

The Effect of Dialogue Journals  
on the  
Reading Comprehension Achievement of Fourth Graders

by  
Kevin W. Baker

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Masters of Education

July 2014

Goucher College  
Graduate Programs in Education

## **Table of Contents**

List of Tables	iii
Abstract	iv
I. Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Hypothesis	2
Operational Definition	2
II. Review of the Literature	3
How Fourth Grade Students Comprehend What They Read	3
How Reading Comprehension Affects Achievement	5
Reasons Students Struggle With Reading Comprehension	6
Reading Comprehension Interventions	9
III. Methods	14
Design	14
Participants	14
Instrument	15
Procedure	15
IV. Results	17

V. Discussion	18
Implications of the Study	18
Theoretical Consequences	18
Threats to Validity	19
Connections to Existing Literature	19
Implications for Future Research	20
Conclusion	21
References	22

## **List of Tables**

1. Means and standard deviations of pre-test and post-test scores for each group	17
--	----

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of dialogue journals on student achievement in the area of reading comprehension for fourth graders. The participants of this study were fourth grade students in a Baltimore County Public School. The measurement tools for this study were the 2012-2013 Baltimore County Fourth Grade Fall and Winter Benchmark Assessments. This study used a pretest-posttest design with the Fall Benchmark being used as the pre-test and the Winter Benchmark being used as the post-test. The null hypothesis was supported for this study as there was no significant gains made by the group using the dialogue journals. Research in the area of reading comprehension interventions and effective writing strategies to help improve student achievement should continue to help provide further assistance to struggling students.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year Baltimore County Public Schools implemented a new English-Language Arts curriculum to help students meet the requirements of the Common Core Standards. This new curriculum aimed to create more rigorous reading instruction through the use of more complex novels and stories. In the fourth grade, students were expected to read and comprehend more challenging novels as indicated by the Lexile range of these novels. A Lexile text measure is a system that identifies the difficulty of a text by analyzing the semantic and syntactic elements of the text. In an effort to increase the rigor of reading instruction in all grade levels students were exposed to texts consisting of higher Lexile ranges than had been deemed appropriate in previous years.

At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, the researcher found that fourth grade students were having difficulty comprehending these more difficult texts. Many students were exposed to these more difficult novels for the first time at the beginning of the school year and they had difficulty understanding and making connections to what they were reading. The researcher became interested in looking for a reading strategy that would help student comprehend more difficult texts. Research suggested the use of writing activities to help improve reading comprehension among fourth grade students. The researcher was interested in finding out if the use of daily writing activities, such as dialogue journals, could improve reading comprehension among fourth graders and help improve comprehension of new reading material.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of dialogue journals on student achievement in the area of reading comprehension for fourth graders.

### **Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that students who utilize dialogues journals will show no significant gains in the area of reading comprehension when compared to those students who did not utilize dialogue journals.

### **Operational Definition**

The dependent variable for this study was **reading comprehension**. Reading comprehension was measured using the fourth grade reading benchmark test. This test assessed student ability to read a text and answer multiple choice and written response questions in the area of reading comprehension.

The independent variable was the use of **dialogue journals** during reading instruction. This instruction consisted of the use of dialogue journals that required students to reflect on the novel they were reading as well as respond to other students' written responses. Students were required to complete a written entry in their journal each instructional session to reflect on what was read. Students were encouraged to write about important elements of story structure such as characters, setting, and plot.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Review of the Literature**

Reading comprehension is an essential skill in school and in life. Many students have shown deficits in this area and struggle to comprehend what they are reading. In order for all students to be successful it is necessary to understand how fourth grade students comprehend what they read, how strong reading comprehension skills affect student achievement, why some fourth grade students struggle with reading comprehension, and what interventions are available to help improve reading comprehension skills in the fourth grade.

#### **How Fourth Grade Students Comprehend What They Read**

Children start building comprehension skills at a very early age. Initially, children listen to stories being read aloud to them. Even at early ages, children can recall important details from stories they have heard repeatedly. As children become older and more advanced, they transition from hearing stories being read to them, to reading stories silently on their own. Once children start school, there is a transition from listening as their primary means of comprehending written material to oral reading independently (Prior, Fenwick, Saunders, Ouellette, O'Quinn, & Harvey, 2011). Oral reading allows children to work on building comprehension skills as well as reading fluency skills. As children get older, they again transition from oral reading to silent reading. While children are expected to be able to read silently to complete assessments in intermediate grades, there is opportunity for students to use both oral and silent reading to help them be successful. These researchers found that students in first through fifth grade comprehend better after reading orally. Oral reading allows students a chance to hear and reflect on what is being read as they hear it and it also helps to keep them focused on what they are reading. In intermediate grades, oral reading helps to facilitate comprehension, independently of the reader's



ability level. Specifically, not only does oral reading allow the teacher to monitor the reader's progress, but it also allows the reader to monitor his/ her own progress. Oral reading helps to keep the reader focused on the words and sentences and how they fit together into coherent meaning. Knowing that intermediate students comprehend best after oral reading is a valuable insight into some of the troubles students have with reading comprehension.

While no two students are exactly alike, there are several trends in reading comprehension deficits seen in fourth graders. There is evidence that the effect of specific types of reading instruction depends on children's initial language and literacy skills (Connor, Morrison, Fishman, Giuliani, Luck, Underwood, & Schatschneider, 2011). Individual student differences can reflect how they respond to different forms of instruction. By identifying which language skills students have to begin with, teachers can gear instruction toward addressing the areas the students are weak in. Specific interventions can be used to meet the needs of students in areas of need based on their initial literacy skills.

It has also been found that motivation, emotions, and psychopathology can play a role in the achievement tendencies of students with reading comprehension difficulties (Sideridis, Mouzaki, Simos, & Protopapas, 2006). In this study motivation was not found to have a significant effect on reading comprehension performance as both low motivation and high motivation appear in groups of high achievers and low achievers. However, the motivational component of competition did have a significant impact on the performance of students in the area of reading comprehension (Sideridis et al., 2006). Competition has been shown to have both positive and negative impact on student performance. It is important to be aware of this motivational factor when examining student performance in the area of reading comprehension.

Along with the factor of motivation and competition is the factor of student interest. Student interest can affect how students comprehend what they are reading. Providing students with text that interests them can improve reading comprehension because the students are interested in what they are reading about. Specific reading strategy instruction can create more positive attitudes towards reading which can in turn improve achievement (McCrudden, Perkins, & Putney, 2005). According to these researchers, increased practice with a certain skill increases self-efficacy and interest in using that skill. As students become more comfortable with how to use a skill or strategy, they are more likely to use it and be successful with it. Knowing how student interest can impact success is an important component in understanding how students comprehend while reading. Using student interest can be a helpful tool in increasing student achievement.

### **How Reading Comprehension Affects Achievement**

Reading comprehension is an essential tool for students to be successful in school. Reading comprehension encompasses all areas of instruction from language arts, to math and science. Strong reading comprehension skills can have a great impact on a student's academic success. Students who have strong reading comprehension skills get more out of what they are reading and can perform better on assessments by using the material that they have read. According to Prior et al., 2011, once comprehension is facilitated through oral reading, students are able to focus on the words and sentences they read and how they fit together to form meaning. Understanding the meaning behind the text can help students identify themes and trends in the text which can help them be successful when they need to synthesize parts of the text for assessment purposes. Comprehension provides the student with understanding. If the

student does not understand what they have read or what they are being asked to do, they can complete the given task successfully.

In addition to reading narratives it is also essential for students to be able to read nonfiction texts successfully in school and throughout life. According to Wijekumar, Meyer, and Lei (2012), nonfiction texts, such as expository texts that inform and explain, are particularly important for students' understanding because of how often they are encountered in school and in life. Students must comprehend nonfiction texts when reading textbooks, newspapers, magazines, internet articles and blogs, etc. understanding what you read is a necessary life skill.

Besides just being able to comprehend when reading specific texts, students need to be able to comprehend when reading in other academic areas as well. In math, word problems require that the student read and comprehend what the question is asking them to do. This allows them to pull out the important parts of the question and understand how best to solve it. Students need to apply similar skills when reading directions in science or when examining documents in social studies. Reading comprehension is directly related to student achievement in all areas of school and in life.

### **Reasons Students Struggle With Reading Comprehension**

Strong reading comprehension skills are essential for student success through all levels of school. Because this is such an essential skill, it is important to examine why some students struggle with reading comprehension. According to the research, there are a several factors that can affect the development of reading comprehension skills in fourth grade students. These factors can be based upon the reader or the text itself.

One factor that can affect the development of reading comprehension skills among fourth graders is in the area of language deficits among the students. Language problems among

students can impact how well a student understands what they are reading. If the student does not know how to pronounce or decode a word it can be difficult to understand the meaning of that word or the sentence the word is in.

According to Catts, Adlof, and Weismer (2006), the simple view of reading comprehension is composed of word recognition and language comprehension and it is important to consider both of these factors when talking about reading comprehension. This study examined students who were considered “poor comprehenders” and exhibited deficits in comprehension but had normal decoding skills, as well as “poor decoders” who had deficits with decoding words but normal comprehension skills. Their study finds that children with deficits in decoding did not have any difficulty with language comprehension while the students who had normal decoding skills but poor comprehension skills still struggled with language comprehension. This is due to “poor comprehenders” having difficulties with making inferences or with working memory. All of these can contribute to difficulties with reading comprehension.

Other factors that can contribute to difficulty with reading comprehension are the cognitive and linguistic abilities of children, especially those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. A large part of reading comprehension involves using background knowledge to make connections and apply meaning to what you are reading (Lesaux, Lipka & Siegel, 2006). Students from diverse linguistic backgrounds often lack the necessary background information to make these connections. Even though the child may be able to read the words correctly, if they don’t have the knowledge base to apply meaning to those words they will have difficulty comprehending what they are reading.

Lesaux et al. (2006) find that in a study comparing fourth grade students who were native English speakers (L1) and fourth grade students who entered kindergarten with little to no

English language experience (ESL), there was no difference between “good comprehenders” and “poor comprehenders” from either group. However, they find that there are significant differences between the L1 and ESL groups in the areas of syntactic awareness and verbal working memory. This again shows that problems with reading comprehension may not be in decoding and reading the words but in making connections and processing what they are reading.

In addition to reading comprehension difficulties related to the learner, there can also be difficulties associated with the text. When examining the text, there can be many factors that can affect student comprehension. The type of text can impact a student’s understanding of what he/she is reading based on what type of text the child prefers reading. Some children prefer narratives, while others may prefer reading nonfiction texts.

McNamara, Ozuru and Floyd (2011) find that narratives were comprehended better than science texts among fourth graders. The level of understanding also depends on the amount of prior knowledge the student has in the subject area, which allows the student to make connections and apply meaning to what they are reading. These authors find that reading comprehension was improved by increased knowledge: high knowledge readers showed better comprehension than low knowledge readers. The higher knowledge allowed the readers to make connections to the text and apply meaning to parts of the text they may have difficulty with. The study finds that background knowledge has a greater impact on a reader’s understanding when reading a science text than when reading a narrative text. The study also finds that readers with more background knowledge better understood the low cohesion, narrative texts than those with limited background knowledge. This again shows that the difficulties students have with reading comprehension may be caused by not having the proper knowledge base to make connections to what they are reading, instead of simply not being able to read the words.

Nonfiction texts can particularly be difficult as they are often about one specific topic. Children need to have some background knowledge in this area in order to be able to make connections to what they are reading and comprehend the text. This becomes increasingly problematic in the fourth grade, as students move away from reading narratives and focus more on reading expository nonfiction texts. Students typically do not spend as long reading a nonfiction text as they do reading a narrative so they have even less time to develop these connections and apply meaning to the text. With nonfiction texts it is imperative that the reader has the prior knowledge, or is given the opportunity to develop it prior to reading the material.

Students have difficulties with reading comprehension for various reasons. Internal problems such as language deficits can cause problems when comprehending the text. Students may also have difficulty recalling what they read or making connections to what they read based on the amount of prior knowledge they have about the subject of the text. The type of text can also impact reading comprehension as it relates to the amount of prior knowledge a reader has about the text before reading it. Problems with decoding words or phonological difficulties do not appear to have as great an impact on comprehension.

### **Reading Comprehension Interventions**

After examining some of the causes of reading comprehension difficulties, it is important to identify some interventions that may provide solutions to these problems. There are many different theories on what is the best method for teaching reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is not typically taught as a separate skill, but is a skill that is built through other reading activities. Because of the many factors that can affect reading comprehension, there are many interventions associated with improving reading comprehension. These methods range

from focusing on vocabulary and fluency instruction as a means to improve comprehension, to using questioning strategies to improve comprehension among readers.

Fluency is an essential skill for being an effective reader. Effective fluency and comprehension strategies need to be taught to help students become effective readers (Fullard, 2009). Fluent readers are able to look at the meaning of phrases and sentences together instead of focusing on one or two words at a time. This can provide context to unknown words and allow readers to make further connections to what they are reading. According to Fullard, a study examined the effect of a structured classroom model for delivery of small group reading instruction called the Intermediate Extended Literacy Routine (IELR). This is an instructional model that focuses on fluency instruction bridging word recognition and comprehension. Through eight weeks of instruction the IELR was found to have a positive effect on reading rate, reading accuracy and increased level on running record assessments. However, comprehension, measured by narrative retellings, did not improve. This shows that while fluency is an important component to effective reading, direct fluency instruction showed no improvement on reading comprehension skills.

Another possible intervention involves the use of writing instruction to build reading comprehension. When students are tasked with writing about what they have read, they need to use comprehension skills to access the necessary information for completing the activity. Writing activities also provide opportunities for students to make connections to the text they may not have done independently. Herbert, Simpson and Graham (2013) examined the effects of different writing activities on reading comprehension. The study examined summary writing versus answering questions, summary writing versus note taking, answering questions versus note taking, and answering questions versus extended writing activities. The study finds that there

were no statistically significant differences for any of these comparisons when effects were averaged over all reading comprehension measures.

When looking at specific types of reading comprehension measures, there were significant differences found for two of the writing activities. According to Herbert et al. (2013), extended writing enhanced reading comprehension better than question answering on measures where comprehension was assessed using an extended writing activity. Extended writing activities prepared students for recalling information from the text when they had to write about the text for a longer period of time. In addition, summary writing enhanced reading comprehension better than question answering on a free recall measure. It is important to know which writing activities showed improved comprehension based on what type of assessments were given. If students are going to be assessed in a particular manner, specific writing activities may help improve comprehension. It is important to note the correlation between type of writing activity and type of assessment. These relationships must be considered in order to see improvement in reading comprehension.

According to Herbert et al. (2013), when looking at reading comprehension assessments in general, no specific type of writing activity showed significant improvement in reading comprehension. This shows that overall; there is not one type of writing activity that has been shown to improve reading comprehension in all areas, but that certain writing activities can improve comprehension when assessed in a particular manner.

In addition to writing activities, oral questioning can also be used to improve reading comprehension. When discussing oral questioning, there are a few factors to consider. First is the timing of the questions. Oral questioning can take place before, during, and after reading. The type of questions being asked is also important to consider. In a study examining the impact



of asking support questions on grades four and seven students' reading comprehension, found that asking inferential support questions has a positive effect on the text comprehension, but only under certain conditions (Kangsepp, 2011). Kangsepp finds that asking support questions during or after reading of easier texts has a positive effect on the reader's comprehension. This study finds that when using more difficult texts, the use of support questions did not show significant improvement in reading comprehension. Support questions can be used either during reading or after reading if the reader is reading an easier text. When the reader is reading a more difficult text, the questions can interfere with the reader's understanding of the text because of the complexity of the text to begin with.

It is important to note the complexity of the text when attempting to use oral questioning as a strategy for reading comprehension improvement. The study finds that fourth grade students showed improvement in reading comprehension independently of the timing of the questions when reading an easier text. On more difficult texts, questions asked after reading the text had a negative effect on comprehension due to the complexity of the text. Oral questioning can be used as an effective strategy to improve reading comprehension, but only under certain circumstances. It is important to understand these conditions when using this strategy to ensure maximum results.

### **Summary**

Reading comprehension is an essential skill for success in school and in life. By understanding how students build comprehension and by examining what problems students have with reading comprehension, teachers are able to develop specific interventions that best meet the needs of their students. Knowing how students learn best, and through which methods

students are able to successfully comprehend what they are reading will help eliminate the deficits many students have in the area of reading comprehension.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of dialogue journals on student achievement in the area of reading comprehension for fourth graders.

#### **Design**

The study was based on a pre-experimental design consisting of an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received additional reading instruction using dialogue journals to reflect on the current novels they were reading. The *independent variable* for this study was the use of dialogue journals in a small group setting. This is defined as meeting with students in small groups (8-10) students to discuss the novels they were reading. Dialogue journals were used to give students an opportunity to respond in writing about a certain topic or key event from their novels. The students responded to other students' journal responses and had the opportunity to discuss these topics orally.

The *dependent variable* for this study was student achievement in the area of reading comprehension. The dependent variable is defined as achievement on the fourth grade reading benchmark test. The benchmark test consists of multiple choice and written response questions assessing reading comprehension. This study will include a pre-test and a post-test with the fourth grade fall benchmark test being used as the pre-test and the fourth grade winter benchmark test being used as the post-test. This study was implemented for an eight-week period of time.

#### **Participants**

For this study, a convenience sample was used consisting of fourth grade students from a Baltimore County Public School. For this study, the researcher used nineteen students from his

fourth grade class. All of these students were between the ages of nine and eleven. The experimental group consisted of nine students from the accelerated reading group. In this group there were six males and three females. Of the six males, two were Caucasian, two were African American, and two were Hispanic. All three females were Caucasian.

The control group consisted of ten students from the average reading group. In this group there were six males and four females. Of the six males, three were Caucasian and three were African American. Of the four females, two were African American, one was Caucasian, and one was Hispanic.

### **Instrument**

The instruments used for this study was the Baltimore County Public Schools fourth grade 2012-2013 fall and winter reading benchmark tests. The fall reading benchmark was given as a pre-test before the study began. The winter reading benchmark test was given as a post-test after the study was completed.

These particular benchmark tests were designed to measure student growth in the area of reading comprehension. Each test consists of several short texts that students must read and multiple-choice and written response questions the students must answer. These questions cover a range of objectives in the area of reading comprehension including; identifying the main idea, summarizing the text, analyzing characters, and making inferences.

### **Procedure**

This study began in March 2013. All nineteen students were given the 2012-2013 fourth grade fall reading benchmark test. Nine students from the accelerated reading group were selected for the experimental group. These students were selected for the experimental group due

to their writing and oral communication skills. These skills would be essential in the utilization of dialogue journals during reading instruction.

The experimental group met with the researcher five days a week for twenty minutes a day. These students were required to read from their novel each lesson. After reading from the novel the researcher posed a journal question for the students to reflect on in their journals. The journal questions varied from day to day but typically focused on important elements from the stories including characters, setting, and plot. Students were required to write about important themes from their novels and analyze characters and character actions. After completing his/her written response, each student then switched journals with another student. Students had the opportunity to read another student's response and respond to their journal entry.

After students had the opportunity to respond to another student's entry, the dialogue journals were returned to their original owners. Students were instructed to read the response of their partner. The students then discussed what they wrote and their reactions to the responses of the other students. This allowed students to think about what they were reading and reflect on what they read. It also exposed students to other interpretations of the text they might not have considered. This reading instruction continued for eight weeks.

The control group consisted of ten students from the average reading group in the researcher's classroom. While each of these students were from the average reading group, they exhibited a range of abilities and reading skills. The control group did not receive any additional reading instruction in the form of oral discussions or the use of dialogue journals. Both groups received daily reading instruction. At the end of the eight week study, both groups were given the post-test in the form of the 2012-2013 fourth grade winter reading benchmark test.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study was conducted to determine the impact of dialogue journals on student achievement in the area of reading comprehension for fourth graders. The study followed a pre-experimental pretest-posttest design. This study utilized the fourth grade fall reading benchmark test as a pre-test and the fourth grade winter reading benchmark test as the post-test. The results on the pre-test and post-test were analyzed to compare the two groups' gains in the area of reading comprehension.

Dependent *t*-tests were run on each group to determine if there were significant differences in pre-test and post-test scores. The results are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.**

**Means and Standard Deviations of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Each Group**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Pre-Test</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>
<b>Treatment</b>	82.00 (9.592)	83.44 (7.699)
<b>Control</b>	68.00 (10.873)	72.10 (11.050)

The results showed no significant differences for either the treatment group [ $t(9) = -0.511$ ,  $p > .05$ ] or the control group [ $t(9) = -1.484$ ,  $p > .05$ ]. Based on these results, the null hypothesis was supported in this study. These results and their implications will be discussed in the Chapter V.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to see if the use of dialogue journals during reading instruction would result in greater gains in the area of reading comprehension than using traditional reading comprehension instruction. According to this data, the null hypothesis for this study was supported. The data shows no significant difference between the control group and the treatment group that used dialogue journals.

#### **Implications of the Study**

The results of this study imply that the use of dialogue journals during reading comprehension instruction does not have a significant impact on student achievement in the area of reading comprehension. While groups showed slight improvements from the pre-test to the post-test, this is likely due to the traditional reading instruction they received. The treatment group which received additional reading instruction incorporating the use of dialogue journals did not show any greater gains than the control group receiving traditional reading instruction. This concurs with the null hypothesis for this study that stated that the group receiving instruction utilizing dialogue journals would show no significant gains in the area of reading comprehension when compared to those students who did not utilize the dialogue journals.

#### **Theoretical Consequences**

Since the null hypothesis was supported, the results did not support some of the theories related to writing instruction and its effect on reading comprehension that were discussed in Chapter II. According to Herbert et al. (2013), extended writing enhanced reading comprehension better than question answering on measures where comprehension was assessed using an extended writing activity. Extended writing activities prepared students for recalling

information from the text when they had to write about the text for a longer period of time. This study demonstrated that extended writing activities such as the use of dialogue journals, did not show enhanced reading comprehension or demonstrate greater gains in this area than students not participating in the writing activities.

### **Threats to Validity**

One of the threats to the internal validity of this study was the natural maturation of the students. This study was conducted over eight weeks during the third quarter of the school year. The limited amount of time used for this study could have affected the results of the study as there would be natural improvement from the students which could account for the slight gains made during this time.

Additionally, the sample for this study also presented a threat to the validity of the study. This was a convenience sample consisting of students from the researcher's fourth grade class. The control group and the treatment group both consisted of students from the researcher's reading groups. A more effective sampling would have involved a random sampling of students from different classes and of different ability levels. This would have allowed for more validity in the results and more accurate data.

### **Connections to Existing Literature**

The results of this study support the theory of Herbert (Herbert et al. (2013), stating that there is no significant difference when comparing the effects of different writing activities and their effect on reading comprehension. Herbert's study compared different forms of writing activities such as summary writing versus answering questions, summary writing versus note taking, answering questions versus note taking, and note taking versus extended writing activities. Herbert concluded that no individual writing strategy showed greater gains than other



writing activities when examining their effect on reading comprehension. This theory was supported by this study by showing that the use of dialogue journals did not produce greater gains than students who were participating in traditional reading instruction and completing other forms of writing activities.

While the focus of this study was specifically on the effects of using dialogue journals to improve reading comprehension, another factor that may have had an impact on this study is the use of oral questioning to improve reading comprehension. Both the treatment and the control group received traditional reading comprehension instruction which includes frequent use of oral questioning to help improve reading comprehension. Kangsepp (2011) found that asking supporting questions before and after reading had a positive effect on the reader's comprehension. Kangsepp found that these support questions helped improve reading comprehension when students were reading easier texts but could interfere with student comprehension when reading more complex text. Kangsepp's findings could have an impact on the results of this study based on the amount of oral questioning that was used during the traditional reading instruction. It is a factor that would need to be considered for future studies.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Based on the results of this study there are several areas of future research that could be addressed in future studies. Because the null hypothesis was supported it would be important to consider other factors which may have influenced the results from this study. As mentioned in the previous section, it would be important to complete further research on the use of oral questioning during traditional reading comprehension instruction. The research would study what impact oral questioning has on student comprehension and determine if that is a factor that needs to be considered when completing a study like this one in the future.

Another area of study that can be considered is what other types of writing techniques could be used to help improve reading comprehension. This research could examine different writing strategies or more specifically, different ways to use each strategy to have the greatest impact on student learning. This research may suggest additional strategies that could be more effective than using dialogue journals or may suggest additional uses of the dialogue journal to further improve student achievement in the area of reading comprehension.

The final area of study that may be considered is what types of students will have the greatest benefit from this type of instruction. Research could examine other factors such as race, gender, sex, socioeconomic status, or primary language spoken, in order to see which groups of students would benefit most from this type of writing instruction.

### **Conclusion**

Since the null hypothesis was supported for this study, it can be concluded that the use of dialogue journals will show no significant gains in the area of reading comprehension when compared to fourth grade students participating in traditional reading comprehension instruction. Future studies examining other contributing factors may give a better understanding of the impact dialogue journals can have on reading comprehension for fourth graders and what intervention strategies will have the greatest impact on student achievement.

## REFERENCES

- Catts, H. W., Adlof, S. M., & Weismer S.E., (2006). Language deficits in poor comprehenders: A case for the simple view of reading. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 49(2), 278-93. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/232343289?accountid=11164>
- Connor, C. M., Morrison, F. J., Fishman, B., Giuliani, S., Luck, M., Underwood, P. S., & Schatschneider, C. (2011). Testing the impact of child characteristics instruction interactions on third graders' reading comprehension by differentiating literacy instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 46(3), 189-221. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/885154745?accountid=11164>
- Fullard, J. Z. (2009). *An intermediate extended literacy routine to support struggling third grade readers*. (Ph.D., University of South Florida). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304996169?accountid=11164>. (304996169).
- Herbert, M., Simpson, A., & Graham, S. (2013). Comparing effects of different writing activities on reading comprehension: A meta-analysis. *Reading and Writing*, 26(1), 111-138. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11145-012-9386-3>
- Kängsepp, P. (2011). Impact of asking support questions on grades 4 and 7 students reading comprehension. *Creative Education*, 2(4), 381-387. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/914451052?accountid=11164>
- Lesaux, N. K., Lipka, O., & Siegel, L. S. (2006). Investigating cognitive and linguistic abilities that influence the reading comprehension skills of children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. *Reading and Writing*, 19(1), 99-131. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11145-005-4713-6>

- McCrudden, M. T., Perkins, P. G., & Putney, L. G. (2005). Self-efficacy and interest in the use of reading strategies. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 20(2), 119-131.  
Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/203881738?accountid=11164>
- McNamara, D. S., Ozuru, Y., & Floyd, R. G. (2011). Comprehension challenges in the fourth grade: The roles of text cohesion, text genre, and readers' prior knowledge. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 4(1), 229-257. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/912207095?accountid=11164>
- Prior, S. M., Fenwick, K. D., Saunders, K. S., Ouellette, R., O'Quinn, C., & Harvey, S. (2011). Comprehension after oral and silent reading: Does grade level matter? *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 50(3), 183-194. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/878894186?accountid=11164>
- Sideridis, G. D., Mouzaki, A., Simos, P., & Protopapas, A. (2006). Classification of students with reading comprehension difficulties: The roles of motivation, affect, and psychopathology. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 29(3), 159-180. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/233085838?accountid=11164>
- Wijekumar, K. K., Meyer, B. J., F., & Lei, P. (2012). Large-scale randomized controlled trial with fourth graders using intelligent tutoring of the structure strategy to improve nonfiction reading comprehension. *Educational Technology, Research and Development*, 60(6), 987-1013. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11423-012-9263-4>