction Variance among Districts and among Campuses

District-to-District Variance

Due to the large amount of findings, in terms of reading instruction variance from district to district, the data will be presented using a table (Table 6). Presentation of these data in such a summary fashion should not be taken as an indication of lesser importance compared to variance related to teacher demographics, class type (regular/bilingual), grade level trends, etc. In fact, the variance here is of vital importance because it may serve to demonstrate how district-level influence is applied upon the teachers and which areas of reading instruction are most commonly subjected to variant political control. Table 6 shows all statistically significant district-to-district variance at each grade level (please note that, because district numbers were arbitrarily assigned by alphabetizing the districts, there will be no linear relationship among districts and, therefore, no Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficients will apply):

Table 6

ANOVA Mean Comparison of Reading Instruction Variance among Districts

Rdg Instr. Category	F value	Sig. Level:
Pre-K		
Dir. instruction in phonics	3.304	.019
Teacher reads to students	22.628	.000
Discussion response	4.777	.003
Rdg aloud-all Categories	3.507	.015

Table 6 (continued) – District-to-District Reading Instruction Variance

Rdg Instr. Category	F value	Sig. Level:
Kinder		
Dir. instruction in phonics	2.348	.040
Dir. instruction in rdg skills	3.885	.003
Dir. instruction in vocabulary	2.834	.016
Dir. instr. in lit conventions	6.719	.000
Teacher reads aloud to students	2.348	.040
Students read from basal	3.550	.005
Oral English language dev.	3.659	.004
Dir. instruction-all categories	3.892	.003
Teacher-centered instruction	3.203	.008
All reading activity combined	2.515	.039
First Grade		
Dir. Instruction in sight words	2.963	.011
Dir. Instruction in vocabulary	3.170	.007
Teacher reads aloud to students	2.275	.041
Reading aloud for assessment	2.852	.013
Written response to reading	2.345	.036
Response via student discussion	3.241	.003
Accelerated reading time	5.455	.000
Silent reading of non-fiction	3.461	.004
Dir. instruction-all categories	2.432	.030
Reading aloud-all categories	2.177	.050
Student reading-all categories	3.406	.004
Teacher-centered activities	2.549	.024
All rdg. instr. categ. combined	2.470	.019
Second Grade		
Dir. Instruction in gen skills	2.321	.038
Shared reading	2.400	.032
Misc. reading response	2.767	.016
Accelerated reading time	2.469	.028
Students read from basal	3.492	.004
Read content area texts	2.313	.038
Reading/completing worksheets	2.380	.034
Trade books on computers	3.699	.003
Oral English language dev.	3.008	.010

Table 6 (continued) – District-to-District Reading Instruction Variance

Rdg Instr. Category	F value	Sig. Level:
Third Grade		
Direct instruction in phonics	2.461	.030
Dir. instruction in sight words	15.934	.000
Teacher reads aloud to students	3.334	.006
Misc. reading response	2.278	.042
Audiotape-assisted reading	2.660	.020
Dir. instruction-all categories	4.185	.001
Reading response-all categories	2.924	.012
Teacher-centered activities	3.322	.006
Student-centered activities	2.360	.035
All categories combined	2.924	.012
Fourth Grade		
Teacher reads to students	3.245	.004
Response via discussion	3.056	.007
Reading content area texts	2.819	.011
Tape-assisted rdg	3.156	.005
Reading response-all categories	2.367	.029
Fifth Grade		
Student reading-all categories	2.451	.043

It seems apparent that district level influence has been applied at significantly variant levels from district to district in the following areas: Direct Instruction in phonics, teachers reading aloud to their students, and reading response activities. Other areas of variance, like computer-assisted reading activities, audiotape-assisted reading, and accelerated may indicate availability of technology or equipment in the classrooms for a particular grade level, and may not indicate a consciously applied district level educational agenda. Bear in mind also that, because only a single elementary was sampled in several of the districts and because, out of the three to five teachers in a single grade level, there were sometimes only one or two teachers who responded, that data may be unrepresentatively influenced by a single teacher's responses.

Campus-to-Campus Variance

Variance among campuses is found in many instructional methods at the various grade levels. The following table, Table 7, displays these data:

Table 7

ANOVA Mean Comparison of Reading Instruction Variance among Campuses

Reading Instr. Category	F Value	Sig.. Level
Pre-K		
Teacher reads to students	13.649	.000
Discussion response	3.542	.014
Non-trade-material on comp.	3.706	.012
Reading aloud-all categories	3.268	.020
Kinder		
Direct instruction in phonics	2.066	.050
Direct instruction in gen. skills	2.646	.014
Direct instruction in vocabulary	2.236	.035
Dir. instruction in lit. conventions	12.809	.000
Teacher reads aloud	2.306	.030
Shared reading	4.220	.001
Non-Accelerated fiction rdg	2.897	.009
Reading from basal readers	2.483	.020
Reading content area materials	3.386	.003
Reading/completing worksheets	5.171	.000
Reading trade books on computer	2.089	.048
Oral English language dev.	2.922	.008
Direct instruction-all categories	3.549	.002
Reading aloud-all categories	3.320	.004
Student reading-all categories	3.304	.004
Teacher-centered activities	3.122	.005
Reading instr.-all 25 categories	2.862	.009

Table 7 (continued)

Reading Instr. Category	F Value	Sig.. Level
First Grade		
Direct instruction in vocabulary	2.472	.014
Teacher reads aloud	2.692	.008
Shared reading	3.183	.003
Paired reading	3.341	.002
Discussion reading response	2.299	.022
Misc. reading response	2.070	.038
Accelerated reading	3.316	.002
Reading non-AR fiction	4.385	.000
Reading non-fiction	2.571	.011
Reading content area materials	2.569	.011
Reading/completing worksheets	2.002	.045
Direct instruction-all categories	1.984	.048
Reading aloud-all categories	2.118	.034
Reading response-all categories	2.051	.040
Student reading-all categories	3.063	.003
Teacher-centered activity	2.588	.010
Second Grade		
Dir. instruction in gen skills	5.527	.000
Dir. instruction in vocabulary	2.480	.019
Shared reading	3.059	.006
Written reading response	2.827	.009
Misc. reading response	2.107	.044
Accelerated reading time	2.148	.040
Reading from basals	2.127	.042
Trade books on computers	3.032	.006
Oral English lang. dev.	2.078	.047
Reading response-all categories	2.973	.007
Student-centered activities	2.225	.034
All reading instruction	2.337	.026
Third Grade		
Direct instruction in phonics	2.256	.027
Direct instruction in sight words	9.927	.000
Direct instruction in gen. skills	2.611	.012
Teacher reads to students	2.064	.043
Cooperative with 3+ students	2.315	.024
Non-trade materials on computer	2.677	.010
Audiotape-assisted reading	3.224	.003
Direct instruction-all categories	2.844	.007
Reading response-all categories	2.133	.037
Teacher-centered instruction	2.013	.049

Table 7 (continued)

Reading Instr. Category	F Value	Sig.. Level
Fourth Grade		
Direct instruction in literature	2.010	.041
Teacher reads to students	3.013	.003
Cooperative with 3+ students	2.658	.007
Accelerated reading time	3.707	.001
Reading from basals	3.238	.002
Reading content area texts	2.315	.018
Student reading-all categories	2.134	.029
Fifth Grade		
Dir. instruction in vocabulary	3.837	.004
Reading content area texts	2.539	.032
Reading/completing worksheets	2.649	.026
Student reading-all categories	2.285	.049

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several findings have been identified. Most notable among them are the very significant variance between the amounts of instruction received by students in bilingual-labeled classes versus those in non-bilingual-labeled classes. The variance was most pronounced for first and fifth grade students. Another interesting finding was that there appear to be clear indicators that teachers are teaching to meet the requirements of the TAKS tests administered at the different grade levels.

Teacher Demographics

Several interesting findings are revealed by the teacher demographics requested from each respondent. Findings include the distribution of teachers by teaching experience, educational level, and gender across the seven elementary grade levels, across the ten districts included in the survey.

For example, male teachers do not teach pre-kindergarten and rarely teach kindergarten. This may be an indication of personal preference among male teachers or it may reflect a district preference at these grade levels. Most males are teaching in the upper three grades; however, there is a significantly lower ratio of male teachers in fourth grade compared to third and fifth grades. Likely explanations for this include the fact that fourth grade teachers must spend much of their time focusing on writing, since this is

the only elementary grade where the writing TAKS is administered, and male teachers may not have as much desire to teach writing as the female teachers. A second likely explanation is that many fourth grade male respondents' data have been excluded because they are teaching the compartmentalized math/science/social studies classes. Opting for the non-language-arts compartmentalized subject areas may also be a reflection of the male teachers' preference to avoid teaching TAKS writing.

Surveyed teachers' years of teaching experience also had an impact on the time they spent in various reading instruction methods. For example, more those with more seniority devoted less time to computerized forms of instruction. It seems logical to expect that younger teachers, most of whom have been raised using computers on a daily basis, both in school and at home, would feel more comfortable guiding their students in computer-aided reading instruction in the classroom. Those with more seniority may feel less competent with this type instruction, may be more set in their instructional approaches, and may not appreciate the efficacy of technological intervention in the education process.

The teacher demographic of educational level (Master's degree or Bachelor's only) also had a variety of impacts on instruction as indicated in Chapter Four. In some cases, the variance between means for Master's degreed versus Bachelor's only teachers was unexpected. For example, although fourth grade teachers with advanced degrees spent more time allowing students to read fiction that is not Accelerated Reader tested, fifth grade teachers actually allowed significantly less time for this as well as offering less time for reading content area textbooks. The second disparity (content area text reading time) may simply be an indication that more educated teachers are better able to

focus on language arts during their class time and to persuade other compartmentalized team teachers to allow students time to read their content area texts during their own class time. On the other hand, it seems inexplicable that the better-educated teachers would offer their fifth grade students reduced opportunities to read fiction independently in class. More research might be appropriate to further explore this anomaly.

Grade-to-Grade Comparisons

Many findings were revealed in the grade-to-grade comparisons, concerning the amounts of time spent at each grade level for the various reading instruction methods. Most of the findings were not surprising. For example, certain forms of instruction would logically be provided in much larger amounts in kindergarten and pre-kindergarten, then taper off at higher grades. This expectation was found to be accurate in areas such as oral English language development since few students in the beginning grades are fluent in English. Other areas with high measured instruction times in lower grades included direct instruction in phonics and sight words, teachers reading aloud to the students, reading trade books and other materials on computers, and miscellaneous seatwork. Areas with the opposite trend – increased time for classroom application as grade level increases – include expected areas such as students reading aloud for practice, direct instruction in non-phonic TAKS reading skills and in literature, and all categories of independent reading. Many categories are more uniformly applied across the grade levels, and some other areas such as cooperative learning and written response to reading have large spikes at specific grade levels.

One rational explanation for grade level spikes and dips is that teachers at certain grade levels must prepare their students to pass the TAKS test being administered that year. For example, third graders, preparing for their first TAKS test in reading, spend significantly more time than second and fourth grade students in TAKS objective direct instruction. Fourth graders, on the other hand, are taking their first TAKS writing test. They spend significantly more time in written response to reading than do the third and fifth grade classes. Of course, in order to devote more time in one area for TAKS preparation, the teacher must sacrifice time in other areas. For example, third grade teachers spend significantly less time in miscellaneous reading response activities and fourth graders spend significantly less time in accelerated reading, the form of independent reading where most time is spent in the upper grades. There is also a significant variance among districts as to which ones focus more instruction time on teaching to the TAKS test. It appears from the related third and fourth grade data that certain districts may emphasize teaching specifically for TAKS objective mastery much more than do other districts. Using recently released 2004 TAKS data I intend to make statistical comparisons to determine whether districts spending more time in specific TAKS preparation have actually fared better on the TAKS reading tests.

There is also other compelling evidence among teacher demographic data that districts are making staffing decisions aimed specifically at improving TAKS scores. For example, a significantly higher percentage of teachers in the third grade have Master's degrees as opposed to only having Bachelor's degrees. This may well be an indication that district and campus administrators have made conscious decisions to place their most qualified teachers in the grade level where students must first take the TAKS exam.

Variance Between Bilingual Versus Non-Bilingual Classes

As one might expect, a grade-to-grade analysis of bilingual versus non-bilingual classes shows a significantly higher percentage in the earliest grades, dwindling down at higher grades. The only grade which does not fall precisely in line with this trend is third grade, where the percentage is slightly higher than second grade. The likeliest explanation for this anomaly is that district and campus administrators may be intentionally placing more bilingual classes at the third grade level in order to better prepare their ELD third graders for their first reading TAKS. Another more troubling possibility, as suggested by teachers in informal follow-up interviews, is that district and campus administrators may be assigning the bilingual label to more third grade students in an effort to exclude them from TAKS testing.

Probably the most significant finding from this study is the extremely significant variance between bilingual and non-bilingual classes concerning the amount of time spent in the various reading instruction methods. High levels of variance exist at all grade levels, but the most significant occurs in grades one and five. Because first grade is such an important growth year for literacy development, significant variance in the amount of instruction at this grade level could have a major lasting impact on the lifelong literacy skills development potential of bilingual students. Furthermore, the specific instructional areas where large variances have been measured – for example, sight word instruction and reading response activities – are especially critical in the formation of literacy skills, literature appreciation, and both short and long term motivation to read. A preponderance of the literature cited earlier in the literature review for these specific

instructional areas has established their significance in early literacy development and motivation to read.

This is of special concern since first grade is a pivotal year in literacy preparation, and quality and amount of instruction at this grade level is a very high predictor of success at later grades (Adams & Osborn, 1990). First grade non-bilingual students receive significantly more reading instruction than do their bilingual counterparts in the following areas of reading instruction time: total minutes per week (19% more), overall direct instruction (45%), overall reading response (21%), sight word instruction (68%), vocabulary instruction (45%), literature instruction (65%), written reading responses (34%), and accelerated reading (60%). By the time students in bilingual classes reach fifth grade, also considered by many to be a critical year in preparing students to succeed in subsequent years in middle and high schools, they continue to receive significantly less reading instruction. The only exception to this is in the area of sight word instruction, which fifth grade bilingual students receive 128% more of than their non-bilingual class counterparts. Apparently, this key scaffolded instruction (in sight words) is being postponed from the early primary grades until much later – too late, according to research cited in the literature review. All of the literature cited in the literature review section for sight words emphasizes the critical need for extensive sight word instruction in the primary grades, whereas no literature has been found to support postponing such instruction until the fifth grade.

Areas where fifth grade non-bilingual students receive more reading instruction time include the following: non-phonics reading skills (28%), vocabulary (61%), shared reading (46%), oral student reading (79%), overall oral reading (45%), student discussion

reading response (44%), miscellaneous reading response (74%), overall reading response (37%), accelerated reading (108%), content area text reading (48%), overall independent student reading (50%), student-centered reading activities (43%), overall reading instruction time (not including sight word instruction) (38%). The fact that non-bilingual labeled fifth grade are being allowed 50% more time every week to read independently is particularly disturbing since many reading researchers and educators would agree that, at higher elementary grades, this is the most vital manner for developing critical reading and thinking skills (see literature review sections on the six areas of independent reading). And in the category where fifth graders normally spend most of their independent reading time (Accelerated Reading), the non-bilingual students are spending more than twice as much time (108% more than the bilingual students). The last two data are perhaps the most disturbing. For example, with all reading instruction categories combined (see Table 4, p. 126), regular, non-bilingual students are spending 5.4 more hours every week learning how to become more powerful readers.

Bear in mind that all other grade levels, not just first and fifth, showed remarkably lower reading instruction times for bilingual classes than for the regular classes; however, the first and fifth grade variances were the most extreme, so this discussion has focused on these two grades and the potential impact of disparities in reading instruction at these two grades where the inequities are most apparent. From all reviewed literature concerning reading instruction among bilingual students, it seems clear that such children need and deserve at least as much reading time as their non-bilingual-labeled peers.

In addition to the variance between regular and bilingual classes, a very high degree of variance is seen among districts in terms of the percentage of teachers

identifying themselves as teachers of bilingual classes. The percentages of teachers (all grade levels combined) reporting that they are teachers of bilingual classes range from around 30% in the lowest district up to around 90% in the district with the highest reported bilingual class rates. There seems to be no logical explanation why teachers in a school district with a lower rate of entering ELD students would report three times as many bilingual classes as a nearby district with a higher kindergarten ELD rate. Further research will be necessary to determine whether this inconsistency between district bilingual class rates really exists or whether this is a case of false reporting by surveyed teachers. And if this is a case of false reporting, additional research might be appropriate to determine what influences the teachers' attitudes, leading to the false reporting.

Additional research is recommended to ascertain what types of instruction the bilingual teachers are providing in lieu of reading instruction. Also, experimental treatment research is strongly indicated, with the hypothesis that adding several hours of reading instruction back into the overall weekly instruction of bilingual students (perhaps an additional hour each day) would significantly improve reading achievement scores among this population.

Variance in Instruction Times among Districts and among Campuses

One would logically expect to find areas of significant variance from district to district. This would be true because supervisory school boards, superintendents, and administrators will favor different types of instruction from one district to another. District X, for example, may have a board that insists on a stronger emphasis on direct phonics instruction while District Y's board may favor more student centered reading

activities. The agendas of a district's board, superintendent, and administrators will be imposed on the teachers in a variety of manners, for example through memoranda to principals, focused selection of curricula, or focused selection of teacher in-service training materials and speakers.

At the campus level, one may expect to encounter variations in leadership styles and in instructional emphases among campus administrators and other less official, *de facto* instructional leaders such as strong department heads and other experienced teachers who tend to advise and mentor many other teachers. These variations can lead to significant variances in instruction among campuses. Some of campus level variance may also be related to availability of technology, and some can be accounted for by virtue of the fact that the different campuses belong to different districts and that the different district influences also produce significant variance among campuses. However, it would appear that, after the effect of district influence has been removed, there is still some remaining variance among campuses. Bear in mind, however, that with single campuses, there are often only a few teachers from a particular grade level responding, and sometimes only one teacher from that grade level. Therefore, in some instances, the data presented in Chapter Four for any given campus are being strongly influenced by a single outlier (a teacher responding with extremely high or low estimates of time in a given category).

The variance among districts and campuses has been analyzed at each separate grade level. Significant variance exists in many of the reading instructional methods surveyed. (See tables in Chapter Four.) Some of the instructional areas show variance across several grade levels, indicating a fairly consistent influence by district and campus

administrators: for example, direct instruction (particularly in phonics), and teachers reading aloud to their students. However, most areas of variance were limited to only one or two grade levels.

Interviews with teachers, after the surveys were collected, reveal that there are several major factors which influence their reading instruction: The factor commonly mentioned as the most important influence is the reading curricula provided by the district. The following are also mentioned as important influences on the teachers' reading instruction methods: teacher in-service presenters and materials, grade-level district reading instruction timelines, campus reading initiatives, and college teacher preparation guidelines.

Overall Conclusions

One of the most significant conclusions that may be drawn from the findings in this study is that students of the teachers surveyed are spending a major portion of their school day receiving reading instruction. With some recent research indicating that students only read, on average, for a few minutes each day in school (for example, Cooter, 1999), it is refreshing to see that surveyed teachers are reporting several hours of reading activities in school every day, and much of that reading activity is actual student reading time.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A –Teacher Survey of Reading In-Class Instruction Time by Categories

Dear Fellow Educator, you have been selected to participate in a survey of in-class reading instruction and reading-readiness practices. This will assist UTPA and other universities determine the types of instruction future teachers will need. Please complete the survey and return it to the front office secretary, sealed in the enclosed envelope. Remember, your answers are just estimates. The survey takes approximately five minutes to complete. "Time spent" means the average per student. For example, if you spend time with only ten students in phonics, and you have 20 students, estimate average time per each student. Responses will be kept confidential. Also, please sign and return the enclosed informed consent page. Please note, the survey continues on the back side of this page.

School & district: _____ **# years teaching:** ____ **Gender:** M F
Educ. level: Master's Bach. Less **Certified?** yes no

Gr level: ____ **Type class:** Reg. Bilingual Span only Dual Lang **Certain Subject?** _____

Please estimate below approximately how much **in-class** time (minutes) your students spend **during an average week** doing the following reading related activities and circle one:

Direct instruction (DI)								
DI in phonemic awareness and other decoding skills	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
DI / Guided Instruction in specific sight words	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
DI in non-phonics reading skills (e.g. main idea, context clues, author's purpose, fact/opinion)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
DI in vocabulary enrichment	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
DI in literary components/conventions (plot, theme, etc.)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Reading aloud								
Teacher reading aloud to students	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Shared Reading (aloud WITH children)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Students reading aloud for assessment (miscue analysis, IRI, running record, etc)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Students reading aloud for practice - Round-robin	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Grouped/interactive reading activities								
Paired/peer-tutor reading	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Cooperative grouping with three or more	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Reading response activities								
Reading/writing connection (journaling, etc.)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Class discussion of reading material	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Other (e.g. dioramas, skits, drawings, field trips,) book-talks, worksheets, etc. related to rdg)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____

(OVER)

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Guided or independent reading activities								
Accelerated Reading (AR) time	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Non-AR student-selected fiction reading	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Silent pleasure reading in non-fiction	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Independent/guided reading in the basal reader	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Independent/guided reading in Content Area Texts	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Work in reading related workbooks and worksheets	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Technology-based reading								
Reading trade-book literature (e.g. *Berenstain Bears, Green Wilma*) on computers	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Reading non-trade-book materials on computers	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Audiotape-assisted reading	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Oral English language development activities (not included in times above)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
Other indiv. seatwork from adopted rdg text (not in times above (puzzles, charts, games, etc.)	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____

Other reading activities not mentioned above (please specify below):

_____:	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____
_____:	NA	10	20	30	40	60	80	More____

Total reading activity time in average week (please add up all minutes above): _____

Do your students take Accelerated Reader quizzes? Yes No

If yes, where? Class Library **Average # AR points per student during year:**_____

Please estimate <u>percentage</u> of reading time spent in activities recommended by adopted reading text:

_____

Please name a few fiction or non-fiction picture books or chapter books which are recent favorites among your students:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

VITA

Richard Steele was born in Eunice, New Mexico on October 11th, 1952. Most of his life has been spent in southern New Mexico and in the Rio Grande Valley at the southern tip of Texas. He received his high school diploma from Edcouch-Elsa High School in 1972, his Bachelor of Arts degree in English and biology from The University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg, Texas in 1976, and his Master of Arts in literature from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio in 1986.

He has had a varied career including ten years as an Air Force officer in the fields of industrial engineering and personnel, several years in promotion and marketing in the private sector, and several years as a researcher and negotiator in oil and gas exploration. His teaching experience includes time teaching at all educational levels – elementary, middle school, high school and college. He has taught in both public and private institutions at various times since 1976. In the state of Texas, he has earned teacher certifications in language arts, reading, English, English as a second language, speech, and journalism.

In February, 1975, he married Paula Bowers. They currently have five grown children and six grandchildren, all living in the Rio Grande Valley region of South Texas. Mr. Steele is an instructor in the College of Education at The University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg Texas.