

The Effects of Focused Intervention on Tenth-Grade Students' Reading Comprehension Level

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of reading intervention strategies on tenth-grade students' reading levels. This was a quasi-experimental study that used a single group of students who were not randomly selected. The students in this study were tenth graders in a large vocational technical high school. The class of participants contained 13 girls and eight boys. The study used the results of the *I-Ready Adaptive Diagnostic Exam*. The data on the pre- and posttest were analyzed utilizing the dependent or paired t-test. The null hypothesis indicated that the use of targeted intervention would have no impact on the reading levels of the study participants. The null hypothesis was rejected since there was a significant increase in students' reading levels.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The most recent changes in education in Maryland have included the introduction and implementation of the Common Core State Standards under the name of the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards. The changes that have happened in instruction have clearly affected the teaching of reading and writing and the outcomes expected as a result of the standards. Some key shifts of the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards, as related to reading, focus on increasing the complexity of the text as well as a student's ability to read texts more deeply for comprehension. According to Calkin, Ehrenson, and Lehman (2012), "one glance at the common core's expectations reveals that today's document places a much stronger emphasis on higher level comprehension skills...Readers of today are asked to integrate information from several texts to explain the relationship between ideas and the author's craft" (p. 17). This new approach requires that students have a high level of comprehension when reading various texts. In addition, students are required to synthesize ideas across the text, and it also suggests that students have the ability to use skills to increase their comprehension of skills.

Overview

In the United States, most students are exposed to reading instruction even before the beginning of their formal education. Many students come to school aware of the alphabet, and then they begin to read. Throughout elementary school, reading is the focus. Students learn using phonics, phonemic awareness, sight words, and comprehension questions. Through using these skills, students' reading ability increases. When students reach high school, they are no longer instructed in reading. They are taught more how to interact with and analyze literature, based on

the fact that they have been taught reading skills all along. However, there is a gap that is present in the reading comprehension of high school students.

When tested, high school students don't seem to maintain those reading skills. Based on the PARRCC test results for reading from the 2015 Maryland Report Card, there is virtually no increase from the third-grade reading scores, when 38.1% met and exceeded the standard, and the tenth-grade scores, when 39.7% met and exceeded the standard. The scores are indicative of a deficit in a variety of reading skills. Since the world of education has made a paradigm shift to standards-based learning and data-driven instruction, teachers are struggling to close the reading achievement gap and create readers who can meet the standards. Teaching struggling readers and being faced with a new assessment which increases the achievement gap has been the catalyst for finding interventions to support teachers and students with a laser-like focus on success.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the effects of a variety of reading interventions targeted at tenth-grade English Language Arts students at or below high school reading level as measured by the *I-Ready Adaptive Reading Test*.

Hypothesis

For this study, the null hypothesis is proposed. The use of a targeted intervention will have no effect on reading levels.

Operational Definitions

The key terms that must be identified and described are as follows:

The dependent variable is *reading comprehension*, as measured by performance on the *I-Ready K-12 Adaptive Diagnostic Exam*.

I-Ready is an adaptive diagnostic exam which tests reading comprehension, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary.

The *independent variable* consisted of the type of instruction. The students are instructed in *whole group* and then broken into *small groups* for each intervention period.

Small group intervention is additional instruction apart from the whole group. Students in a small group receive supplemental instruction through teacher-supported activities as well as independent tasks reflecting a targeted skill.

Whole group instruction is a teacher-led gradual release of skills. The teacher models a reading skill and allows students structured practice time in small group before independent tasks are assigned.

Every student in the class participates in the direct *whole group instruction*, regardless of ability level.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the United States teachers face many educational challenges. Many students are plagued with issues that stem from community and home. These issues sometimes transfer into the realm of education and affect the way students achieve academically. One of the main affected subjects is reading.

Reading is a hot button issue in education, and reading affects all students. It is a skill that is taught from the time a student enters into a school system, and it drives a student's education. If a student can read, he or she can accomplish other academic tasks. Reading is a precursor to other academic skills, and it has a relationship to how well students may perform in post-secondary education and in the field of work. It is one of the most closely followed data points. Systems all over the country use reading skills to determine what and how to teach.

Specifically, in Baltimore City Schools students from Grades 6-10 are tested up to three times a year in different facets of reading. Although reading is important at all levels of education, sometimes high school students are left out of reading assessments because classes are not considered reading classes, but are, instead, English classes.

Reading deficits can affect the way that students progress through high school and complete their secondary education and move on to their post-secondary educational pursuits. Struggles with reading can also affect students' ability to obtain sufficient employment after they complete school because many jobs now require a test of basic skills prior to hiring. The research says that the inability to read originates in students arriving at secondary school ill-equipped; in addition, students are not given the instruction in reading that they need to become good readers as they learn in high school English.

This literature review discusses the issues related to students arriving to high school, particularly to tenth grade, without being on the proper reading level. The review also addresses some interventions that may be used to improve students' reading deficits. Section one defines the problem. Section two outlines what effective reading instruction looks like at the secondary level. Section three focuses on the challenges faced by struggling readers in high school.

Definition of the Problem

The ability to read is one of the most important skills a student develops as he or she progresses through his or her academic life. The ability to read includes not only comprehension, but also analysis, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and making inferences. So the main question is: Why are students entering high school, particularly the tenth grade, not on level in reading? In tenth grade, students in Maryland are required to complete a High School Assessment in English which is now the PARCC test. This assessment determines students' eligibility to graduate from high school and receive their diploma.

The issue of reading deficits is exacerbated by the traditional view that, in the world of education and high school English teachers, the English teacher does not have the responsibility of being a reading teacher. "High school English teachers, however, are traditionally viewed and view themselves as outside the teaching of reading, because the assumption has been that students come to them knowing how to read" (Ericson, 2001, p. 18). Although this is the assumption, all high school students are not, in fact, well prepared to read. In fact, students often have not sufficiently developed higher level skills, such as analysis and synthesis of information, used in English classrooms. According to Ericson (2001), statistics demonstrate that most students in fourth and eighth grade are performing below the achievement level for reading.

Good Reading Instruction at the High School Level

An English teacher's job description seems to change to literature instructor when he or she teaches high school English. Before the implementation of the common core state standards, teachers were instructed to teach less vocabulary and grammar. They were also advised to teach as much literature as possible. The curriculum consisted of many different types of texts to read: narratives, novels, poems, essays, and drama, to name a few. The message was to have students read as much as they possibly could over the course of the year. The English teacher's job was to encourage students to READ, READ, and READ in order to prepare them for the English High School Assessment and also to prepare them for college. In essence, students were given a cursory glance at a lot of literature. This led teachers to believe that students began high school as good readers, since in order to complete all of this reading one must know how to read. However, student test scores have not improved because students are not digging deeply into the text and really reading it for comprehension instead of completion.

This is why the mindset of high school English teachers is shifting based on their newly described duties and responsibilities. According to Ericson (2001), "High school English teachers rarely have the backgrounds to assist the least able readers in their classes, and additionally are often uncertain about what reading instruction actually involves" (p. 19). This point of view is based on the fact that high school English teachers believe that they are teachers of literature but not teachers of reading. It is a misconception that students receive all the reading instruction that they need in the elementary and middle school years and that they learn how to "read to learn rather than learn to read" (Goldman, 2012, p. 91). Accordingly, students' reading proficiency at the high school senior level has not improved since 1971, staying steady with only 38% of high school students scoring proficient in reading (Goldman, 2012).

One of the main issues present is the skill sets that high school students bring with them. In early childhood, they learn to read. Reading instruction for the younger grades until the fourth grade level is explicit. Students focus on sight words, decoding, and blending sounds, “Learning to read involves mastering basic procedural reading skills that enable readers to recognize written words, pronounce them correctly, and read with reasonable fluency...” (Goldman, 2012, p. 91). Through their early childhood years and then through middle school and into high school, students should improve those skills and move up the taxonomy to the point where they are reading to learn. Students should be able to combine those foundational skills and become good readers who read to understand and can read fluently. However, too often this does not happen.

Often, students reach high school without the ability to read. Lacking foundational skills such as reading interferes with learning. This can result in students being unable to read aloud and/or being unable to use reading to catapult them into critical thinking. “Reading to learn involves moving beyond these procedural reading skills to acquire information from text” (Goldman, 2012, p.91). Students should be able to use the basics they learned through fourth grade and practiced through eighth grade to become good readers in ninth grade and beyond. However, for that to happen, there need to be some procedures put into place.

According to Ericson (2001), an uncomfortable step that secondary teachers must take is to become aware of the basics skills of reading that students learn in elementary school. Becoming aware of the basic skills allows teachers to understand the issues that some students face as those students enter their classrooms. Skills such as decoding and recognizing sight words are important, according to the Ericson, because the absence of those skills can be the root cause of students not being able to comprehend on grade level. If a student has a smaller group of known sight words, then he or she will definitely have a more difficult time becoming a fluent

reader. The student will also have a much larger chance of not being able to understand the reading because he or she will not be able to figure out meaning using context clues. Reading difficulty also shows itself in the fluency of high school readers. The research shows that a student who reads fluently with expression comprehends more than a student who stumbles through the reading using a monotone (Paige, Rasinski, & Magpuri-Lavell, 2012).

These issues prompt the evaluation of how reading is taught as a facet of the high school English class. In order to improve and focus the reading skills of high school students and help them to function in a read to learn capacity, teachers need a different approach to get students to the next level. For instance, the following approaches can be used in the English classroom to underscore reading instruction and make sure that students are able to comprehend and extend the text on a higher level: “guided reading, independent reading, group reading, and reading aloud” (Ericson, 2001, p. 21).

According to Ericson (2001), these approaches should be heavily scaffold in the lesson and supported by the teacher to improve the reading ability of the students. One such approach is guided reading, wherein the teacher guides students through reading using a pre-, during, and post-reading approach to support each student and increase his or her capacity to develop ideas based on the text throughout the reading. Instead of doing the work for the students, the teacher guides students in the right direction so that the student will discover meaning on his or her own, thus building reading capacity in each student. Although the teacher is guiding the reading in this approach, the student still is creating the understanding, and it is supported by the teacher.

Group reads and reading aloud are approaches that should be used in a classrooms to increase students’ ability to read fluently through listening to strong readers and practicing reading in a smaller group. Reading aloud can also help students to increase their comprehension

level. According to Hurst and Pearman (2013), “students who struggle to read content area textbook use a great deal of their cognitive energy on decoding the text with little energy to devote to comprehension. Hearing the text read aloud relieves these students of the burdened decoding and allows them to focus on comprehension” (p. 225).

Since students are not all on the same level, the independent approach works more for students who are independent but still require support from the teacher through conferences. The students are able to choose their own reading and read in a non-threatening environment, which can help build the love for reading that many students missed achieving in their earlier years. Independent reading can also be supported through peer conferences. Group reading and reading aloud also are approaches and processes that teachers can set up in class to assist with improvement with reading.

According to Goldman (2012), the Common Core State Standards that were released in 2010 also support the increasing of students’ reading capacity. The capacity to read is spread throughout all course work a student takes in each content area. However, the responsibility for instilling reading skills is not solely focused on the high school English teacher as a reading teacher. The way that the Common Core is designed does still place most procedural skill in elementary school up to the fourth grade. However, each year after in English and other content areas, students practice increasing the capacity to use those procedural skills and a variety of content-specific texts to support their efforts in using reading to learn (Goldman, 2012). As a result, procedures have been entered into the requirements of all classroom teachers to ultimately assist English teachers with helping to correct some of the reading issues that high school students struggle with as they move along to graduation and post-secondary education.

Teaching reading across the curriculum is essential. According to Lesaux (2012), “Readers often work in shades of gray, confronting problems that can be solved only by integrating ideas from multiple sources; they understand a wide range of concepts and access and apply knowledge from multiple disciplines. In this way reading creates a foundation for learning across all academic domains” (p. 75). When students have the foundation, they can use those skills as a catalyst to experience success in all content areas. Although the foundation is the same for all learning, as academic capacity in all content areas increase, different skills are needed to fulfill reading comprehension requirements. For example, “The background knowledge required to make inferences and identify relationships in ELA instruction may differ significantly from the knowledge vital to understanding the causes and effects of the historical events that are a part of social studies instruction” (Swanson et al., 2015, p. 201). Since students must be successful in all content areas, students must receive continual reading instruction in all content areas. Well-rounded instruction will create well-rounded readers.

Challenges in Reading Comprehension in High School Students

In addition to the issue that students have with reading as they enter high school, there are also some challenges that make it difficult for teachers to help students improve their reading skills even when a different approach is taken. One of the procedural elements of reading that teachers discount is fluency. Many times, students will be asked to read aloud in the class and they will read in a monotone voice. They will stumble over vocabulary, and they will stop and start as they read. Sometimes they even skip over words that they find too difficult. This is all related to a student’s fluency. According to Paige et al. (2012), it also relates to a student’s ability to comprehend when reading aloud.

According to Paige et al. (2012), the ability for students to automatically recognize words as a part of fluency is a pressing issue and one directly connected to a student's ability to comprehend text. So, in relationship to the approaches that were discussed earlier as ways to improve reading, fluency presents a challenge that needs to be addressed in order to improve student reading.

Paige, et al.'s (2012) study of fluency's impact on comprehension shows the relationship between a student's fluency and comprehension. The purpose for the study was to analyze whether a student's ability to read text fluently also means that a student comprehends what he or she reads.

Each student was also asked to read a grade-level 408-word narrative passage. The selection of a grade level text was deliberate because the expectation of schools, districts, states, and the federal government is for grade-level achievement. Therefore, regardless of students' individual (or independent) reading level, they are held to grade-level standards. Students' oral readings were digitally recorded and then analyzed for prosody using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (Rasinski, 2010; Rasinski & Padak, 2005a, 2005b; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). ...a rubric that allows teachers to listen to and rate students' readings based on four prosodic dimensions: expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. (Paige et al., 2012, p. 70)

(See Table 1.) The four sub-scores were summed to yield a "total prosody score" (Paige et al., 2012, p. 69), and results showed that students who had "higher prosodic scores also comprehended more as they read" (Paige et al., 2012, p. 70). "Ninth-grade students with the highest levels of prosody are the same students with the highest levels of reading comprehension" (Paige et al., 2012, p. 70).

In addition to fluency challenges and challenges with initial procedural skills, some students have special needs and may have started as good readers and declined, while some may have always been poor readers. Similar to Goldman (2012), whose research is based around instruction of reading throughout the content areas, Reed and Vaughn (2012) also take a stance on instruction, saying

Some of these learners have demonstrated reading challenges from the early grades and have not acquired successful reading skills. Others were adequate readers in the early grades when word reading was the focus and when text complexity was minimal. Improving reading outcomes for both persistently poor readers and relatively newly challenged readers requires school-wide instructional practices integrated into content area instruction in math, science, and social studies. (p. 17)

Interventions to Improve Reading for High School Students

Basically, academic interventions are used to assist students in reaching their full potential. Interventions can be applied in different ways in order to help students. According to Rathvon (2004),

Academic interventions can be implemented through a variety of delivery systems, including (a) case-centered teacher consultation, (b) small-group or classroom-centered teacher consultation, (c) staff development programs, and (d) intervention assistance programs (IAPs). For academic interventions with a home component, intervention services can be delivered through case-centered parent consultation, parent training programs, or parent participation in IAPs. (p. 10)

Each of these delivery methods can help a differentiated group of students based on their needs.

According to Rathvon (2004), certain steps should be taken when choosing interventions to make sure that the interventions are sufficient. The first step is to choose “research-based strategies with a documented history of success with the target student population, target setting, and target skill or subskill” (p. 13) By choosing research-based interventions, a teacher is making sure that there are results that can be referred to in support of the decision to use a particular intervention to increase achievement. Secondly, says Rathvon, “Give priority to strategies that are proactive in nature and have the potential of enhancing the achievement of groups of students” (p. 13) by using proactive interventions that will work with groups of students. Particularly with reading, a teacher can increase the levels of achievement that can be reached by a larger number of students.

Since it is widely known that there is a major issue with students’ reading abilities in high school and beyond, there are many interventions that can help students achieve on grade level. Many research studies that have been conducted are focused on increasing the reading ability of students. In one action research study performed at Kean College, Usen (1993) used many intervention points, and like Ericson (2001) suggested, the approach to the class was changed. Students participated in guided reading through the use of graphic organizers and questioning, and they used pre-reading strategies. Results indicated that there was no increase in student achievement based on the use of pre-reading strategies alone, but “The effectiveness of pre-reading activities may not depend solely on a student's ability to activate prior knowledge, but also on the extent to which they prepare the reader to apply that knowledge” (p. 20). So, although the data didn’t show an improvement, there were other factors that suggested a continuation of the use of pre-reading strategies.

As an extension to the pre-reading strategy that Usen (1993) used, Mahapatra (2015)

indicates that

the most useful strategies for improving reading comprehension are: 1) connecting, 2) constructing knowledge structure, 3) questioning, 4) noticing the important parts, and determining what is most important, 5) summarizing the available information, 6) making inference, 7) predicting, 8) challenging the text, 9) challenging one's own knowledge, 10) monitoring (noticing when one does not understand), 11) determining what one needs to know, and 12) think-alouds. (p. 60)

These strategies are during reading strategies that have been proven through research to improve comprehension. The use of the pre-reading strategies as a support to the during reading strategies may prove successful for increasing reading comprehension.

In addition to traditional intervention, computer-based interventions can be used to increase students' ability to read. A high percentage of the reading and writing that today's students complete is on a computer. It makes sense that students may, therefore, be more comfortable with computer-based learning. Ponce, Lopez, and Mayer (2012) concluded,

The effectiveness of a computer-based instructional program (e-PELS) aimed at direct instruction in a collection of reading comprehension strategies. In e-PELS, students learn to highlight and outline expository passages based on various types of text structures (such as comparison or cause-and-effect) as well as to paraphrase, self-question, and summarize. (p. 1170)

Ponce et al. (2012) also found that "Pretest-to-posttest gains in reading comprehension scores were significantly greater for students instructed with this program than for students who received traditional instruction ($d = .5$), with particularly strong effects for lower-achieving students ($d = .7$)" (p. 839).

Computer-based intervention and direct instruction through computers continue to be viable intervention choices for students who lag behind grade level in reading.

Conclusion

In conclusion, reading is a skill that educators focus on from the moment that students enter school in pre-kindergarten. Students are taught basic procedural skills and then are expected to use those skills to begin to read to learn from many other content areas. However, there is a breakdown in the system that is keeping high school students from succeeding as readers. As discussed in this review, one effective way to treat this issue is through targeted interventions which allow students a chance to succeed in education and later in life. One promising way that this can be done is through computer-based intervention. Since today's student is so familiar with computer-based learning, this approach may provide an answer to increasing student reading achievement. In addition to computer-based learning, a shift in the approach to teaching English on the high school level is in order to help students bridge the gap between learning to read and reading to learn.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of reading intervention strategies on tenth-grade students' reading levels. This was a quasi-experimental study that used a single group of students who were not randomly selected. The study used pre- and post-assessment data retrieved from a system-wide administration of the *I-Ready test*, a computer-based adaptive reading assessment.

The independent variable was the intervention provided to the students, including the type of instruction such as small group, whole group, or independent support. The dependent variable was the students' reading level as measured by the assessment. Another dependent variable was the students' level of engagement during the assessment. The students were assigned a grade level for reading at the completion of the assessment based on their performance during the assessment. A comparison of their grade levels from assessment one, which was given in December 2015, and the grade levels for assessment two, which was given during March 2016 was made to determine whether the null hypothesis could be retained.

Participants

The students in this study were tenth graders in a large vocational technical high school. The high school is located in Baltimore City Public Schools and has an enrollment of 1626 students who are separated into academies based on the vocations they are learning. The class of participants contained 13 girls and eight boys. The class is 100% African American, and it has one student with an IEP. Her disability is a social emotional disability which affects her

academic performance. There is no data this year that defines the percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch because all students in Baltimore City Schools receive free lunch. The group was chosen because it is the most complete class that represents the teacher's academy assignment.

Instruments

The study used the results of the *I-Ready Adaptive Diagnostic exam*. The exam is given several times during the year to all Baltimore City Schools students. In accordance with the Mental Measurements Yearbook review by Carlson, Geisinger, and Jonson (2014), the exam provides reliable and valid measurements in the following areas: reading literature, reading informational text, phonics, phonological awareness, high frequency words, and vocabulary. The diagnostic assigned a grade level equivalent for the students based on their performance on the test. The baseline data is a pretest that consisted of the results from the results from window two of the test taken in December of 2015, and the posttest consisted of the results from window three taken in March of 2016.

Procedures

Over a span of five weeks, the students participated in an intervention period based on deficient skills identified by the pretest. The students were given standards-based instruction. Each student was introduced to the skills related to the standard using reading strategies that were introduced using direct instruction. The students were given time during each period to practice the strategy in small groups and individually. The students were then given grade level-specific assignments to complete in homogeneous groups and then a written assessment of the skill to complete individually. The activity and topics were chosen based on the deficiencies that

appeared in the data. The work was scored in several ways. The written assessments of the reading were scored using the rubrics located in the appendix.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study examined the effects of a variety of reading interventions targeted at tenth-grade English Language Arts students at or below high school reading level as measured by the *I-ready Adaptive Reading Test*. The null hypothesis stated that the use of targeted intervention would have no effect on reading levels. Because of the significant change in results after treatment, the null hypothesis was rejected. The mean scores on the posttest showed an increase of 37.869.

The study utilized a pre- and posttest on the same students. Thus, with no student initial randomization on the student selection, it was a quasi-experimental study, and the data on the pre- and posttest were analyzed utilizing the dependent or paired t-test. Means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 1, and the t-test results are presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of the Pre- and Posttests

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pretest	551.810	21	50.4902
Posttest	589.619	21	45.4208

Table 2

Dependent or Paired t-test from Pre- to Posttest

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Statistical value
Overall Scale Score (2) - Overall Scale Score	-37.8095	38.3896	8.3773	P<.000

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether students who participated in intervention lessons would experience an increased reading level when tested with the *I-Ready Adaptive Reading Diagnostic Test*. The null hypothesis that intervention would have no effect on the students' reading levels was rejected. All but one student out of the 21 students who were tested after being provided with targeted intervention lessons experienced an increase in grade level. Overall, the group scaled score increased from 551.810 to 589.619, an overall increase of 37.869.

Implications of the Results

The results indicate that, although there is a large achievement gap between where tenth-grade students are and where they need to be as readers, teaching and practicing specific standards-based intervention strategies improves reading comprehension. The results validate the importance of students having a variety of skills to use to assist in comprehending text. It also corroborates the need for interventions related to deficiencies in skills needed to meet specific standards. Adding these strategies to their "tool-box" helps students to better understand when reading.

In addition, the results also imply that the use of data analysis to drive instruction works when the aim is to improve the outcomes for students. Using strategies related to the deficiencies allowed the students to pinpoint their weaknesses and improve their reading comprehension based on their individual needs. For instance, although students were instructed using a standard and a specific skill for each intervention session, students were able to practice the specific strategy on grade-level material. Students were able to be more successful as they were working

on grade level. They were also able to better understand how to use each strategy, and that helped them to master their grade level and move beyond. Instruction with support on the grade-level skill and then practice on the actual grade level of the student helped each student to improve in reading comprehension.

Threats to Validity

This study contained some threats to validity. The greatest threat to the validity of the study was the attendance of the students. For the most part, students in the study attended school; however, there were two students who experienced long periods of absence during the middle of the study. This caused those students to potentially miss intervention lessons and practice that could have affected the outcome of their reading scores at the end of the study.

In addition, engagement was a threat to validity. As a part of school system and state requirements, the students must take several standardized tests throughout the school year. During this intervention, there was a protest against the standardized test, and the students were rallying. Since the students were not fully aware of what the Common Core included, they became defiant and spoke out against all testing. Some of the intervention period was used to re-educate the students as well as implement intervention lessons. In addition to students rallying against standardized testing, they also experienced test fatigue because they were given this particular test three times during the year in addition to the following required tests: the HSA, the PARCC, midterms, the PSAT, and system-wide benchmark exams.

Lastly, an additional threat to the validity of the study was instruction in other classes. It is unknown how much additional reading instruction across the curriculum that the students

received. Since this is an unknown factor, different students could have experienced more or less practice with reading which may have influenced the final scores.

The results of this study support the hypothesis that specific reading intervention increases reading comprehension.

Connections to Previous Studies

Even after ten years of school, there is an epidemic of students arriving to tenth grade well below grade level in reading. Since instruction in high school does not explicitly include reading instruction, teachers still need to use strategies that are successful when it comes to increasing the reading comprehension skills of the students in their classes.

The researcher's findings were based on the use of interventions that correlate with the literature. For instance, as a part of the researcher's intervention processes, the students were instructed on a strategy to support Common Core standard RI 9-10.2 which is to determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details as well as provide an objective summary of the text. Students were given steps to compile the central idea in addition to a strategy to help them write an objective summary of a text. Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011) found that, although fewer experiments have looked at the effects of reading and writing integration, results suggest that combining instruction in writing and reading may promote increased literacy levels in students. For this study and this specific strategy, the students identified the central idea and the objective summary through writing. The results of this research support the existing

studies that suggest that reading and writing integration is an effective strategy in improving students' overall reading comprehension.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the favorable results of the current study, the researcher suggests a more in-depth research study be conducted in the future which would use reading intervention strategies to improve reading comprehension in high school students. The current study session only lasted for a period of five weeks and was aligned to standards that the students were studying at the time.

In addition, a future research study could be extended to include a larger number of students. In order for that to work, the research study would need to be more stringent. In addition, the lessons would need to be aligned to standards which are parallel to the curriculum that the teacher is using to teach the students.

Another implication of the current study is that future studies could be designed to include a control group to further study and compare the outcomes of the students who participated in the intervention and those who did not participate in the intervention and received only standard instruction.

Lastly, if the study were extended for a longer period, included more students, and included a control group, the researcher would be able to draw more specific conclusions

Conclusion

The study concluded that students who are below grade level in reading comprehension can make great strides to improve when they are exposed to specific reading intervention

strategies based on their deficits. After analysis of the results of the *I-ready Adaptive Diagnostic Assessment*, the students were grouped by level and skill. Each grade level identified a different skill connected to students' individual deficits and that were related to Common Core State Standards. The direct instruction was standards-based, and students were taught reading strategies; for instance, graphic organizers were introduced for the *It Says, I Say, So What* strategy, and the students had to use textual evidence, explain the textual evidence, and then analyze the meaning of the textual evidence. The researcher then used the gradual release model by practicing with the students.

Finally, student groups were giving readings based on their level, and they had to work on their skill. For instance, students on the eighth-grade and ninth-grade level had to practice identifying specific textual evidence. At first, students had an unfavorable reaction to the leveled groups, but once they started to see improvement, they worked well. By the end of the intervention period, students gained enough motivation to work hard and perform well on the posttest.

The researcher took notice of how the students quickly reacted in a positive manner to specific interventions. They were able to look at the data and see the rationale behind their skill development lessons, and that provided motivation for them to work hard at making self-improvements.

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Appendix

Citing Textual Evidence Rubric

	4	3	2	1	Comments
Text Evidence	<u>Skillfully blends</u> evidence from the text by using both <u>direct quotes</u> and <u>paraphrases</u> .	Cites evidence from the text by using both <u>direct quotes</u> and <u>paraphrases</u> .	Cites evidence from the text by using either <u>quotes</u> or <u>paraphrases</u> .	Does not reference text evidence.	
Explanation of Evidence	Provides insightful explanation/analysis of how text details support opinion.	Provides clear explanation/analysis of how text details support opinion.	Provides some explanation/analysis of how text details support opinion.	Provides no or incorrect explanation/analysis of how text details support opinion.	
Quantity/Quality of Evidence	Provides more than enough & the strongest evidence to support opinion.	Provides enough related evidence to support opinion.	Provides limited and/or vague evidence to support opinion.	Provides very little and/or unrelated or incorrect evidence to support opinion.	