

*Motivation among reluctant readers: Capturing the goal setting experience in the 'Reading
Rocks' program*

by

Samantha Sendzik

Child and Youth Studies

Master of Arts

Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario

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GOAL SETTING IN READING ROCKS

Abstract

This study explored goal setting among children with reading disabilities. Of particular focus was the goal setting experience of participants in a literacy-based program, titled “Reading Rocks”. Reading Rocks, offered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR), supports children with reading disabilities to become more confident readers. The program aims to strengthen literacy skills among vulnerable readers. Another essential component of the program targets children’s reading motivation through goal setting, a recognized strategy for increasing motivation. I outline the importance of reading, followed by exploring children’s reluctance to read. Goal setting is examined as an opportunity to increase motivation among reluctant readers. My research included a qualitative case study of one child-tutor pair in the program. I utilized a think-aloud protocol, a photo elicitation interview, and researcher observations to collect my data. Lastly, I triangulated the data to analyze how children in Reading Rocks experience goal setting.

Key Words: Motivation, goal setting, learning disabilities, dyslexia, children

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Reading is regarded as one of the most highly valued skills in Western society (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Many children, however, struggle with reading for various reasons. Without proper literacy intervention, these children are at a higher risk for academic failure and lower self-esteem (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities [NJCLD], 1990; Reschly, 2010). Engaging in reading based tasks can become unbearable and humiliating for these vulnerable readers (Humphrey, 2003), typically resulting in a lack of motivation to participate in reading altogether (Melekoglu, 2011).

Education initiatives have recognized the need for intervention programs aimed at supporting vulnerable readers. One such intervention program is offered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR). The LDANR is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide resources and support to individuals affected by learning disabilities. The organization delivers a reading intervention program titled Reading Rocks to children in the Niagara region who are struggling with reading. Participants enrolled in the program receive one-on-one tutoring in the areas of their greatest literacy needs. This program focuses not only on strengthening literacy skills, but also on building self-esteem and self-regulation skills among young vulnerable readers through the use of graphing their success and setting attainable goals.

The primary objective of the current thesis is to study how children experience the goal setting process within the Reading Rocks literacy program. Goal setting is an integral component of the program, stemming from academic research highlighting the importance of goal setting in promoting self-regulation (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Children enrolled in the Reading Rocks program typically have a

disinterest in reading due to their constant struggle with reading based tasks, resulting in a lack of motivation to engage in such tasks. Research suggests that goal setting is effective in increasing interest and motivation to engage in overwhelming tasks (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Psychologists Bandura and Schunk (1981) studied goal setting and self-motivation to engage in daunting tasks. They concluded from their research that setting and achieving personal goals related to self-learning cultivates higher self-perceived competence, increased self-efficacy, as well as greater intrinsic interest in the task. Reading Rocks program participants typically lack in these three areas of self-perceived competence, self-efficacy, and intrinsic interest in the task due to their reading difficulties. Consequently, the LDANR have chosen to promote goal setting among young vulnerable readers as a way of increasing interest and motivation to engage in reading while furthermore heightening the children's self-perceived competence.

The objective of this study was to document and describe how goal setting is experienced in the Reading Rocks program. I adopted a qualitative approach to research the goal setting process throughout the duration of the program. I documented the process through a triangulation of research methods including a think-aloud protocol between tutor and child; a photo elicitation interview between myself, the tutor, and the child; and my own researcher observations. I predicted that Reading Rocks would engage effective goal setting in vulnerable readers through a variety of ways including: proper guidance from a tutor to set attainable goals, the use of positive reinforcement provided by a tutor, and through actively promoting the child's autonomy and self-regulation. The findings of this thesis provide insight into the ways in which intervention programs can assist children to practice self-regulation through goal setting.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Literacy skills are among the most essential prerequisites for effective participation in one's own community and larger society (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2004) defines literacy as, "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts" (p. 13). Literacy can be divided into two main components: reading and writing. This thesis will focus specifically on the area of reading. Reading skills remain at the forefront of the education system across North America (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hosp & Suchey, 2014). Without a strong foundation for reading, children tend to struggle academically throughout their school career, typically resulting in lower self-worth and higher school drop-out rates (Reschly, 2010). The Canadian National Reading Campaign (NRC, 2014) exemplifies the importance of reading, both to the self and to the larger community. The NRC (2014) describes reading as a skill that provides the basis for future learning and a skill vital to the well being and functioning of society. Thus, it is important to foster the development of reading in young children so that they can continue on their path of lifelong learning.

The Reading Process

The reading process is quite complex; however, researchers suggest that when broken down into a sequence of stages, it can be simpler to understand (Harlaar, Dale, & Plomin, 2007). Harlaar, Dale, and Plomin (2007) suggest that reading is a cumulative process, where lower-order literacy skills build the foundation for higher-order, more complex, literacy skills. This

process can be visualized as a hierarchical reading process, shown in Figure 1. This model illustrates the reading process as an inverted pyramid, beginning with emergent literacy skills and resulting in the ultimate goal of reading comprehension. The reading process, then, can be conceptualized as a collection of stages, with each stage setting the foundation for the subsequent stage.

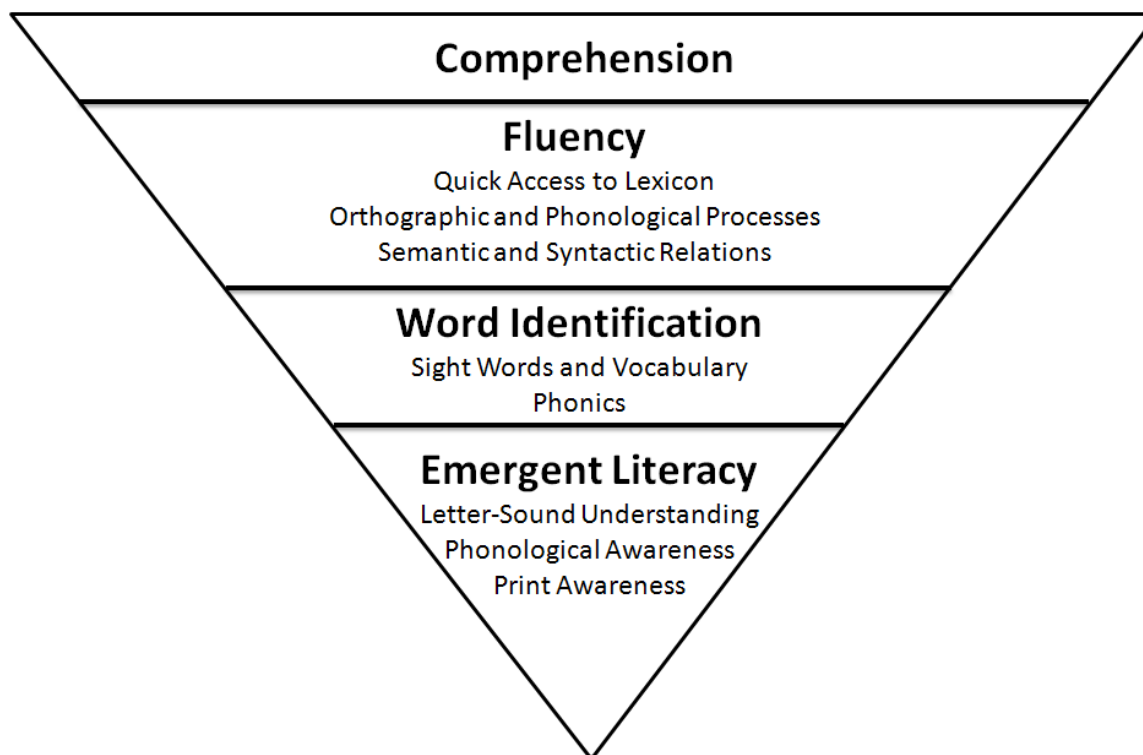


Figure 1. Reading Hierarchy (Holtzheuser & McNamara, 2014).

Components of Reading

As outlined in Figure 1, the reading process can be separated into four main components, namely, emergent literacy, word identification, fluency, and comprehension. It is important to note, however, that these components, although separated in the figure above, are all interrelated

and should not be imagined as distinct from one another. Each of these components, as well as the relationships between them, will be described in further detail below.

Emergent literacy. Research suggests that even before they are born babies begin processing sounds they hear from within the womb (Childs, 1998; Moon, Lagercrantz, & Kuhl, 2013). Following birth, they begin to imitate sounds they hear while simultaneously attempting to make sense of these new sounds (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2006). This is the beginning of emergent literacy. The Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence (FLaRE) Center emphasizes the importance of emergent literacy in the lifelong process of reading. They formally define emergent literacy as, “a developing range of understanding about print and nonconventional literacy behaviours that begin before schooling and lead into conventional reading and writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking” (Zygouris-Coe, 2001, p. 6). Emergent literacy involves a number of sub-skills including letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and print knowledge.

To begin the process of reading, children must acquire letter knowledge. Hulme & Snowling (2013) explain that letter knowledge is a critical skill as it is a prerequisite for reading words. They define letter knowledge as the understanding that letter symbols of the English language alphabet map onto spoken sounds. This involves distinguishing each letter from the others, including deciphering lowercase and uppercase letters and knowing their associations. Letter knowledge also requires being aware of the name of each letter, as well as the sound or sounds associated with each symbol. Being aware of letter-sound associations aids in identifying unfamiliar words using decoding strategies (Hulme & Snowling, 2013).

Letter sounds make up 26 of the 41 phonemes in the English language (Chen & Savage, 2014). Phonemes are defined as the most basic units of spoken language (Zygouris-Coe, 2001).

Children must first acquire phonemic awareness, an understanding that words are a collection of phonemes. Children who have mastered phonemic awareness are able to focus on and manipulate sounds in a word (Ehri et al., 2001). Phonological awareness encompasses phonemic awareness as well as an awareness of all aspects of the speech sound system, including syllables and rhyming words (Ehri et al., 2001; Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Researchers describe phonological awareness as one of the greatest predictors of future reading ability (Ehri et al., 2001; Stanovich, 1986). Phonological awareness is understood to set the foundation for later reading skills in the area of phonics and word recognition (Chard & Dickson, 1999).

Print knowledge is an often-disregarded component of the reading process; however, it is necessary for children to become proficient readers. Print knowledge requires understanding that there exists meaning behind text, that letters joined together form words, and that different words have different meanings. Print knowledge also includes learning how to hold a book, the direction in which to read on a page, and what way to flip the page (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2006).

Although these emergent literacy skills may appear to be obvious and natural skills, they must be learned. The mastery of these early reading skills allows for a smooth transition into the following stage in the reading process, word identification.

Word identification. Identifying unfamiliar words requires different strategies than when identifying familiar words (Ehri, 1995, 2005). Unfamiliar words are words that have not yet become automatic. Identifying unfamiliar words requires more effort and may include methods such as decoding or predicting (Ehri, 2005). Struggling readers tend to use predicting strategies to identify new words, guessing the words based on similar features to words they have previously learned. Predicting can be an effective strategy; however, it is not the most accurate

(Ehri & McCormick, 1998). Proficient readers, however, tend to use decoding strategies to identify unfamiliar words, sounding out the phoneme identities and using learned phonics principles to help them correctly identify the word (Ehri, 1995, 2005). To utilize decoding strategies effectively, it is essential that the basic phonemes have been mastered and that basic phonics principles are being developed (Stuart, 2006).

Phonics principles are the fundamental rules that apply to the English language. These rules must be taught explicitly and learned by young readers. These can be quite difficult concepts to grasp, especially for struggling readers who have just mastered phoneme sounds and decoding, as these rules most often challenge the typical conventions of the English language (Ehri & McCormick, 1998).

Most words can be sounded out using typical language conventions and phonics principles; however, some of the most commonly used words in the English language, referred to as sight words, do not. Many sight words challenge the general rules associated with identifying words, and sometimes even challenge the phonics principles learned (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2006). Thus, the most effective way to identify sight words is through memory. In fact, to identify familiar words, good readers retrieve these words from memory (Ehri, 2005). Ehri (2005) suggests that good readers read whole words; that is, they do not need to decode or sound out the word, they see it and they know it. This occurs through the process of automatization (Nicolson & Fawcett, 1994). Words become automatic through repetition and practice; thus maximum exposure to sight words can greatly increase a child's vocabulary and aid in identifying words that do not follow typical English language conventions (Ehri, 2005; Nicolson & Fawcett, 1994).

The most effective way to encourage fluent reading is for readers to develop the capacity to read whole words. Word identification must become automatic, and phonics principles alongside effective decoding strategies must be mastered to properly identify unfamiliar words (Ehri, 1995, 2005). It is through these effective word identification strategies that reading can become fluent.

Fluency. Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2006) define fluency as the ability to read rapidly and accurately, with expression. Reading fluency is typically measured as the number of words read correctly per minute (WCPM) and results are compared to grade level fluency norms (Swain, Leader-Janssen, & Conley, 2013). High fluency rates are achieved if children have mastered the previous step in the reading process, word identification (Ehri & McCormick, 1998). Children with strong word identification have a large vocabulary, as many words have become automatic (Ehri, 2005). These children are proficient in sounding out unfamiliar words, resulting in quick and accurate reading. Research has indicated that strong fluency rates are positively correlated with high levels of comprehension (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). Fluent readers require less time and effort to decode words, allowing them to instead concentrate on the meaning of the text resulting in greater reading comprehension.

Comprehension. There exist two different types of literacy comprehension skills, namely listening and reading comprehension. Listening comprehension refers to the capacity to obtain meaning from dialogue or text read aloud. Generally, listening comprehension is related, but not directly linked to reading comprehension skills (Wise, Sevcik, Morris, Lovett, & Wolf, 2007), although research does indicate that poor listening comprehension has been associated with lower intelligence quotient scores (Bachmeier, 2009). Reading comprehension is the ultimate

goal of learning to read and can be defined as the capacity to understand and obtain meaning from written text (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2006). This skill has also been referred to as the process of “reading to learn”, as this is the stage in the reading process when text can be read to gather meaning and learn new information. To reach this stage of the reading process, all the subsequent stages must be mastered. Most struggling readers typically have strong listening comprehension skills but poor reading comprehension skills due to their difficulty in the early stages of the reading process (Badian, 1999).

Factors Contributing to Poor Reading

There exist a variety of reasons why some young children may experience reading difficulties. These reasons include, but are not limited to, their environment, attention difficulties, garden-variety poor reading, and learning disabilities.

Environment

A child’s immediate environment can have a significant impact on his or her academic success (Stull, 2013). Research suggests a correlation between a family’s socioeconomic status and their child’s reading ability, indicating that the socioeconomic background of a child may contribute to reading difficulties (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Hagans & Good, 2013). Families of lower socioeconomic status tend to have less time and limited resources dedicated to their child’s reading development in the home environment compared to families of higher socioeconomic status (Hagans & Good, 2013). Circumstances including one-parent households, parents with multiple jobs, low income, parent divorce, parent illness etc. can cause a burden on families, limiting the amount of time and money they can spend on literacy activities and reading at home. Children from disadvantaged home environments therefore receive less practice with reading

based tasks, hindering their reading development, often resulting in these children beginning kindergarten well behind their classmates (Stull, 2013; Hagans & Good, 2013).

Attention Difficulties

Attention disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have been found to be comorbid with reading difficulties (Boada, Willcutt, & Pennington, 2012). Children with ADHD have difficulty sitting still for long durations of time and concentrating on one task at a time, causing them to struggle academically, specifically in the process of reading (Willcutt et al., 2007). Children with ADHD require learning environments that are hands-on and allow them to be active in their learning, with short duration tasks. Typical school classrooms are not ideal learning environments for children with ADHD as classroom learning practices require students to remain seated at their desks for long periods of time (Willcutt et al., 2007). Since reading is a skill that requires focus and attention, it can be quite difficult for children with ADHD to become strong readers.

Garden-variety Poor Reader

Children who display lower than average intellectual abilities are described as “garden-variety” poor readers (Stoodley, Ray, Jack, & Stein, 2008). As the title suggests, these children do not only struggle with reading but also perform lower than average in all cognitive domains. Garden-variety poor readers typically score below 85 on tests of IQ whereas children with reading disabilities typically score above 85 on tests of IQ (Marx, Weber, & Schneider, 2001).

Reading Disability

A reading disability is a specific form of learning disability. A learning disability can be defined as a neurological processing deficit resulting in difficulty with the acquisition, retention, understanding, and organization or use of information (Learning Disabilities Association of

Canada [LDAC], 2002). Individuals with learning disabilities demonstrate average or above average intelligence, however show unexpected underachievement in a specific area of need (i.e. reading, mathematics, oral language, written language). According to the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD, 1990), this processing deficit is presumably due to a dysfunction in the central nervous system and has been identified as being lifelong. The National Centre for Learning Disabilities suggests, however, that with proper and effective support, individuals with learning disabilities can experience academic and professional success (Cortiella, 2011).

It is also important to note that, although learning disabilities may exist concurrently with hearing, visual or motor disabilities, emotional disturbance, or extrinsic influences (economic, cultural, or environmental disadvantage), they are not a result of these conditions, and are distinct from global intellectual disabilities (NJCLD, 1990; Cortiella, 2011; LDAC, 2002).

The most prevalent form of learning disabilities is a reading disability, also commonly referred to as dyslexia (Cortiella, 2011). Dyslexia makes up approximately 80% of all learning disabilities and affects approximately 1 in 10 children in Canada (Canadian Dyslexia Association, n.d.). Studies indicate that individuals with reading disabilities have a specific phonological processing problem where they process language information in a different area of the brain than non-dyslexic readers. This processing deficit affects their ability to manipulate and process sounds, ultimately resulting in reading difficulties. Their poor decoding and word recognition abilities ultimately result in poor reading comprehension, a secondary characteristic of dyslexia (Cortiella, 2011; International Dyslexia Association, 2002).

Effective Practices for Children with Reading Difficulties

Intensive, high-powered environments have proven optimal for supporting children with severe reading difficulties (Torgesen et al., 2001). Specific evidence-based intervention strategies including one-to-one or small group, explicit, systematic, and direct instruction are the most effective approaches for addressing reading difficulties in young children (Ehri & McCormick, 1998; Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009; Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011; Torgesen et al., 2001).

One-to-one Instruction

Many studies suggest that the smaller the teacher-to-student ratio, the greater the instructional outcome for children with reading difficulties (Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011; Torgesen et al., 2001). The most optimal teaching setting for children with severe reading difficulties incorporates one-to-one tutoring instruction, as this environment allows for more individualized attention (Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011). Research done by Slavin, Lake, Davis, and Madden (2011) suggests that even compared to small-group instruction, one-to-one instruction facilitates greater learning outcomes. An individualized approach is ideal for addressing the child's specific literacy needs that are impossible for a teacher to address in a typical classroom.

Explicit and Direct Instruction

Children do not develop reading skills naturally through maturation; rather reading is a skill that must be learned. Explicit and direct instruction has proven to be an effective and essential approach to teaching children how to read, particularly with struggling readers (Ehri & McCormick, 1998; Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009). Explicit and direct instruction involves the teacher or tutor presenting new information to the student in a systematic manner. Rupley, Blair

and Nichols (2009) use Rosenshine and Stevens' (1995) six steps for teaching well-structured objectives to outline how direct and explicit instruction is achieved. These steps include: Review previous work → Present new information → Provide guided practice → Give feedback and corrections → Provide independent practice → Deliver weekly reviews

These steps toward direct, explicit instruction are extensively utilized as an effective practice in teaching children how to read.

Ongoing Support

In some cases, specifically cases where a child is struggling with reading due to slow development or environmental influences, early interventions have been shown to bring children up to grade level, and they will continue to develop without the need of such interventions. Children with reading disabilities, however, require ongoing support. This idea is presented in a study conducted by Torgesen et al., (2001). They concluded that with structured, one-on-one instruction, children with reading disabilities could steadily improve their reading to grade level and remain at grade level with the instructional program. They also found that when the one-on-one instruction was removed, the reading abilities of the children with dyslexia began to fall back below grade level. From this, they summarized that children with reading disabilities required continued effective instruction and support.

Positive Feedback and Reinforcement

Finally, a strategy that has been shown to produce higher levels of reading achievement among young vulnerable readers is providing the child with positive feedback and reinforcement. Children with reading difficulties struggle academically compared to their peers, typically resulting in their receiving more negative than positive feedback about their academics. These children internalize this negative feedback, typically resulting in a lack of self-esteem as well as

a lack of motivation to engage in reading tasks. Providing these children with positive feedback and reinforcement with any effort that they put into furthering their reading is a well-utilized strategy to increase the child's confidence with reading, simultaneously increasing interest and motivation to read (Brooks, 1994).

The Matthew Effect

Many research studies surrounding the area of reading difficulties have stressed the presence of what has been referred to as the Matthew Effect when comparing grade level readers to struggling readers (McNamara, Scissons, & Dahleu, 2005; Sideridis, 2011; Stanovich, 1986; Walberg & Shiow-Ling, 1983). The Matthew Effect is a term dating back to biblical times and refers to the phenomenon of the rich getting richer as the poor get poorer. In 1986, Keith Stanovich applied this term to the subject of reading. He hypothesized that children with strong literacy skills at an early age will remain strong readers over time whereas children who struggle with the early stages of reading will fall further and further behind their peers, increasing the reading achievement gap between the grade-level and poor readers (Stanovich, 1986).

Addressing the Matthew Effect

One approach to addressing the widening achievement gap between grade level and poor readers is providing early literacy intervention programs to children who demonstrate early signs of being at risk for reading difficulties. Targeting vulnerable readers at a young age and providing them with literacy support has been consistently found to help in narrowing the achievement gap between these struggling readers and grade level readers (Jenkins & O'Connor, 2002).

The Matthew Effect in Schools

The current education system in Canada and the United States places a large emphasis on reading and the development of strong literacy skills (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hosp & Suchey, 2014). This places children with reading difficulties at a greater risk for academic failure. As children approach fourth grade there exists an inherent shift in the school curriculum where reading and literacy skills begin to receive much less attention, as these skills are expected to be mastered (Melekoglu, 2011; Juel, 1988). These expectations carry over into other academic areas where reading and literacy skills become engrained in all school subjects. Children with reading disabilities then continue to fall even further behind their peers, not only in the area of reading, but in a majority of school subjects, increasing the achievement gap (Sideridis, 2011). This achievement gap can be visualized in Figure 2 below, where after grade 4, the performance gap between children with learning disabilities and children without learning disabilities becomes increasingly large.

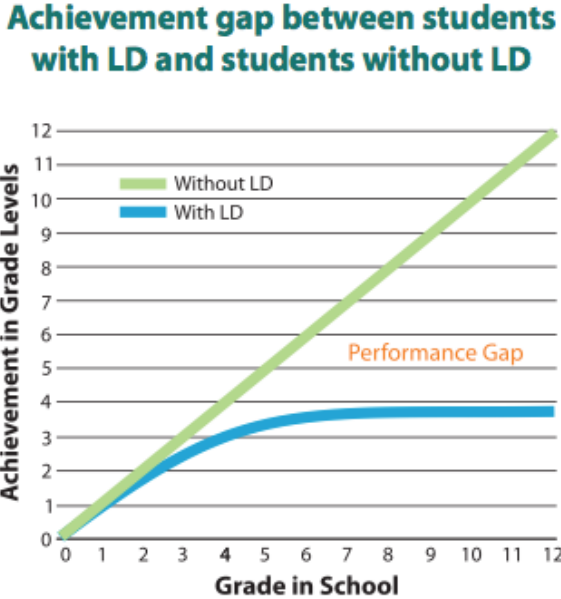


Figure 2. The State of Learning Disabilities – Achievement gap between students with and without LD (Cortiella, 2011).

The Consequences of the Matthew Effect

Children begin comparing themselves to others as early as age 4, recognizing whether they perform better or worse in different areas compared to their peers. Researchers suggest that these comparisons arise from evaluative school practices that favour competition and compare student abilities (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Such comparisons contribute to the shaping of student self-esteem and self-worth, and these comparisons only escalate as children grow older (Shaffer, Kipp, Wood & Willoughby, 2010). Children with reading difficulties recognize, quite early on, that they are not performing to the academic ability of their peers, specifically in the area of reading, resulting in lower self-perceived competence. As the achievement gap widens, this low self-perceived competence is only amplified.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, these children also continue to receive negative feedback regarding their academic performance (Brooks, 1994). Receiving negative feedback causes children to internalize their failures, resulting in disengagement with the task, a lack of self-perceived competence, and ultimately a lack of motivation to perform the task. These factors only enhance the achievement gap even further.

Motivation and Reading

Lack of Motivation to Engage in Reading

Another contributor to the growing reading achievement gap is the lack of motivation that these children have to engage in reading based tasks. Timothy Seifert (2004) describes four main theories of motivation that are prominent throughout motivation literature: self-efficacy theory, attribution theory, self-worth theory, and achievement goal theory. These four theories will be explained and discussed with a focus on children with reading difficulties.

Self-efficacy Theory. Self-efficacy theory insists that if individuals perceive themselves as capable of performing a task, they will be more motivated to complete such task. On the other hand, if an individual believes incapable of completing the task, he or she will avoid such task (Seifert, 2004). As established earlier, children with reading difficulties understand that they struggle with reading based tasks. They have learned this through comparing themselves to others as well as receiving negative feedback regarding their reading abilities. These children typically do not perceive themselves as capable of completing reading tasks and will therefore avoid or be less motivated to engage in reading.

Attribution Theory. Attribution theory focuses on what an individual believes caused an outcome of a task (Seifert, 2004). Individuals who possess a higher self-efficacy typically attribute their failures to causes that can be manipulated and controlled. For example an individual who, when he or she fail; attributes failure to a lack of effort. Attributing the cause of their failure to something that can be controlled (i.e. effort) encourages individuals that they can achieve the task if they put in more effort or try a different strategy. Individuals with lower self-efficacy classically attribute their failures to a static cause that cannot be controlled. An example of this with young vulnerable readers would be that they attribute their failures to their own inability. Consistent with self-efficacy theory, they believe that they cannot perform reading based tasks because they do not and, more importantly, will not be able to due to their inability. Attributing their failures to stable causes results in expectations of future failures ultimately resulting in a lack of motivation to engage in the task (Seifert, 2004).

Self-Worth Theory. Self-worth theory suggests that maintaining or enhancing their self-worth (dignity) motivates an individuals' behaviour. Seifert (2004) explains that perceived inability, as outlined in the previous two theories, is a threat to an individual's self-worth. To

avoid this threat to their self-worth, individuals would avoid tasks that would highlight their inabilities. It is not surprising, therefore, that children with reading difficulties would avoid engaging in reading in order to protect their self-worth.

Achievement Goal Theory. Achievement goal theory indicates that student motivation can be understood as being goal directed. Students are motivated by their aspiration to achieve designated goals. Seifert (2004) discusses two types of goal orientations: mastery and performance. Mastery goal orientation refers to the same individuals, as demonstrated above, who believe that it is their effort that contributes to their successes and failures. Their goals are task and learning directed, also referred as intrinsic motivation (Mirabela-Constanta & Maria-Madela, 2011). Performance goal orientation refers to the same individuals, as demonstrated above, who believe that it is their ability or inability that contributes to their successes and failures. Their goals focus more on how they perform compared to others, and typically involve them trying to achieve some external reward. This is also referred to as extrinsic motivation (Seifert, 2004). Children with reading difficulties are more performance goal oriented than mastery goal oriented. If they do engage in reading tasks, it is usually to receive some external satisfaction; they do not typically engage in reading to receive personal, or intrinsic satisfaction from completing the task (Mirabela-Constanta & Maria-Madela, 2011). Therefore, it is important to assist vulnerable readers in switching from a performance to a mastery goal orientation. Although all four of the above theories are relevant to a vulnerable reader's motivation to engage in reading, the theory that is predominant in this research study is the achievement goal theory.

Using Intrinsic Motivation to Increase Reading Engagement

There are two key forms of motivation, namely extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation refers to the motivation to engage in a task in order to achieve a

certain external outcome or to avoid a negative consequence; this is associated with individuals who display a performance goal orientation (Mirabela-Constanta & Maria-Madela, 2011; Seifert, 2004). Learners who are motivated by extrinsic incentives such as rewards and punishments strive for goals that do not pertain to their learning. This type of motivation has been revealed to have only short-term effects on task performance and does not result in continued commitment to their own progress. (Vansteenkiste, Lens & Deci, 2006).

Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation to engage in a task due to the personal satisfaction that comes with completing the task; this is associated with individuals who display mastery goal orientation (Mirabela-Constanta & Maria-Madela, 2011; Seifert, 2004). This is the type of motivation that is encouraged to increase reading engagement as intrinsic motivation, unlike extrinsic motivation, has been linked with long-term outcomes of commitment to development and progress (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006; Lee, McInerney, Liem, & Ortiga, 2010). Intrinsic motivation has also been found to be positively associated with strong self-regulation skills. Strong self-regulated learners have been shown to be intrinsically motivated to achieve their goals, as accomplishing those goals is meaningful to them. With intrinsic motivation, learners have more control and autonomy over their achievements, resulting in these learners internalizing their successes (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Internalizing accomplishments is associated with increased confidence and self-worth because they attribute their success to their own efforts and not external forces.

Goal Setting

Goal setting is a popular way of promoting intrinsic motivation as well as self-regulation and self-efficacy (Cerasoli & Ford, 2014; Zimmerman, 2002). For these goals to be effective, however, they must be attainable.

Setting Attainable Goals

Setting goals can be a difficult task for a child to engage in. If they set their goals too low, they will be quite easy to achieve; however, this typically results in a lack of interest to continue engaging in the task. If they set their goals too high, however, to a point where their goals are unrealistic and unattainable, this typically contributes to a poor self-perceived competence with the task due to not being able to reach their desired goal (Locke & Latham, 2002). Thus, for children to learn how to set attainable goals, it is important that they develop effective goal-setting calibration.

Calibration refers to, “the accuracy or alignment between a judgement and a meaningful standard” (Hadwin & Webster, 2013, p. 39). Effective goal-setting calibration involves finding a medium where the goal is both challenging and attainable, so that individuals can feel proud when they accomplish it. Children’s judgements of their abilities, however, may not be fully developed and accurate. Providing children with a skilled individual to provide guidance in goal calibration can assist them to set realistic goals that are not too low that the child disengages from the task, but not too high that the task becomes discouraging. Receiving this guidance can facilitate children to independently calibrate their goals in the future, contributing to higher levels of self-regulation (Schunk, 2003).

Goal Setting to Improve Self-regulation and Self-efficacy

Individuals with strong self-regulation can analyze task requirements, set achievable goals, and select strategies to aid in achieving these goals. Zimmerman (2002) refers to self-regulated learners as metacognitive learners who are active in achieving their own goals. Setting goals helps to motivate learners as goals give them an outcome to strive for. Locke (1996) outlines that individuals are committed to achieving their goals if they believe the goal is important and if they also believe it is achievable. Learning how to set such attainable goals using proper goal-setting calibration can promote self-regulation. When learners achieve the goals they set for themselves, this increases their self-efficacy and self-esteem specifically when these goals are challenging.

Goal Setting to Promote Intrinsic Motivation

A common way of promoting intrinsic motivation is through the use of goal setting (Cerasoli & Ford, 2014). As individuals set personal, attainable goals, work towards achieving those goals, and eventually attain those goals, this stimulates a sense of personal satisfaction. Seeing one's own progress in a task confirms that one has the ability to succeed in the task due to personal effort, encouraging mastery instead of performance goal orientation. A mastery goal orientation, as discussed, is linked to intrinsic motivation. When individuals believe that it is their effort that directly contributes to achieving their goals, they are more likely to be motivated by their own learning (Seifert, 2004). Thus, setting achievable personal goals can assist in promoting intrinsic motivation.

My Present Study

My research study centres on a literacy program for young vulnerable readers, Reading Rocks, offered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region. A key component of the program involves child participants setting weekly goals for themselves and working toward achieving those goals throughout the duration of the program. The goal setting process in the Reading Rocks program is the central theme of my research. My study documents the goal setting process to outline how this specific process works in a remedial literacy program for children with reading difficulties. The present study specifically asks the question: How do child participants in the Reading Rocks program experience goal setting?

Chapter 3

Methodology

Overview

My research study is a qualitative, descriptive study aimed at documenting the goal setting process of the Reading Rocks literacy program offered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region. The Reading Rocks program is a one-on-one tutoring program available to children in the Niagara Region who are falling behind in their reading due to a potential or diagnosed reading disability. The literacy program, described in further detail below, concentrates on building strong literacy skills in the areas of phonics, sight word recognition, reading fluency and reading comprehension. Furthermore, Reading Rocks aims to strengthen each child's self-esteem and motivation toward reading through having each child graph his or her own success and engage in setting personal goals throughout the program.

I was interested in collecting an in-depth analysis of the Reading Rocks goal-setting process, focusing on what child participants in the program experienced as they set personal goals throughout the course of the program. To do this, I conducted a qualitative, descriptive research study to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experience with goal setting in the Reading Rocks program. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2013) explain that qualitative research concentrates on gathering meaning from language collected through interviews, observations, or artifacts. They suggest that qualitative research is important as it focuses on events occurring in natural settings, offering an understanding of "real life" events. As the purpose of my study was to capture the experiences of goal setting in the Reading Rocks program, qualitative research methods were selected. Qualitative research, however, has been criticized for being quite subjective due to interpretation bias on behalf of the researcher (Miles,

Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). This is why, in this research study, I chose to include photo elicitation interviews, in order to take the perspectives of my participants into consideration. My participants included one child participant of Reading Rocks and a tutor. The child's goal setting process was documented through a photo elicitation interview, the think-aloud protocol, and my own observations as researcher.

Reading Rocks Program Description

Reading Rocks is an eight-week, sixteen-session, literacy program offered through a partnership between the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) and Brock University. The program is offered during the fall as well as the winter at multiple locations throughout the Niagara Region including St. Catharines, Welland, and Beamsville. This program is aimed at supporting young vulnerable readers in the Niagara Region. Each child participant in the Reading Rocks program is paired with a trained literacy tutor. The first sessions are dedicated to a needs-based assessment performed by the tutor. These assessments provide the tutor with crucial information about the child's specific literacy needs, allowing the tutor to begin creating an individualized workstation unique to the child's interests, strengths, and literacy needs. For the duration of the eight weeks, each tutor works one-on-one with a child focusing on the child's specific literacy needs in the four main literacy skill areas.

12-Minute Principle

Each hour-long session is divided into four 12-minute blocks dedicated to the main literacy components described in detail above: phonics, sight word vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Throughout the 12-minute blocks, tutors utilize direct and explicit instruction to help each child in mastering new literacy skills. To practice the new skills, the

tutors couple this instruction with play-based instruction to make the learning fun and engaging for the child. The 12-minute principle is effective because it allows for a variety of literacy skills to be taught within the hour-long session. Also, long durations of time spent on a task typically result in children becoming disengaged from the task due to boredom. The 12-minute principle is utilized in the Reading Rocks program as it is successful in maintaining the children's attention throughout each literacy task.

Personalized Workstation

Children enrolled in the Reading Rocks program each have their own literacy workstation. This workstation consists of a tri-fold poster board decorated by both the tutor and the child. The purpose of the workstation is to visually display the child's improvements throughout the program so that the child is able to appreciate his or her literacy developments. The workstation is also designed to appeal to the interests of the child. This is a key aspect of the program, as this helps to capture the child's initial interest in the program and to maintain his or her attention throughout the program.

Graphing Success and Setting Goals

The final minutes of each 12-minute block focus on the child participants graphing their own success and setting goals for the following sessions with the guidance of their tutor. For three of the four literacy blocks (phonics, sight word vocabulary, and fluency), the participants graph their progress throughout the program. The graphing process is quite flexible in that the way the literacy gains are graphed (stickers, bar graphs, line graph) is decided by the child-tutor pair. Having the children graph their own progress allows them to take ownership of their learning and physically see their literacy gains. Seeing these gains is expected to increase their

motivation to engage in reading based tasks and ultimately raise their self-esteem pertaining to their reading ability.

Along with graphing their success, the tutor also guides the child in setting attainable goals for future sessions. Goal setting is a key component of the Reading Rocks program and is the specific focus of my research study. The tutor and child have a conversation about what a realistic goal would be, and they establish a clear goal on their graph that they hope to achieve in the following session. There are two central purposes behind this goal setting process. The first is the hope that when children realize that they can reach the goals they set out to meet, they will develop a heightened sense of accomplishment and confidence with reading. The second purpose for the program's focus on goal setting is to simultaneously assist each child in practicing self-regulation skills through setting achievable goals and working towards meeting those goals. Self-regulation is a life skill that then can be applied to other areas of their lives including other academic subjects.

Participants of Reading Rocks

The Reading Rocks program is offered to children ages 6-16 in the Niagara Region demonstrating significant difficulties in their reading due to a potential or diagnosed reading disability. To sign their child up for the program, parents must first complete a Program Application Form and provide the LDANR with any available diagnosis reports and their child's most recent school report card. To be eligible to participate in the program, children must be performing below grade level in their reading and have a diagnosed or potential reading disability.

Children enrolled in the Reading Rocks program, although offered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region, may not necessarily have a learning disability. A

formal diagnosis of a learning disability is not a requirement for the program for two main reasons. First, many of the children that the LDANR support come from low-income families. A formal diagnosis of a learning disability can become a financial burden for these families and, as such, requiring a formal diagnosis for program participation may leave some of the most vulnerable readers without the support they need. Secondly, a formal diagnosis for a learning disability is typically not conducted until approximately Grade 3 or 4, by which time these children are up to two grade levels behind their peers in reading. Requiring this formal diagnosis would result in young struggling readers being denied access to supportive intervention programs. It is important to note, however, that child participants do not have an underlying intellectual disability that may be causing the reading difficulty. Once submitted, the LDANR staff review the child's Program Application Form. If the child meets the eligibility requirements for the program, the child is then enrolled into the program and paired with a literacy tutor.

My Research Participants

The participants in my study included one child enrolled in the Reading Rocks literacy program and the assigned one-on-one volunteer tutor, totalling two participants altogether. The child participant took part in the eight-week program, receiving one-to-one remedial literacy instruction from the assigned tutor. My participants were involved in the Reading Rocks program at the Brock University location on Tuesday and Thursdays from October to December of 2014. The participants in my study were chosen from this group out of convenience, as I facilitated the program on these nights and it would therefore be easier to collect my own researcher observations while ensuring the data collection went smoothly.

The child participant in this study was a seven-year old girl. This was her first time participating in the Reading Rocks program. She was referred to the program by her school teacher due to her difficulty with reading and the potential of her having a reading disability. The tutor participant was in her third year at Brock University and had previously tutored for the Reading Rocks program the year before.

Recruitment

The child and tutor participant in my study were chosen using convenience sampling through the LDANR and myself. Although it is understood that convenience sampling does not provide the most authentic data as opposed to randomized sampling, convenience sampling was chosen because my study's focus is specific to the participants of the Reading Rocks program. The LDANR staff and myself chose the tutor participant for this research study. It was important that the tutor had a thorough understanding of the organization and the Reading Rocks program. Although all tutors underwent training for tutoring in the Reading Rocks program, it was also preferable that the tutor had prior experience with Reading Rocks. Along with Reading Rocks tutor training, the tutor participant was also debriefed regarding the details of my research and her role as a participant in this study. Furthermore, she underwent training for administering the think-aloud protocol with her child and attended regular meetings throughout the duration of the program to discuss the progress of the data collection.

The tutor had already been assigned a child by the LDANR staff prior to any knowledge of the study. This child was then, by association with the tutor, chosen to participate in the study. The child's parents were informed of the study on the first night of the program, and I asked their permission to have their child partake in the study. A consent form was given to the parents of the child participant, restating the objectives and logistics of the current study, asking them to

provide their signature indicating that they agree to their child participating in the research study. The child participant was informed of the study at the beginning of the program, as well, to avoid deception.

My Study Protocol

To monitor the goal setting process throughout the duration of the program, the tutor-child pair was assigned one literacy component, phonics, that would be documented through the think aloud protocol, photo elicitation interview, and researcher observations as they set goals for that specific skill each session. The small sample size allowed for a more detailed description of the processes and the dialogue involved in the goal-setting process.

Think-Aloud Protocol

To collect my research data, I utilized a think-aloud protocol, a qualitative measure of cognition. This measure involves researchers probing participants to verbalize their thoughts as the participant partakes in a task or activity (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). Ericsson and Simon (1984) discuss the practicality of using a think-aloud protocol, explaining that thinking aloud is not a foreign behaviour, but a behaviour that subjects would engage in on a daily basis. The think-aloud protocol has been accepted as a reliable measure of thinking for many decades. Dating back to 1945, psychologists Karl Duncker and Lynne Lees emphasized the importance of studying productive thinking in their study of problem solving, utilizing the think-aloud protocol as participants solved complex problems. More recently, Durning et al. (2013) compared the think-aloud protocol to answering multiple-choice questions using a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). They concluded from the study that the think-aloud protocol is a reasonable measure of cognition that can be used in educational research.

To conduct the think-aloud protocol, the tutor involved in my research study underwent training on the think-aloud procedure. During each tutoring session, when it came time for the child to graph her progress and set goals for the following session, the tutor would use an audio recorder to document their dialogue throughout the process. The child insisted she wanted to be involved so the tutor allowed the child to press the start and stop button on the recorder. The dialogue between the child and the tutor was unstructured, with the tutor only using prompts to encourage the child to verbalize her thoughts throughout the goal setting process. This dialogue would be helpful in understanding how the child and tutor interact when the child is setting personal goals.

Photo Elicitation Interview

Visual research methods have become increasingly popular among applied research studies with organizations. Visual representations, specifically the use of photographic evidence, provide a means of documenting experiences across time, showing the progress of a specific phenomenon (Ray & Smith, 2012). Qualitative researchers commonly utilize photographs as a source of data collection in conjunction with other qualitative methods, as they add an alternate dimension to understanding the phenomenon (Macdonald, 2008).

Photos taken by the researcher, however, are subject to bias if only interpreted by the researcher alone. To minimize this bias, many researchers utilize photo elicitation interviews. Photo elicitation interviews are conversations structured around specific images of events or experiences to gather further meaning and information of the experience by gaining a participant's perspective. Photo elicitation was first introduced in anthropology and sociology by researcher John Collier in 1957 with his research of environmental influences on psychological stress. Collier paralleled photo elicitation interviews with non-photographic interviews noting

that the photo interviews seemed to elicit more refined memories among the participants and allowed for more elaboration and precision about events than did the non-photo interviews (Harper, 2002). Photo elicitation interview methods have also been credited for their usefulness in researching youth. Liebenberg, Ungar, and Theron (2014) suggest that visual methods provide children with a voice while additionally allowing power imbalances between the researcher and participant to be overcome as the child is given the opportunity to share his or her perspective on the images. Lisa Whiting's (2015) research on children similarly points to photo elicitation methods as a way of empowering children by valuing their viewpoints. Furthermore, Whiting (2015) concluded that photo elicitation offers a fun and engaging experience for child participants to make them feel more comfortable with the research process.

The photo elicitation interview was utilized in this particular study to complement the think-aloud transcription of the goal setting process. Each session I collected photographic evidence of the child participants' workstation, specifically the phonics graph on her workstation showing her progress and goals, to outline what goal setting looks like throughout the Reading Rocks program. I collected one photograph of the workstation every week of the eight-week program, with the exception of the first week due to assessments, for a total of 7 photos from which to draw my data. These photographs illustrate the participants' lived experiences of goal setting, providing further understanding into the goal setting process in Reading Rocks.

Using the photographic evidence collected throughout the program, a photo elicitation interview took place at the end of the program to understand the child's interpretations of the photos. I asked the child questions about the photos and the progress that the photos indicate that she had made in the program. This discussion allowed for the child to share her own lived experiences of the goal setting process, drawing upon the photos taken throughout the program.

Including the child's voice and elucidation of the photos minimized subjectivity by removing interpretations of the photos solely from the researcher's perspective.

Researcher Observations

Observational data collected by the researcher are considered to offer greater and deeper understanding into the experiences of research participants (Cotton, D., Stokes, & Cotton, P., 2010). Observational data refers to information that is recorded by researchers as they observe the phenomenon of interest. Researcher observations allow for researchers to expand on areas of the study that were not captured via other research methods, resulting in a more thorough account of the experiences.

During the tutoring sessions, I, as both facilitator of the program and researcher, observed the research participants as they set goals and worked towards achieving them. I recorded any observations that I thought might assist in understanding the participants' experiences, including non-verbal cues and participant behaviours, throughout the eight weeks. These data were recorded to supplement the transcription of the think-aloud protocol, providing context to a purely verbal collection of data.

Transcription and Analysis

The think-aloud dialogue between the child-tutor pair was audio recorded by the tutor using a tape recording device. At the end of each session, the tutor would return the recorder with the dialogue from that session to myself. Following each session, I transcribed the dialogue from the recording device into a Word Processing document, titled "Reading Rocks Transcription", with the session date indicated above each entry. My own researcher observations were recorded in a notebook during each program session to compare with, and add

to, the data collected from the think-aloud and photo-elicitation methods. The complete conversations captured in the think-aloud dialogue as well as in the photo-elicitation interview on the final night of the program were transcribed verbatim into the Reading Rocks Transcription document.

I created a separate “Goal Setting Themes” Word Processing document to track potential themes that outlined how children experience goal setting in Reading Rocks. To analyze the content and search for themes within the data, I thoroughly engaged myself with the dialogue between the tutor and the child as well as my own observations to uncover themes. I searched for themes that remained consistent, as well as themes that changed throughout the program, and across the research methods. In the Goal Setting Themes document, I designated each potential theme with a different colour. As I read through the think-aloud conversations on a weekly basis, I highlighted sections of the transcript that corresponded to the potential themes that emerged. Colour-coding the transcript allowed me to reveal major themes that appeared throughout. My own observations were also analyzed week by week to find consistencies with the themes emerging from the think-aloud dialogue. Lastly, I colour-coded sections of the photo-elicitation interview transcription corresponding to the themes found in the think-aloud protocol.

Triangulating the Data

Triangulation is a multi-method approach to analyzing and interpreting data. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, as cited in MacDonald, 2008) describe triangulation as a means of gaining a more in-depth analysis and understanding of the phenomenon of interest. When studying complex phenomenon in qualitative research, it is not uncommon to analyze the phenomenon from

various perspectives to provide more detail into the experiences of the research participants (MacDonald, 2008).

Similar to MacDonald's (2008) study, I utilized verbal representations (think-aloud protocol), visual representations (photo elicitation interviews), and researcher observations. Each program session provided verbal data through the think-aloud protocol and recorded data via researcher observations. These two sets of data were triangulated with the photographs taken throughout the duration of the program. To triangulate the data, themes that emerged from the think-aloud transcription were compared with the observations made by the researcher, which could be used to either hinder or support the findings from the transcription. The photographs of the goal setting process were also compared to the themes that emerged from both the transcription and observations. Themes that overlapped between all three methods were designated as primary, overarching themes. Triangulating the data from the think-aloud protocol, the photo elicitation interview, and researcher observations augmented not only the quantity but also, more importantly, the quality of data collected.

Chapter 4

Results & Discussion

The ideas presented and explained in Chapter 2 including goal setting, motivation, and self-regulation will be further explored within the think-aloud and photo elicitation interview transcriptions I analyzed, as well as the researcher observations I collected. These data will be used to address my research question, how do child participants in the Reading Rocks program experience goal setting?

When analyzing my data, a number of overarching themes emerged. First, I will discuss how the child participant, Amanda (a pseudonym), set goals in the Reading Rocks program and what role the tutor, Michelle (a pseudonym), played in this process. I will further explain how both Amanda and Michelle experienced negotiating and setting appropriate goals in the program through scaffolding and proper goal calibration. Secondly, I will examine the use of positive reinforcement by both myself as the program facilitator and the tutor, Michelle, as a means of motivating Amanda to realize her potential with her reading. Thirdly, Amanda's improvements in her perceived self-competence with reading will be explored with respect to setting personal, attainable goals. Lastly, I will describe how, by the end of the program, Amanda was taking ownership over her reading achievements and demonstrating autonomy in her learning.

Setting Appropriate Goals

Setting goals is a well-utilized routine that helps to motivate individuals to achieve a certain task (Seifert, 2004). This was referred to in Chapter 2 as the achievement goal theory. The Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region recognizes the importance of goals in

motivating individuals to perform tasks that they would otherwise be unmotivated to perform, and therefore implements goal setting into the Reading Rocks program. Children participating in the program are typically highly unmotivated to engage in reading based tasks due to their continuous difficulty with reading. Encouraging goal setting and guiding the child participants in reaching their goals throughout the program is used as a motivational tool to keep them motivated to continue to engage in reading tasks.

As the program facilitator, I observed goal setting in all of the participating children in Reading Rocks. Specific to this research, I observed Amanda and Michelle's goal setting process. To begin the goal setting process, prior to the first session, Michelle created a blank graph on Amanda's workstation with the program sessions written along the horizontal axis and the vertical axis left blank. The intervals on the vertical axis were determined after Michelle got a sense of what skills Amanda would be working on and could judge what sort of interval would allow Amanda to accurately follow her progress throughout the program. Since Amanda was still working on her letter names and sounds, each new letter name she learned as well as each new letter sound would count as a skill learned. At the beginning of every session, Michelle and Amanda had a conversation about how many new letter names and sounds Amanda predicted she could learn by the end of the session. Michelle guided Amanda to set a goal based on this conversation. They then recorded the goal on Amanda's chart with a dot and Amanda would strive to reach this goal. After they had spent 12 minutes working on the new skills, Amanda would chart her progress on the phonics graph. If Amanda reached or exceeded her goal, she would receive a "smiley" sticker to add to her graph to indicate that she "hit her goal" that session.

The second component of my data includes the think-aloud dialogue between Michelle and Amanda throughout the program. The goal setting conversation between them is captured in the following extract.

- Michelle: How many do you think we can learn today?
Amanda: Seven!
Michelle: Do you want to write on our chart number seven, do you want to mark it off? Okay so you can put a dot, this is for you, and we're gonna put a dot...so this is today, so [at the goal] just put a dot there.
Amanda: [Counting] One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.
Michelle: Perfect, so this is our goal that we're gonna get to today. And what happens when we reach our goal? What do we get?
Amanda: A smiley!

(At the end of the same session)

- Michelle: How many did you do?
Amanda: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.
Michelle: So when we look at our chart, how many did we say we were gonna do?
Amanda: Seven!
Michelle: So what does that mean?
Amanda: We got seven!
Michelle: You got seven, so what do you get? When you get your goal.
Amanda: A star and a smiley face!
Michelle: Here you go, pick your smiley face. You can put it right up to [your goal].

Michelle begins the session by asking Amanda to set a goal and guides her in recording the goal on Amanda's chart. At the end of the session, Michelle probes Amanda to think about whether or not she has reached her goal, using the recording on the chart as a marker. Amanda realizes that she has met her goal and that she could indicate this on her chart with a smiley face sticker.

I triangulated my own observations and the think aloud dialogue with photographs and a photo elicitation interview with Michelle and Amanda. Figure 3 is a photo of Amanda's graph

after the fourth session, with the first session being dedicated to assessments. It is clear from the photo that Amanda's progress was tracked each session, with the date of each session indicated along the horizontal axis of the graph. The stickers specify the number of new skills learned, quantified along the vertical axis. For example, on October 16th, Amanda learned six new letter names/sounds and reached her goal, demonstrated by the smiley face sticker. When I asked for clarification about how many she learned in the third session, Michelle explained that Amanda had actually learned 8 letter names/sounds instead of 13 as the graph suggests. Instead of placing the necessary number of stickers that corresponded with the appropriate number along the left side of the graph (8), Amanda added 8 stickers to the graph. They had both agreed to leave the stickers as they were and remember that Amanda had mastered 8 letter names and sounds instead of 13. This illustrates the flexible nature of the graphing and goal setting process.

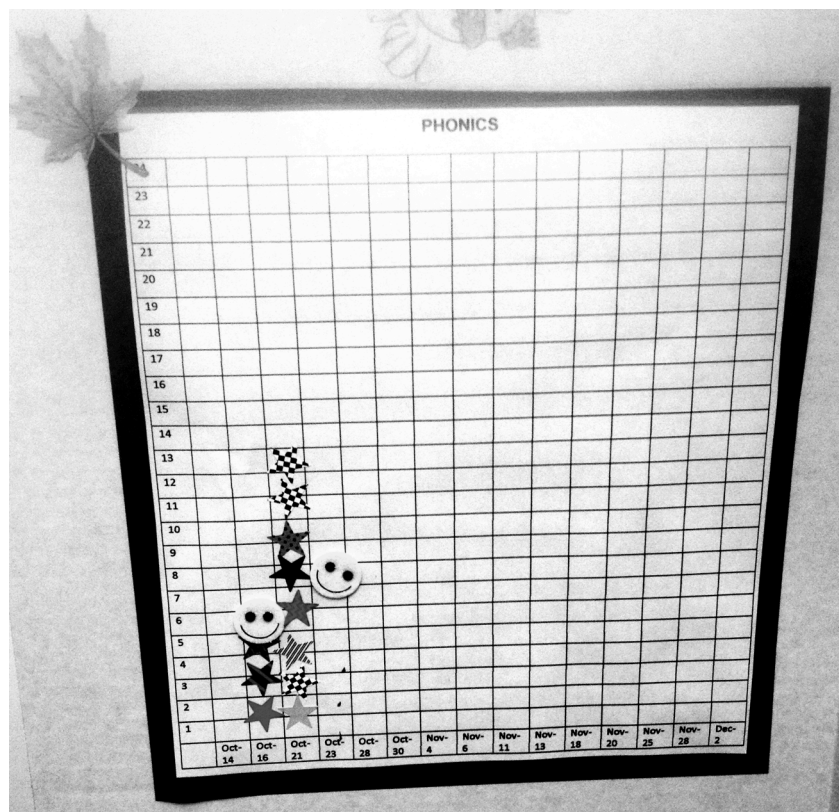


Figure 3. Amanda's phonics graph – week 2.

For goal setting to be successful in motivating an individual to complete a task, it is important that the goals set are realistic and attainable (Schunk, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 2, appropriately calibrated goals are effective in maintaining effort and interest in a task. Goals that are far too challenging typically result in failure to complete the task, further resulting in a lack of confidence with the task. However, goals that require minimal effort to attain lead to boredom and lack of engagement in the task. Thus it is important to strike a balance between setting goals that are too challenging and setting goals that are too easy. The ability to properly calibrate self-set goals is an essential skill to develop and was evident throughout the program as the tutor, Michelle, guided the child, Amanda, in practicing this skill.

It was clear from my own observations that at the start of Reading Rocks Amanda had limited knowledge of goal calibration based on the impractical goals she was setting for herself. As a program facilitator, I recognized this as a common feature of children who are new to the program. New program participants typically have difficulty judging their own capabilities with reading, and when asked to predict how much better they can do in the upcoming sessions, they either have low expectations or a magnified idea of what they can achieve. These misjudgements could possibly be attributed to lack of experience with setting personal goals. Children who have previously been enrolled in Reading Rocks are typically aware of their potentials and are accustomed to setting goals, and generally have a better understanding of goal calibration.

A key component of Reading Rocks is that the tutors help the children to become more independent in their goal setting. The tutors, while their main focus is helping the child with their reading, also concentrate on assisting the child to become more aware of how to set appropriate goals. Much of the conversations between the tutors and the children at the beginning of the program involve the tutor directing the child in setting goals that are not too difficult or too easy.

They will use language such as, “Wow! That’s really high! Why don’t we try for this number instead and eventually we’ll get there.” These conversations between tutor and child occur regularly throughout the program until the child has a better understanding of what he or she can accomplish within one session. By the end of the program it is clear that the children are practicing more independence when creating their own goals.

These general observations are present throughout the think-aloud dialogue transcription between Michelle and Amanda. Amanda’s ineffective goal calibration was demonstrated through the following dialogue between herself and Michelle during the second week of the program.

- Michelle: So if we learned four [letters] in one day, how many do you think we can learn today?
Amanda: Eighteen!
Michelle: Eighteen...how about a little bit lower? So we did four...
Amanda: Nine!
Michelle: You want to try for nine?
Amanda: Or I want to try for eleven!
Michelle: Hmm...let’s do...
Amanda: Seven!
Michelle: Okay, why don’t we try for seven.

Michelle recognized that the goal of learning eighteen letters in one program session was unrealistic given that Amanda learned four letters in the previous session. To guide Amanda in setting a more attainable goal, Michelle then probed her to think of more practical goals based on her progress in the first session.

In the following session, Amanda set another unrealistic, yet easy, goal, captured in the following discussion between her and Michelle.

- Michelle: Before we start, we’re going to figure out how many we can do today.
Amanda: I want to do...one.
Michelle: You only want to do one?? You can do at least five. Look – the first day we learned six.
Amanda: Woah.
Michelle: We don’t have to do that many today though if you don’t want.

How many do you think we should do?
Amanda: [Pausing] Seven.
Michelle: You want to try for seven?

The two above examples demonstrate Amanda's initial poor judgement of goal calibration at the beginning of the 8-week program. Throughout the program, Michelle continued to guide Amanda in setting goals that were both attainable but challenging. Michelle utilized scaffolding techniques to guide Amanda's goal setting. Scaffolding in the context of adult-child interactions consists, "of the adult "controlling" those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity," and then guiding the child towards understanding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 90). Michelle encouraged Amanda to set her own goals, but would offer her own insight if Michelle judged the goals to be impractical. Michelle had experience setting goals whereas Amanda did not, so setting appropriately calibrated goal was initially beyond Amanda's capacity until she became aware of her limits and abilities. There were sessions where Amanda did not reach her goal; however, as illustrated in Figure 4 by the last five sessions she was reaching her goal each session. This is an indication that Amanda became aware of what she was capable of achieving and could set attainable goals that she could strive for. This is further evidenced in the photo elicitation interview where Amanda explained that goals were more difficult to set at the beginning of the program compared to toward the end of the program. She explained that she set goals every session and that she got used to the process. It was apparent that Amanda was more comfortable setting her own goals toward the end of the program. Her motivation shifted from external, "I got a smiley!" (referring to her smiley face stickers) in the beginning of the program to internal, "I hit my goal!" by the end of the program.

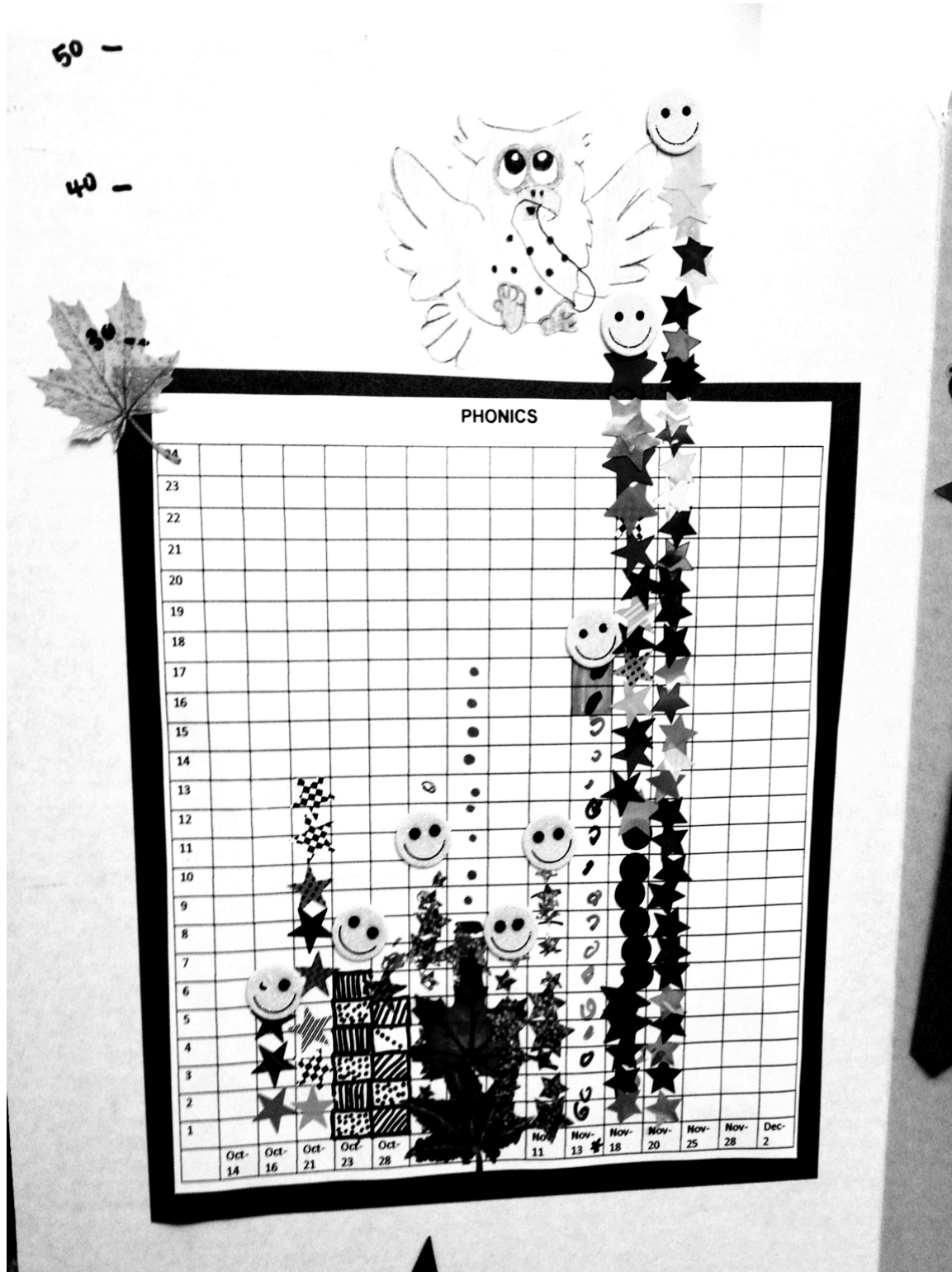


Figure 4. Amanda's phonics graph – week 6.

Positive Reinforcement

Stemming from B. F. Skinner's (1953) idea of operant conditioning, positive reinforcement, "is an event that, when introduced following a behavior, makes that behavior more probable in the future" (Shaffer, Kipp, Wood, & Willoughby, 2010, p. 227). Positive reinforcement, specifically the use of praise, has been accepted as an effective tool to enhance children's intrinsic motivation if employed appropriately. Henderlong & Lepper (2002) explain that praise has the potential to increase a child's intrinsic motivation toward a task if the child perceives the praise as sincere. The authors also suggest that praise is most effective when the child's performance is attributed to causes under their control, when autonomy is encouraged, and when there are attainable expectations. The previous section highlighted the importance of setting attainable goals throughout the program as a way of keeping the child motivated to continue to engage in the task at hand, and the following section will address the importance of promoting autonomy with children as they set their goals. Triangulating these strategies with positive reinforcement can provide an effective method towards increasing a child's motivation to perform a certain task.

In Chapter 2 it was established that children with learning disabilities, dyslexia in particular, are accustomed to negative feedback and responses regarding their literacy skills, especially in schools where their failure with reading is most apparent. The effects of this negative feedback were discussed in relation to the Matthew Effect where these children in turn lose motivation to engage in reading based tasks due to their continued struggle with reading and the unenthusiastic responses they receive about their reading ability. Providing these children a space where they can receive positive rather than negative feedback can be a way of avoiding the

Matthew Effect, encouraging these children to see their own potentials not in relation to their peers, but to their own successes with reading.

As a facilitator of the Reading Rocks program, my own observations indicate that tutors frequently use positive reinforcement to motivate and encourage their child participants. In the program, praise is used to congratulate the children on their accomplishments and acknowledge their hard work throughout the program, with particular emphasis on reaching goals set throughout the program. Children tend to respond positively to this type of reinforcement and can constantly be seen smiling, laughing, or clapping after their tutor tells them how proud they are of the child's progress in the program. I have also observed instances where such reinforcement is not as effective. As previously mentioned, in situations where the tutor does not seem sincere with praise or when the tutor overuses praise to the point where it becomes artificial, children recognize this and respond accordingly. It is important that the tutors provide genuine positive reinforcement at times when children have earned it.

In addition to the positive reinforcement from the tutors, I, as the facilitator also provide reinforcement when I check in on each child-tutor pair during each program session. If children attain or exceed a goal they had set for themselves, I make a point of recognizing and praising their exceptional amount of progress. Having another adult offer praise and comments on their successes only seems to enhance the children's confidence with reading tasks.

One instance in particular that I observed as I collected my research data illustrates the direct effects that positive reinforcement can have on the child's motivation. As I performed my rounds during one program session, Amanda, with her tutor Michelle in tow, came running out of the room where she was working to find me. She excitedly explained that I needed to visit to her room to see how well she had done that session. I followed her to the room with Michelle

where Amanda proceeded to show me her graph on her workstation. She pointed to her smiley sticker (her goal) and exclaimed that she had gone past her goal that she set for herself, describing how many new letter names and sounds she knew. I opened my eyes and mouth wide with shock, to display that I recognized her great accomplishment. I expressed how proud I was of her, “Wow Amanda! That is incredible! I’m so proud of you, look at how well you’re doing!” As I told her this she jumped up and down with an enormous grin on her face. I smiled back. She told me that she would set a new goal and try to exceed the next goal the same way. This happened a couple of times throughout the program and demonstrates the importance of both verbal and nonverbal positive reinforcement. Even offering praise in the form of high fives, thumbs up, or smiling seems to stimulate a sense of pride among the child participants of the program.

The conversations between Amanda and Michelle, captured by the think aloud protocol, illustrate the use of both verbal and tangible types of positive reinforcement with goal setting. Numerous examples throughout the think aloud transcriptions highlight the frequent use of praise or positive verbal reinforcement by both Michelle and myself, the program facilitator. Phrases including, “That’s amazing Amanda!”, “Good job!”, “You did awesome Amanda!”, “You beat your goal! Awesome!” illustrate the pattern of positive reinforcement language used when Amanda reached or surpassed her goals. Amanda responded well to this type of reinforcement and began to pursue this verbal reinforcement for reaching her goals. After Amanda exceeded a goal she had set for herself, Michelle said to Amanda, “You did awesome [Amanda], good job!” to which Amanda eagerly replied, “Can we go see Sam and show her?” The positive reactions that both Michelle and I provided regarding Amanda’s achievements made reaching her goal more desirable.

Stickers were also used as a form of positive reinforcement. If Amanda accomplished her goal she could put a smiley sticker on her graph to indicate she met her goal.

- Amanda: If I get up to seven I get a smiley, if I get up to nine I get a smiley.
Michelle: Why do you get a smiley?
Amanda: If I get to ten I get a smiley! And if I get to twelve I get a smiley!
Michelle: Why do you get a smiley?
Amanda: Because.
Michelle: Because why?
Amanda: I got up to a thing. If I get up to here, here, here, or here or here I get a smiley.
Michelle: You got your goal, right?
Amanda: Ya.

Tangible rewards such as stickers typically encourage extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation towards a task. Chapter 2 describes intrinsic motivation as ideal due to its long-term motivation effects in comparison to extrinsic motivation that is typically short-lived. Intrinsic motivation, however, can be obtained if the tangible reward is connected to the purpose of the skill (Project Informing and Designing Education for All Learners [IDEAL], 2013). Applying this to my research, Michelle ensured that Amanda was associating the stickers to the goals she was reaching and also to the learning of her new letter names and sounds. Amanda demonstrated that by the end of the program she was more concentrated on reaching her goal than the fact that she was receiving a sticker as verified in the following conversation:

- Michelle: Do you remember how many we thought we wanted to learn?
Amanda: Um, seven.
Michelle: Ya. So what did we do today?
Amanda: We got to our goal!
Michelle: Ya, we passed our goal, didn't we?
Amanda: Ya so I still get a smiley.

The photo elicitation interview also demonstrated how positive reinforcement in the form of stickers encouraged Amanda to think about why she was receiving the stickers and what she

had to do in order to attain a smiley sticker. When I pointed to the Figures 3 and 4 and asked Amanda what the graphs were about she replied, “It’s about my goals, and whenever I get my goal I have to put a smiley face on and some stars.” This complements the findings above. By the end of the program, Amanda focused mainly on attaining goals she set for herself, with the stickers being an added bonus to reaching her goal. Verbal reinforcement was also evident throughout the interview with many instances where both myself and Michelle would compliment and praise Amanda for all the work she had done and all the progress she had made throughout the eight-week program. The positive reinforcement, coupled with reaching her goals, seemed to increase Amanda’s confidence with literacy tasks.

Perceived Self-Competence

Chapter 2 explored Timothy Seifert’s (2004) four theories of motivation, one of which was referred to as the self-efficacy theory. This theory suggests that if individuals perceive themselves as capable of completing a task, they will have motivation to engage in such task. The opposite is also true; if individuals believe that they are not competent enough to perform a task, they will lack the motivation to engage in the task. This is especially true for children with reading difficulties. Setting and attaining goals can act as a tool to encourage motivation among reluctant readers. Reaching goals that they have set for themselves allows them to visualize their successes, offering a greater perceived self-competence.

My observations of the Reading Rocks program support the self-efficacy theory. It has been previously mentioned that children with reading disabilities do not occupy a high level of perceived self-competence in the area of reading and literacy. Children who participate in the Reading Rocks program have experienced many difficulties with reading and can typically be

heard at the beginning of the program making remarks such as, “I can’t do this”, “I’m too dumb”, or “I don’t know how to read!” They do not identify themselves as capable of performing literacy related tasks. Throughout the program, however, as the children set goals and reach these goals, there is a shift in their thinking. They begin to see, through the use of graphing and goal setting, that they can be successful in literacy tasks. At the end of the program the children are making much different remarks than they did at the start. I hear them say instead, “Look what I can do now!”, “See how many words I know?”, “Listen to me read this!”

At the beginning of the program, it was clear that Amanda was not confident with reading. Counter to her outgoing and bubbly personality, when I visited the room where she and Michelle were working, she would act shy and would refuse to read in front of me. She also seemed timid when approaching an unfamiliar word or a new letter combination she didn’t know. Her confidence, at least with reading, was noticeably lacking. As a program facilitator I also talked to Amanda’s mother regularly throughout the program. Her mother was concerned at the beginning of the program that Amanda would not make much progress throughout the program due to her lack of confidence with reading. Toward the end of the program Amanda’s attitude had changed towards reading. She began asking me if I wanted to hear her read or see all the new words she learned and she became eager to show both myself and her mother how she had reached or surpassed the goal that she had set for herself. It was obvious how much Amanda’s perceived self-competence had changed over the eight-week program. Amanda’s mother stopped me one session to emphasize the incredible progress that her daughter had made in not only her reading skills, but also her confidence in herself and her own reading abilities.

Amanda's new confidence with regard to her reading was evident in the following conversation, only two weeks into the program. The dialogue is between Michelle, Amanda, and myself after Amanda had reached a goal.

Me: That's awesome Amanda!
Amanda: I know. And I finished the whole entire role [of stickers]!
Me: Wow!
Amanda: Now you're gonna have to get me more stickers, more stickers, more stickers!

Michelle: How many pages did you read today?
Amanda: Six! I got my goal!
Me: Oh my goodness! That's awesome Amanda.
Amanda: I know. [Smiling]

Amanda demonstrates that she recognizes her successes and is proud of what she has accomplished. Reaching her goals has proven to be effective in increasing Amanda's perceived self-competence, especially when compared to my own observations of Amanda's attitudes at the beginning of the program. Amanda's perceived self-competence with reading is dramatically greater than it was prior to the Reading Rocks program.

The photo elicitation interview also provides insight into Amanda's goal setting and her developed confidence with her reading abilities. When I asked Amanda how she felt when she reached a goal, she explained that she felt happy. I went on to ask her:

Me: How did you feel when you went over the board?
Amanda: Very, very happy [laughing].
Me: What did you do when you went over the board? You told me before.
Michelle: You were so happy...
Amanda: I was so happy that I screamed!

She also indicated that she was proud of what she had accomplished, of getting all the way over the board with her goals, and that she had enjoyed setting goals for herself. It was

apparent that Amanda's experience with goal setting was a positive one and that reaching her goals throughout the program improved her perceived self-competence in reading.

Child Autonomy and Ownership of their Learning

Another component of Timothy Seifert's (2004) theories of motivation was what he referred to as attribution theory. Attribution theory focuses on what individuals attribute their successes and failures to. Attributing their successes and failures to forces that they can control themselves typically results in increased motivation to perform a task. Providing children the opportunity to exercise their autonomy and take ownership over their learning can encourage them to attribute outcomes of a task to what they can control themselves. Children are seldom given opportunities to regulate their own learning, for example through setting personal goals and working toward reaching them. They are typically provided with expectations to meet by their teachers and school curriculum, expectations that may be difficult for children with learning disabilities to fulfill. Supporting and guiding children with reading disabilities to set their own literacy goals and work toward achieving them could, in turn, encourage them to attribute their successes to hard work and the effort they put into the task. Taking control of their own learning, or learning how to self-regulate, can then motivate children with reading disabilities to perform reading tasks that they may have otherwise avoided.

Encouraging children to become independent in their self-regulation is a large focus of the Reading Rocks program. When child participants are new to the Reading Rocks program, it is clear that they have little experience of being in charge of their own learning and sometimes seem uncomfortable when first offered choice by their tutors. Tutors give the children choice over as much as they can in the program, from general choices such as what type of stickers they

want to use to graph their successes or how they want to decorate their board, to more specific choices such as what skills they are struggling with and need work on, or choosing the goal they want to set. Although the tutors do offer some guidance with these, especially with appropriate goal setting as previously discussed, they provide more and more choice to the children throughout the duration of the program. After participating in the program, returning participants typically demonstrate increased self-regulation and autonomy in their learning; they know what they need to work on and know what goals are realistic for them. Amanda was new to the Reading Rocks program and, from my observations at the beginning of the program, she was unaware of what literacy skills she struggled with. I would ask her what she was working on at the beginning of the program and she would generally respond with, "I don't know." A few weeks into the program, however, when I visited Michelle and Amanda working together, Amanda was telling Michelle which letters she still needed to master. When I would ask her what she was working on, she would proceed to tell me all the letters that she was working on in that session. Through learning how to set goals for herself and understanding what areas she needed to develop, Amanda appeared to be more in control of her learning by the end of the program.

Evidence from the think aloud interviews also provides insight into how Amanda demonstrated autonomy and how she was encouraged to take ownership of her learning. Through using "I" language, Amanda illustrated that she was aware of her own efforts in achieving her goals. She was often quoted as saying, "*I got my goal!*", "*I hit my goal!*", "*I got my goal here too!*" Using "I" instead of "we" demonstrates that Amanda attributes her successes not to Michelle helping her to reach her goals, but to her achieving them on her own due to her own efforts. Michelle also encouraged Amanda's ownership of her learning by using "you" language.

Michelle frequently used “you” when referring to Amanda’s efforts. Michelle is quoted saying, “*You* were amazing, *you* know all of these!” and, “*You* beat your goal!” Exercising this type of language also encouraged Amanda to attribute her successes to her hard work. To further encourage Amanda’s autonomy with her learning, Michelle provided Amanda with plenty of choice throughout the program. In particular to this study, each session Michelle would ask Amanda to set a goal for herself. She would ask, “How many do you want to do today?” or, “How many do you think you can do today?”, although, as previously mentioned, Michelle would provide Amanda with guidance in setting appropriate goals. Giving Amanda choice allowed her to make decisions regarding her learning.

As demonstrated in the photo elicitation interview, Michelle also gave Amanda choice in how she wanted to graph her success. Amanda explained that she selected the stickers to add to her graph, and that she added the stickers and her goals to the graph herself. Figure 5 illustrates her choice in using a variety of stickers and markers for graphing her success in the program. She seemed proud of her involvement in the graphing and goal setting process. Michelle explained that on one occasion Amanda accidentally added more stickers to her board than she had earned, illustrated in Figure 5 on October 21st. Instead of adding stickers up to the corresponding number indicated along the left side of the graph, she added the number of stickers that corresponded with the number of new letter names and sounds she learned. This resulted in a misrepresentation of the number of skills she had learned that session. Michelle indicated that she had noticed but did not stop her. Instead, she reminded Amanda afterwards that the stickers did not represent the number of skills learned, and that the numbers along the left side of the graph indicated the number of skills learned. This example illustrates how Michelle permitted

Amanda to make her own mistakes, encouraging her to take ownership and responsibility of her own learning.

It is evident from my observations during the program as well as the conversations between Michelle and Amanda during the think aloud and final photo elicitation interview that Amanda was encouraged to take ownership of her learning. Taking ownership of her learning in turn allowed her to attribute her successes to her own efforts and hard work.

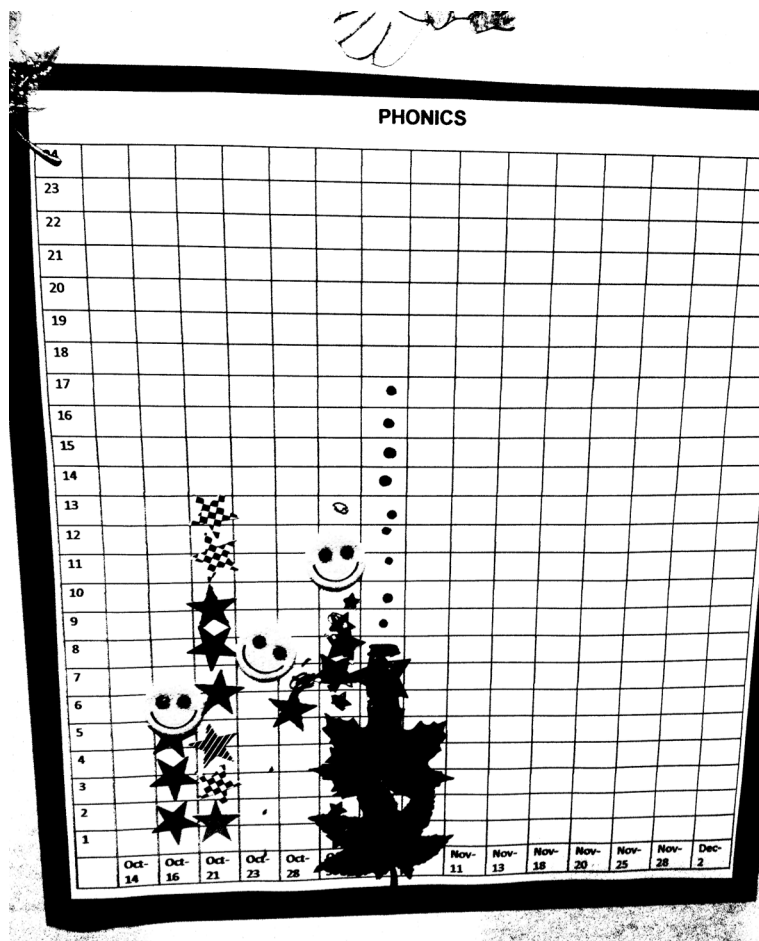


Figure 5. Amanda’s phonics graph – week 4.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Amanda began the Reading Rocks program with a negative attitude towards reading due to her constant struggle with literacy-based tasks. She lacked motivation to perform reading tasks and furthermore exhibited low perceived self-competence with respect to her reading abilities. Although the main objective of the Reading Rocks program is to improve literacy skills, another equally important component of the program focuses on motivating reluctant readers through setting goals and tracking their success throughout the program. The current research study demonstrated how goal setting is experienced by a child, Amanda, in the Reading Rocks program and how setting goals increased Amanda's motivation to engage in literacy activities and tasks. Four themes emerged which outline the experiences that allowed for an increase in motivation.

Michelle, Amanda's tutor, guided Amanda in setting appropriate goals to ensure that Amanda was able to achieve the goals she set for herself. It was apparent that to motivate an individual there must exist a balance between setting goals that are too easy versus setting goals that are too challenging and unrealistic. Amanda also received plenty of positive reinforcement from both Michelle and myself. Amanda was encouraged to see and understand her successes through both verbal reinforcement (i.e. congratulating her when she reached a goal) and tangible rewards (i.e. encouraging her to add a smiley sticker to her graph when she reached a goal). Goal setting offered a way of changing Amanda's ideas of her reading abilities and increased her perceived self-competence. Through setting and attaining goals in the program, Amanda was able to understand that, contrary to her previous views, she *was* capable of succeeding in literacy-based tasks. Goal setting allowed Amanda to take control of her learning and begin to

realize her potential. Overall, the present study suggests that Amanda's experience with setting goals in the Reading Rocks program were positive and increased her motivation to read. It is our hope that Amanda's experiences with setting and achieving personal literacy goals will encourage her to continue to display greater motivation to engage in reading tasks due to her increased confidence and understanding of her literacy abilities.

Implications

Future Research

A variety of avenues exist to further research on the connection between literacy skill acquisition of children with reading disabilities and their motivation to perform reading tasks. This study focused specifically on goal setting and the role goal setting can potentially play in a vulnerable reader's motivation to engage in literacy tasks. Consistent with the aims of this study, further research would benefit from a comparison of how goal setting is utilized in the Reading Rocks program between different tutor-child pairs. As this study consisted only of one child-tutor pair, including more case studies would allow for a deeper understanding into the similarities and differences between the child participants' goal setting experiences within the Reading Rocks program.

Longitudinal findings may also offer an added dimension to future studies by providing insight into whether or not a child's motivation to read continues after participating in the literacy program. Longitudinal studies could also track any changes to a child's attitudes towards reading during and after participating in the program. It would be interesting to understand whether or not goal setting and, more broadly, self-regulation skills are carried on after the

program when the children perform literacy tasks. Motivation to read could then be compared between children who return to the program and children who do not return to the program.

Lastly, another area that may be of value to future research studies would be to include the perspective of the parents of the child participants. The parents may provide insight into any changes they may have noticed throughout the program with respect to their child's motivation and engagement with reading. Adding an outsiders view of the effects of goal setting in the program can provide an additional element to the understanding of goal setting in Reading Rocks.

The findings of the current research study offer valuable implications for both practice and policy surrounding reading disabilities and the importance of motivation. Literacy intervention programs aimed at supporting vulnerable readers can use these research findings to appreciate how goal setting can provide a way of motivating reluctant readers to engage in and become eager to read. The intervention program that would specifically benefit from the research data is Reading Rocks. As the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) offers the Reading Rocks program, the results of this study provide the LDANR with insight into how goal setting is experienced by child participants in the Reading Rocks program. This insight can offer support with training the tutors in how to encourage positive goal setting and to better explain the connection between goal setting and motivation to read in the program.

The findings of this research study can also be applied to educational settings. Educators are faced with the difficult responsibility of encouraging reluctant readers to engage in literacy tasks. Although it is understood that a one-on-one tutoring program cannot be paralleled with the responsibility of teaching upwards of 25 children, teachers struggling to motivate reluctant readers in their classroom are provided with information of goal setting as a form of motivation

for reluctant readers and what this looks like. Goal setting can be a strategy for educators to explore with unenthusiastic learners.

Limitations

Although providing valuable insight into policy and practice for literacy programs aimed at supporting children with learning disabilities, the present study does offer some limitations. The study consisted of a convenience sample due to the specificity of the research objective. The study aimed at researching participants of the Reading Rocks program in particular. This presented a small population of individuals. The location of the program site to be studied was chosen out of convenience. I, the researcher, was the facilitator at the specific program site and as such it was easier for me to conduct my observations at that individual program site. The tutor was also not randomly chosen from the group of volunteer tutors. The chosen tutor for this study had been previously involved in the program and as such had prior knowledge and familiarity with both the program and, with respect to this specific study, the goal setting process. She was also chosen on the basis that she as well as her assigned child had no prior associations with myself, excluding any personal relation bias. The child was randomly assigned to the tutor prior to the program by staff of the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region, removing some convenience bias.

Secondly, the present study only examined one case study of a child-tutor pair in the literacy program. The experiences with goal setting that the research participants provided, therefore, cannot be generalized to all participants of Reading Rocks, and certainly not to all children with reading disabilities. All children learn and experience situations differently and as such generalizations can be very difficult to validate. As discussed above, future research could

potentially include a larger number of case studies to increase the validity of the findings.

Although this may not allow for generalizations across the population of children with reading disabilities, it may give a more accurate representation of the experiences of participants in the Reading Rocks program.

Lastly, it was important that the child participant was made aware of and informed of the present study to avoid any deception. Informing the child participant of the study, specifically of the fact that she would be tape-recorded, could act as a limitation to the research study as it may minimize the authenticity of the data collected. The tutor participant, Michelle, discussed the study with Amanda, the child participant, informing her that they would be recording some of their conversations. Michelle told Amanda to imagine that the recorder was not there and encouraged her to engage in normal dialogue as she would if the recorder was not present. It is understood that when children are consciously being recorded or observed, they may alter their behaviour or responses; however, this is more often the case with intrusive studies that focus on sensitive topics that may make children feel uncomfortable (Hill, 2005; Punch, 2002). Since this is not the case for the present study, the loss of authenticity is undoubtedly negligible, however must be acknowledged as an unavoidable limitation in the study as the need to avoid deception was greater than the need to produce purely authentic data.

Final Thoughts

Reading is inherently linked to motivation. Individuals who are proficient readers are motivated to engage in reading, whereas individuals who incessantly struggle with reading become disengaged and lack the motivation to perform literacy tasks. The importance of developing strong literacy skills cannot be ignored. Children with reading disabilities struggle to

acquire foundational literacy skills, typically resulting in a reluctance to engage in reading tasks. Thus, it is essential that motivation is an area of focus in intervention programs aimed at supporting vulnerable readers.

The present study suggests that goal setting offers a practical strategy for increasing motivation among reluctant readers. The findings of this study add to the research aimed at understanding how to motivate students who appear unenthusiastic and disengaged in learning tasks. There exists a gap in the literature surrounding goal setting and its fundamental link to learner motivation. This study endeavoured to fill this gap by documenting the experiences of a reluctant learner engaged in goal setting. The results of the study demonstrate how the learner became increasingly motivated and engaged in previously overwhelming tasks. Goal setting can be regarded as a valuable element of literacy programs whose objective is to increase motivation among reluctant readers.

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Appendix



Brock University
 Research Ethics Office
 Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035
 Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 7/22/2013

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: MCNAMARA, John
 Child and Youth Studies

FILE: 12-287 - MCNAMARA

TYPE: Faculty Research STUDENT: Samantha Sendzik
 SUPERVISOR: John McNamara

TITLE: Reading Rocks: A study of literacy and motivation for children at-risk for reading disabilities

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW

Expiry Date: 7/31/2014

The Brock University Social Sciences Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 7/22/2013 to 7/31/2014.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 7/31/2014. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.


To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:


 Jan Frijters, Chair
 Social Sciences Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.