

The Effects of Literature Circles on
Second Graders' Reading Comprehension and Motivation

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the increase in levels of reading comprehension and motivation for students participating in literature circles and guided reading groups. The participants of this study were second grade students enrolled in a suburban school in Anne Arundel County for the 2014-2015 school year. Data was collected during small group instruction between January and April. The students were given a pretest to determine their beginning reading comprehension level using the Fountas and Pinnell program. Throughout the study, behaviors were recorded using a behavior and motivation tally chart. At the end of the study, the students were given a posttest to assess their reading comprehension level using the Fountas and Pinnell program. The hypothesis was supported since there was no significant difference between the increase in levels of comprehension for literature circles compared to guided reading. Research in the area of reading comprehension and motivation should continue in order to provide students with the most effective form of instruction.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted skill for students to learn. Teachers can and should use a variety of strategies to reach students. One strategy that can be used to improve comprehension and student reading motivation is a literature circle. The format of the literature circles, the research on the success of literature circles, suggestions on using literature circles in the classroom, and methods to assess literature circles will be discussed.

Importance of Reading Skills in Second Grade

Reading is imperative to second grade students' academic success. This is the year when many students begin to use their reading knowledge in order to acquire knowledge in other subjects. In previous grades the students should have mastered phonics skills and learned to accurately and fluently decode most words. Once the students are able to read the information, the next step is to increase their reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is the process of finding meaning in a text, thinking about it, and making inferences (Avci & Yuksel, 2011).

Consequences of Low Reading Skills

When students struggle with reading skills in second grade, it not only affects their reading and writing performance, but it also affects their ability in other subjects. For example, in science or social studies, students are expected to be able to read nonfiction articles and respond to questions or in writing. If the students are not able to read the information, the student will not be able to gain the content knowledge. Similarly, in math the students frequently are required to read directions or word problems in order to complete a math activity.

Intervention to Increase Comprehension and Motivation

There are some activities that students can participate in to help their reading comprehension. The use of graphic organizers can help students remember to pay attention to comprehension skills such as the plot of a story or the main idea. These organizers can also be used by instructors to model what important features should be identified in stories. Some examples of graphic organizers would be a chart to record the beginning, middle, and end of a story, or a chart to record the main character's problem and solution in a story.

Instructors can also model reading comprehension for students through the use of think alouds. An instructor can stop during an oral read of a story and model what a good reader thinks during reading. The instructor may model asking questions, reference text features, or summarize the information read.

Frequently students lack motivation to improve their reading skills when they have struggled in the past. A strategy that can be used to increase both reading comprehension and motivation is literature circles. In literature circles all students are encouraged to take an active role in learning process (Anderson & Corbett, 2008). Students work together to ask questions, think beyond the text, examine multiple perspectives, and reflect on the text (Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012). The students' motivation to participate increases as they are engaged in collaborative learning, and their reading comprehension increases as they discuss the text in greater detail.

Literature Circles

Literature circles consist of a small group of students reading the same text independently and then meeting to discuss the text. Through the discussions of the students' feelings, questions, and reactions the students move to higher level thinking (Certo, Moxley, Reffitt, & Miller, 2010). The students can also respond to the text in writing. This can be used to document the

students' thinking for the purpose of assessment as well as increasing the students' writing abilities.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of literature circles on second graders' reading comprehension and motivation.

Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that after participation in literature circles students will show no improvement in reading comprehension and motivation compared to students who participate in a standard guided reading group.

Operational Definitions

- Literature circles- This is an instructional technique in which students read a book and then meet in small groups to discuss the book.
- Reading comprehension-The students' reading comprehension is being measured through the use of the reading program Fountas and Pinnell. The students read leveled stories, retell the story, and then answer comprehension questions based on the text read. All of the students were given the assessment before literature circles were used in the classroom. At the end of the study, all of the students were given the assessment again in order to compare the students' progress.
- Motivation- The students were observed using a form created by the researcher. The behaviors being monitored were the students' engagement, completion of work, facial expressions, excitement, and participation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review seeks to explore effects of literature circles on student comprehension and motivation. Section one explains what literature circles are. Section two offers suggestions as how to implement and use literature circles in the classroom. Section three discusses how assessments can be gathered while using literature circles. Section four explains the research on the benefits of literature circles, and in section five a summary is provided.

What are literature circles?

Learning to read is a complicated process that requires students to master a variety of skills and perform these skills in conjunction with each other. Once the students are able to decode words, has a large knowledge of sight words, and understands how to obtain information, he/she begins working to improve his/her comprehension skills. A successful and engaging method used by many teachers is a literature circle. A literature circle is a group of students that all are reading a similar text that meet on a regular basis to discuss the text. The literature circle model allows students to collaboratively construct meaning through the process of thinking about the text, listening to peers discuss the text, sharing thoughts, and reflecting (Avci & Yuksel, 2011; Anderson & Corbett, 2008).

In many classrooms students' understanding is checked through the initiation, response, and evaluation (IRE) method. In this model the teacher asks the student a question, one student responds, and the teacher gives the student feedback (Certo et al., 2010). This model limits the number of students participating as well as the level of cognitive thinking required. Frequently, time restraints require the teacher to ask basic factual questions and students are not given the opportunity to participate in discussions. The purpose of literature circles is to create a learning

environment in which students participate in peer led discussions in order to making meaningful connections, inferences, and reach their own conclusions about a text they read (Avci & Yuksel, 2011; Keefe, 1995).

Literature circles have been used in classrooms since the 1980s. In 1996 the “International Reading Association and National Council for Teachers of English both endorsed the use of literature circles as a recommended strategy for increasing literacy skills” (Anderson & Corbett, 2008, p. 25). Literature circles are sometimes compared to book clubs and considered in a similar manner to those adults may participate in. There are resemblances but some important differences to be accounted for are the structure of literature circles. In adult book clubs the discussion from the book is not always the focus. In literature circles the teacher is present as a facilitator with the purpose of keeping the students on task and helping to establish preliminary rules and routines (Anderson & Corbett, 2008). The teacher is not the instructor in this learning model, but rather there to guide the dialogue amongst the students.

Using Literature Circles in the Classroom

When a teacher is working to begin literature circles in a classroom, there are a set of guidelines recommended to follow. First, the student should be given the opportunity to select the book he/she is going to be reading. When students have some input into the book or genre they are reading, they are more likely to enjoy the book and participate in activities involving the book (Buzard, Jarosz, Lao, & Zimmerman, 2001). Next, the students form groups based on the books being read. The recommended group size is between two and six students. Once the groups are created, the students should determine how many pages are to be read, how often the group is going to meet, and the format of the discussion when they do meet (Avci & Yuksel, 2011).

A format commonly used to introduce literature circles is role assignments. The students can be assigned the roles by the teacher or the roles can be set up on a rotating schedule. A teacher may choose to assign roles based on students' strengths and weaknesses (Anderson & Corbett, 2008). There is an expansive list of suggested roles. Some examples are: leader, interrogator, connector, word hunter, and summarizer (Avci & Yuksel, 2011). See Appendix A for sample role assignments. The use of literature circle roles provides structure especially when students are first learning how to participate in the group.

The teacher should begin the groups with a discussion on what listening and speaking rules are expected to be followed. Then, the teacher should model a meaningful discussion through the use of strategies such as visualization, making connections, and making inferences (Keefe, 1995). Once the students have become comfortable with the expectations and understand how to contribute to the dialogue, the teacher should gradually release the responsibility to the students.

Some components that should be included in literature circles are the students participating in independent reading, writing response journals, and contributing to oral discussions. In the discussions the students can share their feelings about the text, ask their peers questions in order to clarify understanding, and share their reactions to the story (Keefe, 1995). The response journal can give the students an opportunity to record their thoughts without needing to wait for the group meeting time. Some teachers also use the response journals as a method of communicating back and forth with the students.

Assessing Literature Circles

A common area of concern that arises with using literature circles is the assessment portion. Our performance driven society expects students to receive a score to report progress.

Teachers are required to keep gradebooks that document the skills taught and the student's ability to master the skill. Parents also expect to see proof that their child is learning. Since a large part of literature circles is discussion, it is sometimes difficult to document the learning. Some options that can be used will be discussed.

An important point to keep in mind is that literature circle assessments should be authentic. In other words, the purpose of the assessment should be to document the real life learning that has occurred. The format of literature circle discussion aligns with learning that could occur outside of the classroom in the real world (Avici & Yuksel, 2011). Some examples of authentic assessment would be portfolios, projects, rubrics, or work samples (Anderson & Corbett, 2008).

A portfolio may include work samples of the student's response journals, recorded videos from the group discussion, student notes that were used to prepare for the meeting, or the teacher's notes taken during the discussion. A teacher may choose to do a quick check of notes for preparedness and other times the teacher may collect the notes to put in the portfolio (Daniels, 2003). If the teacher chooses to put notes in the portfolio the teacher should remember that the student's conventions are not being graded. The information that should be examined is the content of the notes, not the spelling, capitalization, etc. Although those skills are important, those are not the standards that are being graded for the assignment (Anderson & Corbett, 2008; Daniels, 2003).

Another resource that may be used to assess student performance in literature circles is a rubric. A rubric is a grading tool that lists the expected goals and allows the teacher to rate the student's performance based on specific descriptions. For example, the teacher may expect the student to participate four times in discussion. The teacher may assign four points on the rubric

for perfect performance and then list the description of the quality of work for each of the lower scores. Rubrics allow teachers to grade subject matter that may be considered subjective in an objective manner. Some categories that could be included on a rubric are preparedness, participation, strength of social skills, or memorable quotes (Daniels, 2003). Some teachers find that the assessments are more meaningful if the students help to create the rubric. The teacher may work with the students to determine what standards they feel should be included in the assessment and what level of performance should be expected.

A final assessment strategy that will be discussed is the use of projects. The students may work as a group to present the information they have learned to the class. This will not only demonstrate to the teacher that the students have comprehended the content of the book, but it will also share information with other students in the class. This could be a learning opportunity for all students as well as motivate other students to read the book discussed in the literature circle (Avici & Yuksel, 2011).

Regardless of the method of assessment chosen to document the student's learning in literature circles, it is important to keep in mind that the assessment should align to the curriculum and record the skills that the students have displayed in the literature circles.

Benefits of Using Literature Circles

Research has found that there are many benefits of using literature circles with many ages of students with many different abilities in the classroom. Students that use critical literacy are more likely to have effective social skills, more likely to consider multiple perspectives, comprehend the information read, and more likely to enjoy reading (Norris et al., 2012; Avici & Yuksel, 2011; Certo et al., 2010).

Literature circles are beneficial to so many students, not just high achieving students because all students are given the opportunity to take risks and participate in a discussion. They are “ideal for increasing oral language, reading and writing achievement in a supportive, collaborative learning environment (Anderson & Corbett, 2008, p. 25). In literature circles students interact and learn from one another as well as the teacher. The teacher works more as a facilitator rather than the primary instructor. The teacher and students work together to construct meaning while focusing on inner thinking. The students are able to model thought processes for each other with the teacher there to guide any struggling students (Pearson, 2010). This allows each student a chance to become a leader (Anderson & Corbett, 2008). Through this process of working together as a team, the students learn to respect others, cooperate, and become better listeners (Certo et al., 2010).

In addition to becoming a better communicator, students’ reading skills also increase with the participation in literature circles. Students are shown to have improved writing skills and critical literacy (Pearson, 2010; Certo, et al., 2010; Levy, 2011). In order to prepare for the literature circles many instructors require students to prepare notes or response journals. In response journals students may summarize the information they have read or record their reactions and questions for the text read. Some teachers use this as a starting point for the literature discussion whereas other instructors prefer to use a separate form of communication between the teacher and student. In both situations, the students writing skills are increasing as they are recording their thoughts in a meaningful way that promote reflection and require them to think beyond the text (Certo et al., 2010; Norris et al., 2012). There are a variety of other writing activities that students may participate in preparation for literature circle discussions that incorporate the reading-writing connection. Students may create a new ending the book, write a

letter to a character, conduct a fictional interview with a character, or create an advertisement for the book (Hsu, 2004). These writing activities would not only be engaging to students, but also improve their writing skills.

Furthermore, the students are required to closely read the text which avoids the tendency to passively read and possibly miss subtle events and nuances (Levy, 2011). This close reading is called critical literacy. Norris, Lucas, and Prudhoe (2012) write that the use of literature circles promote the development of critical literacy which “encourages readers to question, explore, or challenge the power relationship between authors and readers. It examines issues of power and promotes reflection, transformative change, and action” (p. 59). This skill is one in which students are required to connect their lives to the text, view the text from a different perspective, and reflect rather than recall specific facts which then leads to increased comprehension (Norris et al., 2012; Levy, 2011).

A final and crucial benefit of using literature circles in the classroom is improved student motivation to read. A student that enjoys reading is more likely to continue to read while not in class resulting in increased practice and attainment of information. In addition, a primary predictor of academic success is reading motivation (Neugebauer, 2013). Literature circles are a perfect strategy to create a learning environment that is characterized as interactive and engaging (Fletcher, Grimley, Greenwood, & Parkhill, 2012). Students report that literature circles are the best part of their day because they are given the opportunity to communicate with their peers and read texts that are authentic rather than commercially produced stories that are sometimes dull (Certo, et al., 2010) Through the strategy of modeling and observing good readers in discussion students also learn to adopt good reading habits which results in the students enjoying reading (Avici & Yuksel, 2011). When students enjoy what they are reading, they are more likely to read

which then leads to increased reading stamina (Pearson, 2010). In other words, the more students read, the more they enjoy it. The more students enjoy reading, the more reading they will participate in.

Summary

Therefore, students that participate in literature circles are shown to have increased social skills, reading comprehension and reading motivation. With the improved social skills students are more prone to communicating effectively and considering other's viewpoints. The reading comprehension skills are improved through the use of critical literacy and higher level discussions in which all students work together with the teacher whom acts a facilitator to construct new meaning. Finally, the students are motivated to read resulting in eager learners that are continually improving their reading skills through extensive practice.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of literature circles on second graders reading comprehension and motivation.

Subjects

The participants in the study were 52 second grade students who were in the researcher's language arts classes. All of the students received whole group instruction using the *Treasures* reading series, the *Comprehension Tool Kit*, as well as supplemental lessons based on the Common Core Standards. In the morning the researcher instructed three small groups. One group was a control group consisting of nine students, six boys and three girls. Eight of the students were Caucasian and one student was African-American. This group received standard guided reading instruction. Two other groups participated in literature circles. One group consisted of eight students, four boys and four girls. All eight of those students were Caucasian. The other group that participated in literature circles contained nine students, four boys and five girls. Seven of the students were Caucasian, one student was Hispanic, and one student was Asian.

Similarly, an afternoon class of different students received whole group instruction using the *Treasures* reading series, the *Comprehension Tool Kit*, as well as supplemental lessons based on the Common Core Standards. In the afternoon, the researcher instructed three small groups. Two groups were control groups consisting of six students, one boy and five girls, and ten students, three boys and seven girls. These groups had a total of fourteen Caucasian students and two African-American students. These groups received standard guided reading instruction. One other group participated in literature circles. The group contained ten students, three boys and seven girls. All ten of these students were Caucasian.

The school the students attend is in the suburbs and has 579 students and 28 teachers. The students have better than a 95% attendance rate. Five percent of the students receive free and/or reduced meals and six percent of the student receive special education services. Twenty five percent of the teachers hold standard teaching certificates and sixty eight percent have advanced teaching certificates. Twenty seven of the teachers are Caucasian and one teacher is Asian.

The school is a Green Ribbon School as well as a Blue Ribbon School. The school has very involved parents and many before and after school activities. The 2013-2014 school year Maryland School Assessment results ranged from 92% to greater than 95% of the students scoring in the Advanced + Proficient area in all subjects.

Instruments

The Fountas and Pinnell assessment was used to determine the students' reading comprehension level. This program was originally published in 1996 by Heinemann. The writers of the program, Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, developed this program in order for students' reading leveled to given a score which then corresponds to a grade level.

The first step of the assessment is administering a word list to the students. The students read a list of twenty words. The number of words read correctly is recorded, and another set of more difficult words are administered if the students correctly read 16 or more words. Once the students read all of the lists or make five or more errors on a list, the administrator uses a chart (see Appendix B) to determine what level of book the students should begin reading. The books are leveled from A to Z. For each level there is a fiction and a nonfiction text with corresponding comprehension questions. The students are given the book to read while the administrator records the number of errors. The administrator than asks the students to retell the story and answer comprehension questions based on the book. The administrator calculates the students'

score using guidelines from the Fountas and Pinnell program (see Appendix C) and then determines if the student should read the next level book. Once the administrator finds the correct instructional leveled book, the administrator uses the Fountas and Pinnell Text Level Ladder of Progress chart (see Appendix D) to match the students reading level to a grade level.

The instrument used to monitor the students reading motivation was an observation form created by the researcher (see Appendix E). The researcher noted students who came to their reading time prepared, engaged, and participated. Tally marks were used to count the number of students in each group who exhibited the above behaviors.

Procedures

This study began with a baseline reading assessment for all 52 students. Each student was given the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment to determine their reading level. The students were then placed into reading groups based on similar reading levels. There were three groups in the morning and three groups in the afternoon.

Once the groups were established and routines for the classroom were introduced, three of the groups began participating in literature circles, while three groups continued with standard guided reading lessons. Every group met with the researcher for twenty minutes during reading workshop every school day. The students worked on their literature circle jobs or guided reading follow up work independently every day.

In order to assure that each student understood literature circle roles, the researcher introduced each role one at a time. The students were initially all assigned the same role. The researcher and the students worked together to begin the assignment. The students finished the literature circle assignment on their own and then shared the roles the next meeting. The researcher was able to give feedback to the students about successes and areas to grow with each

student. Once each student had practiced each role, the literature circle jobs were divided up so that each role was assigned to a different student. The students volunteered for roles and were asked to not always choose the same role.

Throughout the study the students reading motivation was also monitored and recorded on the observation form created by the researcher. After several months, all of the students were then again given the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment to monitor changes in reading comprehension.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine that after participation in literature circles students will show no improvement in reading comprehension and motivation compared to students who participate in a standard guided reading group.

The gains in levels of reading comprehension from pretest to posttest using the Fountas and Pinnell assessment were analyzed for students taught by guided reading and literature circles using a t-test for independent subjects. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Gains in Reading Comprehension for Guided Reading and Literature Circle Groups

Group	Mean	Number	Standard Deviation	t	Significance
Guided Reading	2.8	25	1.41	0.43	0.669
Literature Circles	3.0	27	1.32	0.43	0.669

The hypothesis that there will be no difference in the number of reading comprehension levels gained from pretest to posttest for students taught reading using literature circles students and students taught reading in a standard guided reading group is supported.

Table 2

Pretest and Posttest for Reading Comprehension for Guided Reading and Literature Circle Groups

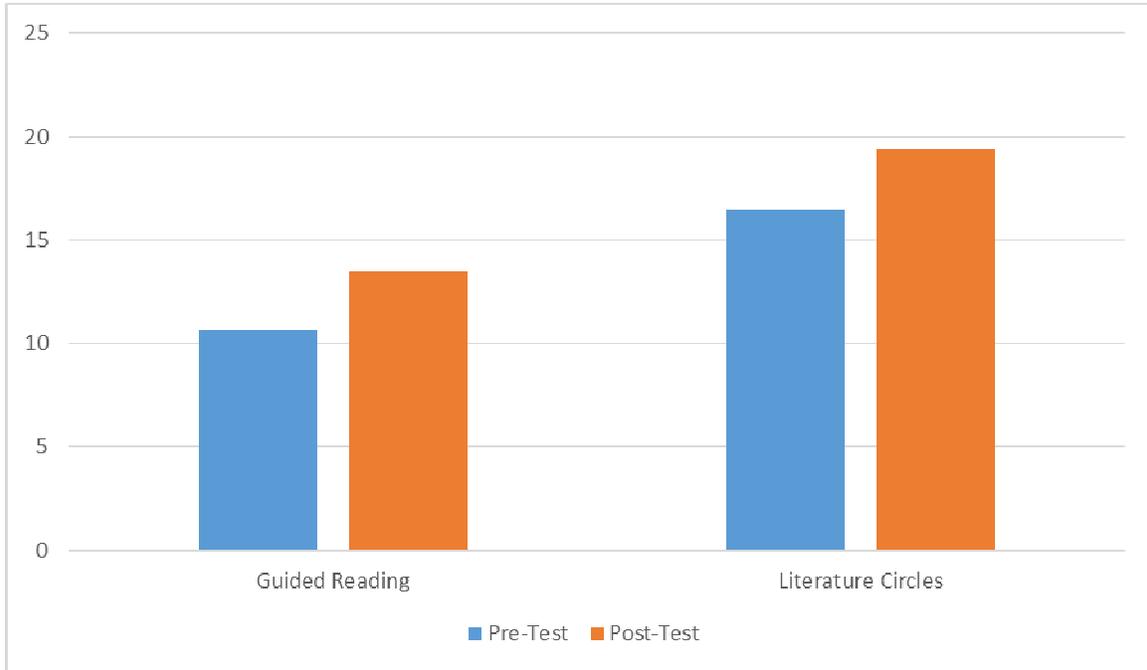
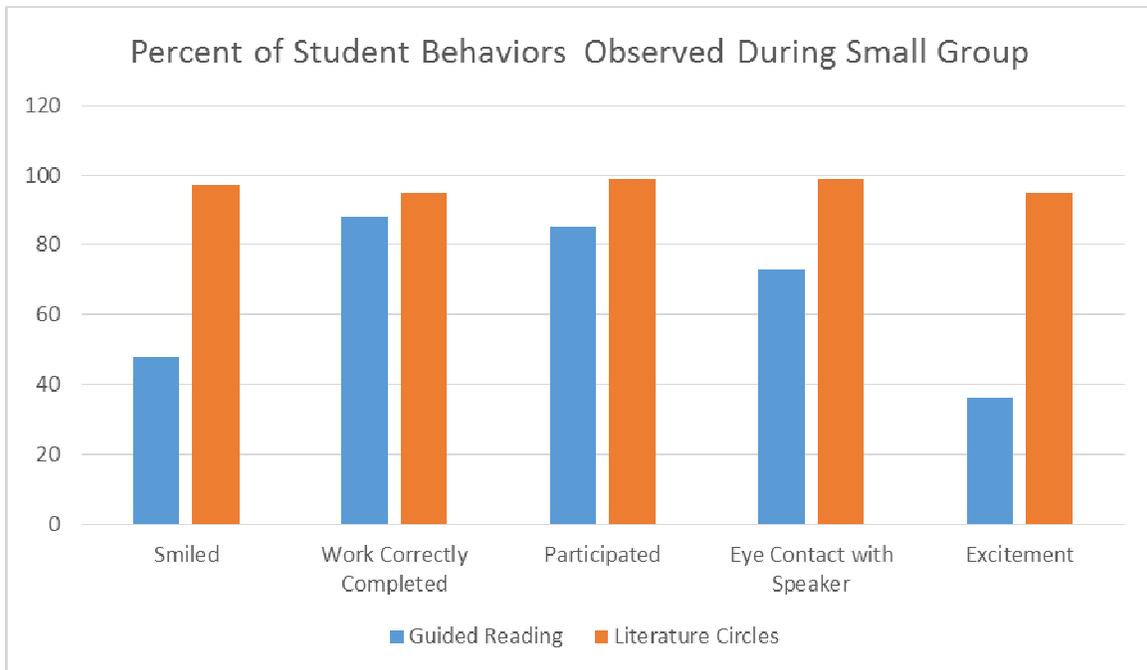


Table 3

Behavior Observation for Students during Reading Groups



*Anecdotal notes taken.

2/19/15- Two students from the guided reading group specifically asked to do literature circles after observing peers.

2/25/15 Guided reading students wanted to know what page the answers are on. (They are reading with the purpose to find the answer; not necessarily for enjoyment.)

2/27/15 Had in depth conversation with literature circle group about character's feelings

3/2/15 Literature circle group very excited and active discussion

3/10/15 Students in literature circle group asked if they could continue to do literature circles for their next book.

3/10/15 A student from the guided reading group asked to move to a higher reading group in order to do "fun literature circles."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference between an increase in levels of reading comprehension when using literature circles compared to guided reading was supported. Literature circles had a higher mean score, but it was not statistically significant. Literature circles had a mean increase in level of 3.0 and guided reading had a mean increase of 2.8 levels.

Behaviors were also monitored in addition to comprehension. Using the behavior observation form revealed that between 80% and 100% of students participating in literature circles smiled, correctly completed their work, participated, engaged with the speaker, and showed excitement while in group discussion. The results of the students that participated in guided reading were much more varied. The number of students exhibiting the same behaviors ranged from 13% to 100%. Anecdotal notes were used to make informal observations that students preferred literature circles to guided reading.

Implications of the Study

The information gained from this study shows that guided reading and literature circles both help to improve students' reading comprehension level. There was no significant increase in levels of comprehension with literature circles compared to guided reading, so both methods are equally effective.

However, the student engagement and interest in literature circles was observed to be higher. This information suggests that students enjoy literature circles more than guided reading and will make equivalent gains in reading comprehension levels.

Threats to Validity

- The Fountas and Pinnell comprehension assessment that was used did not show significant increase in comprehension levels for any student.
- The students were grouped based on ability. The students participating in literature circles began the study at a higher reading level than the students participating in guided reading.
- The comprehension assessments were given on multiple days, by multiple people, over a six week time period due to the amount of students that needed to be tested.

Theoretical Consequences

The results of this study support the research found in chapter two. Multiple studies found that students enjoyed reading more when they participated in literature circles (Norris et al., 2012; Avici & Yuksel, 2011; Certo et al., 2010). Students in literature circle groups were observed to be happier and even voiced their excitement about the format of their group.

Additionally, the research reported in chapter two found that students that participated in literature circles communicated more effectively (Pearson, 2010; Certo et al., 2010; Levy, 2011). The behavior observation form in this study confirmed that students participating in literature circles conversed more often and engaged in more discussion compared to the students in guided reading groups.

Conversely, the area of reading comprehension did not show a significant improvement when using literature circles compared to guided reading. The research in chapter two suggests that students participating in literature circles are in an ideal setting for improvement in their reading and writing abilities (Anderson & Corbett, 2008). The results of this study showed an

improvement in reading comprehension for students using literature circles, but not much more of a gain in levels compared to students in guided reading groups.

Conclusion

The information from this research study could be improved by randomly assigning students to the guided reading groups and literature circle groups. The random assignment would eliminate the question as to whether the students in the groups made progress based on their own achievement levels versus the instruction they receive.

The results would also be more accurate if the Fountas and Pinnell assessment was given with standard procedures. If the number of subjects were lower, the data could have been collected in a more timely manner. Collecting the data in a more condensed time period would allow for the results to show the gains of the students based on the same amount of instruction.

Finally, the Fountas and Pinnell assessment that was used to determine the students' reading comprehension level does not provide the opportunity for a large range of change for each student. Therefore, regardless of the instruction the students received, all students showed similar gains in reading comprehension level based on the Fountas and Pinnell assessment. If an alternative assessment that had a larger range in level was used, a more significant change may have been observed.

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Appendix A

Name: _____ Meeting Date: _____
Literature Circle Group: _____ Assignment: _____
Text: _____

Literary Luminary

Job Description: Your job is to find important quotes and sections of the text that stand out and spark discussion within your group. Record the important quote or event, the page number, and why it is important.

Important Quote or Event from the Text	Page Number	Why is it Important?

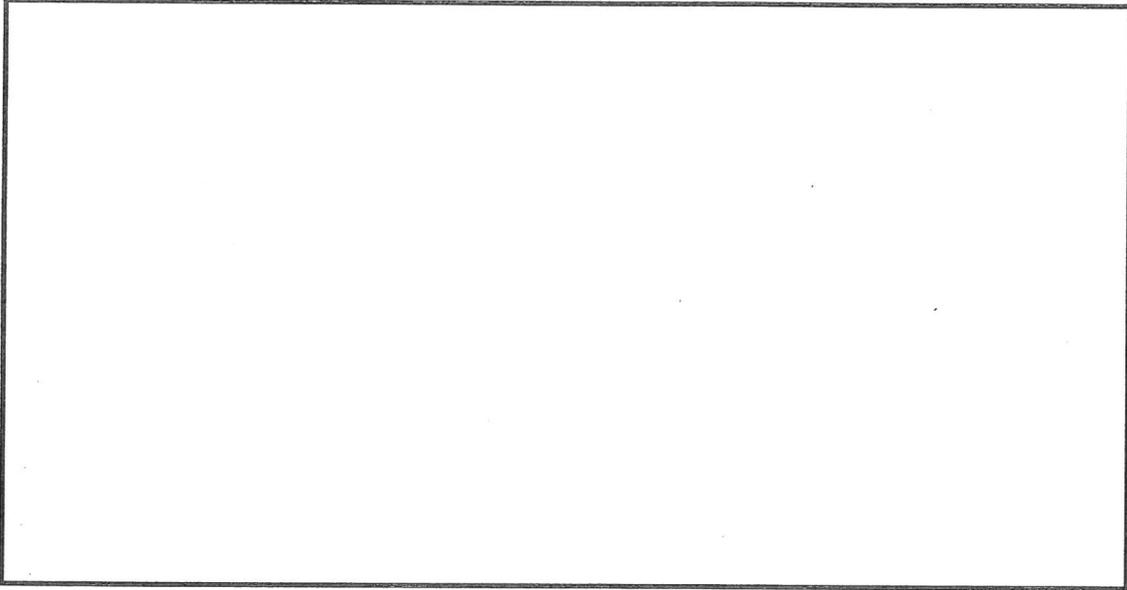
Name: _____ Meeting Date: _____

Literature Circle Group: _____ Assignment: _____

Text: _____

Vibrant Visualizer

Job Description: Your job is to create a visual image from the reading that the author creates with words. Your picture should be detailed and colorful. Use quotations to quote the part of the book that you are drawing, but do not reveal your quote when you share your picture. Ask your group to guess which part you visualized.



Scene from the book you visualized:

Name: _____ Meeting Date: _____
Literature Circle Group: _____ Assignment: _____
Text: _____

Scholarly Summarizer

Job Description: Your job is to complete a brief summary of the reading (4-6 sentences). Your summary will begin your group's discussion and should include the most important points and ideas in your reading.

Key Events/Points:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Summary:

Name: _____ Meeting Date: _____

Literature Circle Group: _____ Assignment: _____

Text: _____

Qualified Questioner

Job Description: Your job is to develop questions to discuss with the rest of your group as you read. Your questions should lead to higher-level thinking and should NOT have a "yes" or "no" answer.

Possible discussion topics:

- *Character motivations
- *Confusing events or parts in the text
- *Themes
- *Author's use of foreshadowing
- *Predictions
- *Inferences readers could make

Questions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Appendix B

Getting Started

Where-to-Start Word Test

Description Students read a leveled word list.

You Need

- ▶ The Where-to-Start Word List
- ▶ The Where-to-Start Chart to determine the level at which to start Benchmark Assessment
- ▶ Where-to-Start Individual Record form

Why Use It

If you do not have or are not confident about reading performance information about a child, this quick assessment will give you a broad notion of the level at which to begin Benchmark Assessment.

How to Use It

- ▶ Ask the student to read the list for the level below his/her grade level (e.g., kindergarteners and first graders should begin with the **Beginning** list, second graders with the **Level 1** list, fourth graders with the **Level 3** list, etc.).
- ▶ *"I want you to read some words. When you come to a hard word, try it. If you cannot read it, go on to the next word. I'll be making notes while you read. Start here."*
- ▶ Place a card under the first word in the appropriate word list. Have the child move the card down the list as he reads. If the student spends too much time on a word (more than 5 seconds), say *"Read the next one."*
- ▶ As the student reads, score and record word reading on a copy of the list:
 1. Check each word read accurately, including correct guesses, self-corrected readings, and accepted local variations in pronunciation.
 2. Write incorrect responses next to each word. If word not attempted, leave the space blank.
 3. Score as errors words that the student
 - cannot read
 - substitutes with another word or other sounds
 - says several different ways and is uncertain of the correct pronunciation
 - reads incompletely (*bed* instead of *beds*) or adds sounds to (*plays* instead of *play*)
 4. Do not prompt, coach, or ask the student to repeat a word (unless you could not hear it).
 5. Record the number of words read accurately at the bottom of each list.

If the child reads 16 to 20 words on a list correctly, then go to the next level. If a child reads less than 16 words correctly, then stop and begin the text reading at the appropriate level shown on the chart below.

Where-to-Start Chart

Number Correct	List Read				
	Beginning	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
0-5	A	A	E	I	M
6-10	A	B	F	J	M
11-15	A	C	G	K	N
16-20	B	D	H	L	N

Appendix C

The Loose Tooth • LEVEL E • FICTION

Recording Form

Student _____ Grade _____ Date _____
 Teacher _____ School _____

Recording Forms

Recording Form

Part One: Oral Reading

Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.

Introduction: Kate had a loose tooth and she tried lots of things to make it come out.
 Read to find out what happened to Kate's loose tooth.

Sources of Information Used

Page	Text			Sources of Information Used					
				E			SC		
		E	SC	M	S	V	M	S	V
2	Kate had a loose tooth. Her tooth was very loose. Kate played with her tooth. But it did not come out.								
4	"Don't play with your tooth," said Kate's mom. "Eat your breakfast." "I want my tooth to come out," said Kate.								
Subtotal									

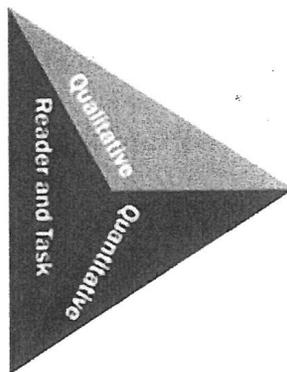
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Appendix D

Instructional Text Level Ranges

Both the **F & P Text Level Goals** and the **Common Core Stretch Lexile Levels** represent a student's level on a developmental scale of reading ability. Throughout the school year, students will move both up and down in levels dependent upon the complexity of the text (encompassing qualitative and quantitative measures and a match between reader and task).

F & P Level Range	Grade	CC Stretch Lexile Level Band
A-D	K	
D-J	1	
J-M	2	420-820
M-P	3	
P-S	4	740-1010
S-V	5	
V-Y	6	925-1185



Fountas and Pinnell Independent Text Reading Levels

**Guided reading instructional levels would be 1-2 levels higher than independent reading levels*

Grade	Month of School Year									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
K	--	A	B	B	C	C	C	D	D	D
1	D/E	E	F	F	G	H	H	I	J	J
2	J/K	K	K	K	L	L	L	M	M	M
3	M/N	N	N	N	O	O	O	P	P	P
4	P/Q	Q	Q	Q	R	R	R	S	S	S
5	S/T	T	T	T	U	U	U	V	V	V
6	V/W	W	W	W	X	X	X	Y	Y	Y

Appendix E

The observation form below was used to observe students during a twenty minute small group lesson on the date _____.

Students participating in literature circles

Behaviors	Smiling	Work Correctly Completed	Participation	Eye Contact/ Engaged with Speaker	Excitement
Number of Students Observed					

Students **NOT** participating in literature circles

Behaviors	Smiling	Work Correctly Completed	Participation	Eye Contact/ Engaged with Speaker	Excitement
Number of Students Observed					

Notes: _____

