

The Effect of Increased Sight Word Knowledge
on the
Comprehension of Below Level Third Grade Readers

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

May 2014

Goucher College
Graduate Programs in Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether increasing sight word knowledge in below level third grade readers impacts their comprehension of a simple text. The intervention implemented was the repeated use of flash cards with the first through third grade Dolch words, 20 minutes of daily guided reading instruction, interactive games and websites students practiced with during independent time, and homework assignments focused on the sight word practice. The measurement tools used were the 128 Dolch words from first, second, and third grade lists and a passage containing all 220 common Dolch sight words for a pre- and post-test comprehension assessment. This study involved the use of a quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest repeated measures design to compare data from before the intervention was implemented in February 2014 to data from after the intervention was implemented in April 2014. Achievement gains in sight word knowledge were apparent for all students involved in the study. Findings of the study may have been influenced by intervening factors such as changes in classroom schedules, parent involvement at home or questions of validity with the assessment. Research in the area of sight word knowledge should continue given the relationship between the sight word recognition and increased reading comprehension.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Job performance, higher education, finances, and leisure all require the ability to read and comprehend written material (Mcgrath, McLaughlin, & Derby, 2012). However, having the ability to read and comprehend is a process that has to be developed over time in the early years of schooling. Elementary school is the foundation when the tools needed to be successful readers are addressed, developed, and mastered. Every student is capable, if given the right means, to become a fluent reader with good comprehension skills.

In the researcher's school, the Fountas and Pinnell (2001) program is used to implement leveled books for assessment of students' reading level followed by guided reading instruction on students' reading level. Fountas and Pinnell analyzed in great detail the text characteristics of fiction and nonfiction books at every level of the A to Z+ ladder of progress to understand the demands of each level on the developing reader. As the leveled books increase in level, so do the genre and form, text structure, content, themes and ideas, language, sentence complexity, vocabulary, illustrations, and book and print features. Third grade students are to be reading on levels N, O, and P, on the A to Z text leveled ladder of progress, according to the Fountas and Pinnell. After administering a reading record through the Fountas and Pinnell program, reading groups are formed to address the needs of the students in the classroom.

If students fall below the level required for third grade, educators work diligently to put interventions in place for those students to make progress over the four quarters of school. The researcher's groups of struggling third graders are reading on levels F through K which is

equivalent to grade one and beginning of grade two on the Fountas and Pinnell (2001) leveled ladder of progress. These students are receiving interventions, guided reading, and small group instruction to address their low level reading.

Reading groups and interventions may change, but one thing stays the same: the reading components. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), five distinct components make up the ability to read. These components are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension. Ultimately, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary all work together to help the reader develop strong comprehension of the material read.

The reading components are crucial to the development of a good reader with proper comprehension and are implemented from the very beginning of a student's educational career. Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers introduce the components to build the foundation. When the foundation is being built, teachers need to go into depth and detail about each component along with practicing the individual components so students are gaining knowledge and support as they proceed through the grades. If an early teacher notices a student struggling with one or more of the components, that teacher will work with a student in flexible grouping to address struggles. If students are not given the proper instruction, struggle with new concepts, and/or have a learning disability or a diagnosis, then internalizing the concepts and building upon the components will not be an easy task.

As the student moves up in grade level, there are new parts of the components introduced and developed. If a student does not have that vital groundwork, he or she will have a harder

time keeping up with peers and building upon background knowledge of the components, and will thus struggle with reading and comprehension. The researcher's third grade students have not internalized the basic establishment of the components and this prevents the students from being able to read and comprehend third grade leveled text. These students are given first grade text for independent work and receive guided reading on their individual levels to build the much needed knowledge of the five components. If the researcher does not help the struggling students to make progress with reading and increase on the Fountas and Pinnell (2001) leveled ladder, these students will just continue to be behind and read below grade level. It is generally unrealistic for a student to jump two grade levels by the end of the year, but any progress is a step in the right direction.

Early intervention is a definite way to catch reading difficulties and address struggling students' deficits. Fluent readers automatically recognize and decode about 300 common words as well as a plethora of word units that make up larger words. With these skills, students are able to read fluently and comprehend the text. However, if a student is unaware of how to decode, has little knowledge of word parts, and cannot remember common sight words, the focus of his or her reading is not directed toward understanding the text but is instead concerned with making sense of individual words or phrases; therefore, instead of decoding and comprehending simultaneously, a disconnect occurs between the two. This causes reading to become laborious and time consuming and forces the memory to work harder (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002).

There are several interventions used to assist third graders who are reading below grade level. Guided reading is one of the strategies used in the researcher's classroom. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001), guided reading is research-based, professionally energized, highly targeted, scaffolded reading instruction that propels all students toward confident, independent

reading of high quality grade level books across a diverse array of literature and informational genres. Another tool used for students who have limited sight word knowledge is the Dolch Word Lists. If a student can master sight words early in his or her school career, he or she will be more likely to be a fluent reader with appropriate automaticity and comprehension. Mastery of the Dolch Word Lists can allow a student to tackle an unfamiliar text with confidence. The student will not have to decode words. This means that the maximum amount of cognitive energy can be directed to the all-important task of making sense of the text (Rasinski, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Dolch Word Lists and frequent phrases on the reading comprehension of struggling third grade students in guided reading.

Hypothesis

The researcher's third grade students who are struggling in reading will not increase their reading comprehension skills if their knowledge of sight words increases during guided reading.

Operational Definitions

At the beginning of the school year students are given a Fountas and Pinnell (2001) reading record. Depending on the level of book the student reads, the student is then categorized as on level, below level, or above level. The teacher then decides on interventions, supports, and individual needs of students with an eye toward seeing growth by the middle of the year. Struggling third grade students are below grade level because, according to Fountas and Pinnell ladder of progress, they are reading on the first grade level of F to level K. By collecting data on a Guided Reading Assessment chart recorded daily to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each student, the researcher will address those deficiencies in students' individual assessments.

Students reading below level may increase their comprehension by spending time comprehending text instead of decoding through the use of guided reading practices in a small group setting. Sight word knowledge will be addressed by the repetition of sight words through the use of flash cards, interactive games, and homework assignments.

Guided reading is a teaching approach designed to help individual readers build an effective system for processing a variety of increasingly challenging texts over time (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Guided reading performed daily will encourage and develop appropriate word attack abilities, decoding skills, and other reading strategies used to become a successful reader. The Dolch Word List will be used to track student progress with identifying and memorizing sight words needed for first and second grade texts.

The dependent variable in this study is a student's reading comprehension during guided reading practice. The independent variable in this study is the implementation of sight word identification through teacher-directed activities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Every aspect of life involves reading. A lack of sight word vocabulary in beginning readers can contribute to a decrease in fluency, comprehension, and motivation. Additionally, sight word vocabulary can assist young readers with finding a purpose for reading. The role of vocabulary in reading is clearly understood: vocabulary knowledge and the understanding of the word meanings and their use contribute to reading comprehension and knowledge building (Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2007).

If children can read words quickly and easily, their reading fluency, and therefore comprehension, will improve. The National Reading Panel in 2000 reported that fluency is one of a number of crucial factors needed for reading comprehension (Turner, 2012). If a student has a good foundation of phonemic and phonological awareness, then he or she is on the way to becoming a fluent reader. The relationship between phonemic awareness and reading fluency indicates that improved efficiency in phonological processes used to complete phonemic awareness tasks contributes to fluency development (Ashby, Dix, Bontrager, Dey, & Archer, 2013).

Memorizing sight words also helps develop skills that students will use later when encountering harder words. Because of reading curriculum demands, basic sight words are not always taught directly to students. Individual differences in reading fluency can be attributed to two main factors, slow serial naming speed and poor word recognition (Ashby et al., 2013).

In order to understand the importance and relationship between sight words and fluency, this review of the literature will discuss four subsections. Section one will focus on reading fluency. Section two will review sight words. Section three will examine fluent/dysfluent readers

and sight words, and the final section, section four, will delve into developing a sight word vocabulary.

Reading Fluency

Reading fluency can be defined as the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (National Reading Panel, 2000). As students move more towards reading for understanding rather than simple decoding, the link between fluency and sight word knowledge becomes even more important. The three components of fluency are rate, automaticity, and prosody. When a student is able to recall a high number of sight words, his or her fluency becomes automatic. Inefficiency in word recognition processes requires excessive cognitive capacity, leaving minimal capacity for comprehension to occur (Frantantoni, 1999).

The first component, reading rate, is determined by the number of words read correctly or accurately per minute. Reading rates are broken into grade levels. The goal of reading fluency is not words correct per minute, but the development of comprehension (NRP, 2000). Once readers achieve fluency, they have the ability to decode text automatically.

The second component of fluency is automaticity. Automaticity is a quick and accurate recognition of letters, sounds, and words without hesitation (Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2007). Without automaticity, students are not able to read fluently. This is why interventions incorporating advanced phonemic awareness tasks will be most effective at increasing reading fluency (Ashby et al., 2013).

Word recognition can be broken into three simple stages (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002). The nonaccurate stage is where students have difficulty recognizing and identifying words in the beginning stages of reading. The accurate but not automatic stage occurs after formal reading instruction has ensued. In the fluent stage, students can read fluently and accurately as if they

were speaking instead of reading. Comprehension and decoding are occurring simultaneously (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002). As a result of knowing a great number of sight words, students' fluency and comprehension will improve.

The final component of fluency, prosody, is defined as reading with expression. As a reader develops in each element of prosody, that reader is making the connection between the written and spoken word. Rasinski (2003) suggests that, through this connection of encoding and decoding, students recognize the organic connection between speaking and listening and writing and reading. Students gain confidence and get better with decoding skills when reading orally.

Along with other aspects of reading, knowledge of sight words is very important to a readers' fluency. As readers progress through reading instruction, their bank of sight words increases. Sight words provide a foundation for word recognition because they are recognized automatically.

Sight Words

Linan-Thompson and Vaughn (2007) define a sight word as "a word that is automatically identified without the aid of phonetic or analytical strategies" (p. 158). Sight words refer to words that children usually learn to recognize on sight rather than "decoding" them. A lack in this skill can cause frustration and lack of confidence in students when they are faced with a text with unfamiliar sight words. Comprehension, speed, and fluency are all hindered the more times a student needs to stop to decode a word (Frantantoni, 1999). If a student can master sight words at an early age, he or she will be able to read the majority of readings he or she is given in the first years of elementary school. A student who lacks adequate proficiency in sight vocabulary, who has a reading pace that is slow, and who is reading each individual word at a time fails to

acquire meaning. There are several different lists of sight words that educators implement in their classrooms.

Edward Dolch published the most popular sight word lists in 1936 (Frantantoni, 1999). His lists, The Dolch Word Lists, and are divided up into: pre-primer, primer, 1st grade, 2nd grade, and 3rd grade. There are 220 words all together. There is also a list of 95 nouns that accompany his sight word lists. Many teachers use this list when identifying words for students to recognize.

Edward Fry also developed a list titled, Fry's "Instant Words," in 1976. His lists were composed of 300 words grouped into sets of twenty-five words correlating with grades first through fourth (Frantantoni, 1999). He updated his lists in 1980 to contain 600 words. Fry (as cited in Frantantoni, 1999) argued that the first ten words make-up about 24% of written material, the first one hundred words comprise about 50%, and the first three hundred words make-up about 65% of all written material. Along with practicing the sight words in isolation, it is also important for students to see these words within a context of short sentences or phrases. Since these words are very common and make up so much of the English language, it is important that students have practice in and learn these words in order to be fluent when reading. When words have received sufficient practice and automaticity is achieved, the reader can focus less on processing the print word by word and instead use his or her processing skills to gain the message.

Fluent/Dysfluent Readers and Sight Words

Fluent readers automatically recognize and decode about 300 common words as well as a plethora of word units that make up larger words. This automaticity allows the fluent reader to pay more attention to comprehending, or understanding, what the words mean, rather than to decoding. Fluent readers recognize words and phrases instantly. They exert little cognitive

energy when decoding words. This means that the maximum amount of cognitive energy can be directed to the all-important task of making sense of the text (Rasinski, 2003).

Dysfluent readers must spend more time and attention on decoding. This leaves less processing space and time for comprehension. The dysfluent reader must go back and forth between decoding and comprehending instead of the two happening simultaneously. This causes reading to become laborious and time consuming and forces the memory to work harder (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002). Nonfluent reading also leads to less reading. Lack of practice in reading then leads to a failure to practice automatic word identification (Frantantoni, 1999).

Developing a Sight Word Vocabulary

Students differ in their learning styles, and identifying areas of need is crucial to designing effective instruction because each student brings a set of strengths and weaknesses that vary and can be most effectively addressed through differing interventions (Swain, Leader-Janssen, & Conley, 2011). Sight words can be taught in a variety of ways. Repetition and practice are very important in making recognition of sight words automatic. Repeated oral reading, followed by feedback and effective instruction, promotes improvements in reading for students at all levels (NRP, 2000).

One of the most popular ways of learning sight words is through memorization and flash cards. In this method, words are presented in a rapid manner with brief periods of praise and correction between the teacher and the student. Flash cards provide instant error correction with feedback, which is also important when learning (Frantantoni, 1999). This type of instruction maximizes the number of responses for a child and produces fewer errors, improved reading rates, and better long term gains in fluency (Frantantoni, 1999).

Word walls are another way to help students develop sight vocabulary. A word wall is a space on the wall where the teacher has a section divided off for each letter of the alphabet. Using word walls in the classroom empowers both students and teachers. Students view pertinent content specific words easily, and when given the opportunity to use the words repeatedly, internalize their meanings for use in the present as well as the future occurs (Yates, Curthrell, & Rose, 2011). As children learn new sight words, those words; are added to the wall in the appropriate space (according to the first letter of the word). Word walls serve as an excellent source of information for students attempting to analyze unknown words, spell unfamiliar words, or define new vocabulary (Yates et al., 2011).

Educators in the 21st century are lucky to be able to incorporate technology in the classrooms and the use of technology can be so engaging and motivating for students. Motivation is a barrier that a struggling reader must overcome, and engagement could be the fastest way to overcome that barrier (Ortlieb, 2013). Sight word activities can be found on the Internet and through Smart Board software. Interactive websites and games encourage students to take ownership of their own learning. Technology also allows the teacher to be more of a facilitator instead of instructor. The gradual release of responsibility model in which the teacher reduces the level of support helps students gain competence (Duke & Block, 2012).

Another form of engaging activity is the use of multisensory methods. These could include using magnetic letters to spell the words, tracing over the word using “wiki sticks” or another tactile medium, tracing the word in shaving cream, and/or tracing the word with one’s finger on the carpet or on someone else’s back. Students may also enjoy playing board games with sight words.

Decodable texts and repeated readings will also help develop sight vocabulary.

Repeated reading gives the student the opportunity to master material before moving on to something new, which also increases self-confidence. By reading words several times, the words become sight words. Decodable texts can also be used to develop sight words because students can identify the words within a story and context. Using variations of sight vocabulary connected to reading with a high degree of sight words in a passage has documented students' growth in speed, accuracy and fluency (Frantantoni, 1999).

Conclusion

Job performance, higher education, finances, and leisure all require the ability to read and comprehend written material (McGrath et al., 2012). As students begin to accumulate and store sight words, they begin the process of reading. Students will gain confidence the more fluent they become and, in turn, will be engaged in reading for all purposes. Fluency is an important contributing factor to overall reading success and must be a component that is addressed during reading instruction (Swain et al., 2011). Every student, if given the correct instruction and guidance, can be a fluent reader with good comprehension skills.

CHAPTER III

Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the Dolch Word List and frequent phrases on the reading comprehension of struggling third graders in guided reading.

Design

The design of this study is a quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest repeated measures design. The study involves collecting data to investigate whether working to increase students' base of known sight word knowledge would positively affect students' comprehension ability. All students received a pretest that provided baseline data. All students received the same treatment. Students were given a weekly assessment on sight words, and the researcher completed a comprehension rubric to measure their progression.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected from a public school where the researcher is employed. Most students in this school are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The school is located in a suburban area of Maryland. There are approximately 650 students enrolled in the school. The demographics of the student body are as follows: approximately 27% are African American students, 28% are Hispanic students, 30% are Caucasian students, and 15% are other, meaning two races, Asian American and Pacific Islander. The school receives state money instead of federal money for funding based on the percentage of students enrolled in the school who receive free and reduced price lunches. The school successfully reached Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all student groups in grades three through five on the 2013 Maryland State Assessment (MSA). Maryland has received funds from Race to the Top program and the study

school has used this funding to educate teachers on the new Common Core curriculum implemented in schools starting in the 2013 -2014 school year.

The participants in the study were selected from the researcher's third grade language arts class. There were five participants in this study, three boys and two girls. The group included four African American students, and one Caucasian student. All the students in the group participate in the free and reduced price lunch program (FARMS) and in the special education program.

The participants vary in reading level from F to K. On the Fountas and Pinell (2001) ladder of progress, the beginning reader starts off at level A and an advanced reader is on level Z. The beginning reader is usually in preschool or kindergarten. The kindergarten level ranges from level A to level D. The first grade reader is leveled generally from E to J. A second grade reader is in level K to level M. An on-level third grade student is reading at level N to P. The researcher's group of students has been identified as below level using the Fountas and Pinell ladder of progress (see Appendix A). There is one student reading on level F, two students reading on H, and two students reading on a level K. The lowest reader struggles with Dolch words, spelling patterns, and fluency. She demonstrates strength with comprehension. The two middle readers struggle with sight words and comprehension. They also have difficulty with retelling skills and vocabulary. Both students do well with fluency. The readers on a level K have strengths with Dolch words but lack comprehension skills.

Instrumentation

There were two instruments used in this study. The first instrument was the Dolch First through Third Grade Sight Vocabulary List. This list consists of 128 words that third grade students are expected to master. This list was used as a pretest and posttest as well as a

check point measure four times during the study. Students only practiced the sight words they did not know off the three lists. The second measure was a Guided Reading Assessment Grid. This is a type of rubric that identifies the different known components of comprehension and sight words. There is a clear leveled system that elaborates on the different scores that can be given depending on the student's performance. The researcher found this rubric to be an appropriate rubric to collect data on the students' progress. The specific rubric can be found in Appendix B.

For the purpose of this study, students were instructed using guided reading for 20-minute periods each day. To track individual progress, the rubric was used daily to document in which areas students either struggled or were successful. Students were also given the unfamiliar words on the Dolch First, Second, and Third Grade Sight Vocabulary list in the form of flash cards. Students practiced sight words for homework and played sight word games independently. The posttest was administered following the completion of the four weeks of guided reading and sight word practice. Results were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the instructional strategies in place.

Procedure

The groups were formed and students were identified as struggling by using the Fountas and Pinnell (2001) reading record program. Each student was individually pulled to read a leveled text three times a year. A score was given (Instructional, Independent, or Frustration) based on the student's word errors, self-correction, fluency, and comprehension. Based on a student's score, the researcher moves the student up in a leveled text if that reader scores Independent, down a leveled if the student scores a Frustration, or keeps the student in his or her current level if he or she receives an Instructional score. However, this information changes

throughout the year. Students are placed in interventions and guided reading groups to address any reading ability concerns. By the middle and end of the year, the students are tested again using the same procedure to observe changes or progression. The researcher identified five students who were reading on a first grade level.

The intensive program for these five students began by providing each student with flash cards of the 128 Dolch sight words to practice at home. The sight words were broken up into 41 for the first week, then 46 words the second week, and lastly, 41 total words for the third week. The fourth week, the researcher reviewed all 128 Dolch words covered in the three weeks and collected data on retention of the word lists studied over the three weeks of intervention. The words were also reviewed with the students by the researcher at the beginning of each guided reading group five days a week. During the program, each student was assessed weekly on the words. The results were recorded in percentage form.

Also during the program, on a weekly basis, each student was given the Guided Reading Assessment Grid scores to indicate the comprehension level of each student. The passage used for the pre- and post-assessment has all 220 Dolch words in the text, but the researcher only focused on the first-third grade Dolch words studied during the four weeks of research. A student was able to color in his or her Dolch Word list when mastery of the words occurred. One positive, observable benefit to students throughout the study was a growth in their self-confidence and excitement about achievement.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of the Dolch Word List and frequent phrases on the reading comprehension of struggling third graders in guided reading. After the pretest was given, the intensive program for these five students began. The researcher provided each student with flash cards of the 128 Dolch sight words to practice at home and engaging activities for students to complete during his or her independent time. On a weekly basis, the Guided Reading Assessment Grid was documented to track comprehension level of each student after implementation of the daily teacher directed guided reading lesson. Each student was assessed weekly on the Dolch words. The pre- and post-test results for the Dolch list and Guided Reading were analyzed using a t-test for dependent groups. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Pretest and Posttest Results for Dolch List and Guided Reading

Test	Pre/post	Mean	N	St. Dev.	t	Sig.
Dolch List	Pretest	61.4	5	7.93	7.52	0.002*
	Posttest	82.6	5	8.05		
Guided Reading	Pretest	12.2	5	2.29	3.72	0.020*
	Posttest	15.4	5	2.70		

*p < 0.05

The hypothesis that the researchers' third grade students who are struggling in reading will not increase their reading comprehension skills if their knowledge of sight words increase during guided reading was rejected. There was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results for increased sight word knowledge and comprehension.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine whether increasing sight word vocabulary in below level third grade readers would impact their comprehension. In this study, students were chosen based on their below level performance on the Fountas and Pinnell (2001) leveled reading assessment. The group was given an intervention of daily guided reading instruction with their teacher, treatments of repeated views of first through third grade level Dolch words presented on flash cards, homework assignments focused on Dolch words, and engaging and interactive games and websites to practice during independent time.

The results demonstrate that there is a relationship between sight word knowledge and comprehension. There was a significant difference in sight word knowledge from the pre- to posttest results. The average students knew 61% of sight words on the pretest. The average sight word knowledge increased to 81% on the posttest. The comprehension results increased as well. The pretest outcome was an average of 12%, and the posttest results average was 15%. There was an increase of 3% comprehension on average.

This study demonstrated the importance of sight words in our everyday skill of comprehension. The researcher's group of struggling readers developed a higher degree of sight word knowledge over the course of four weeks. By practicing Dolch words on flash cards, within homework, and through engaging games, students were exposed to a lot of vocabulary in isolation. Along with teacher guidance through daily guided reading instruction, students were

able to observe the sight words within the text. This assisted with making the connections between words and sentences and in turn, comprehension of the text. This is a crucial skill in order for readers to understand and make sense of a text. It is a skill that is needed for all aspects of reading.

Threats to Validity

There are a couple threats to the internal and external validity of the study. First, the group was chosen specifically based on their performance on the Fountas and Pinnell (2001) reading assessment. If students had been chosen for this group based upon random sampling, there would have been a range of ability levels in the group. The results could have been different with a larger group of third grade students.

A second threat to the internal validity was the administration of the Maryland State Assessment, or MSA. The students taking the MSA did not receive their interventions for two weeks while testing was in session. Classroom schedules had to be altered to accommodate the MSA. These changes in schedule resulted in the interruption of direct instruction.

A third threat to internal validity relates to parents' involvement in assisting their children at home. Some students were able to get assistance at home with flash card and homework practice while others did not have assistance at home.

Finally, it appears that the greatest threat to internal validity was time. Due to time restrictions, the experimental group was not able to receive instruction for a solid four weeks. The interventions were given as many days as possible, but with days off and the MSA testing, the intervention was not consistent.

Connections to Previous Studies

According to McGrath et al. (2012), “every aspect of life involves reading”(p.50). The study McGrath et al. performed involved the effects of increased sight word knowledge using a game called Reading Racetracks. Instead of only using flash card drills, the researchers found that using a game board and timing students increased sight word knowledge partly because of the competition factor and student engagement. This current study is similar to the McGrath et al.’s study because of the use of interactive games and activities on the computer to help increase student engagement and excitement about learning.

Another study by Mayfield and Holmes (1999) examined what effect direct instruction of sight vocabulary had on the reading achievement of at-risk third grade students. Mayfield and Holmes also support the notion that word recognition is a precursor to reading comprehension. The results of Mayfield and Holmes’ study suggested that direct instruction in sight word recognition resulted in improved scores on unit tests. In the current study through guided reading and flash card practice, the researcher used direct instruction to assist with sight word knowledge and received an increase in sight word knowledge as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a couple different recommendations for future research. The first improvement would involve the amount of time provided for the study. More time for instruction would give any intervention a greater opportunity to make an impact on students’ performance. The consistencies of the intervention can also allow for a routine and structure that is beneficial to students in a school setting.

Another suggestion for future investigations involves sample size and selection. A comparison between groups of students on different reading levels could provide clearer,

more accurate results to the researcher.

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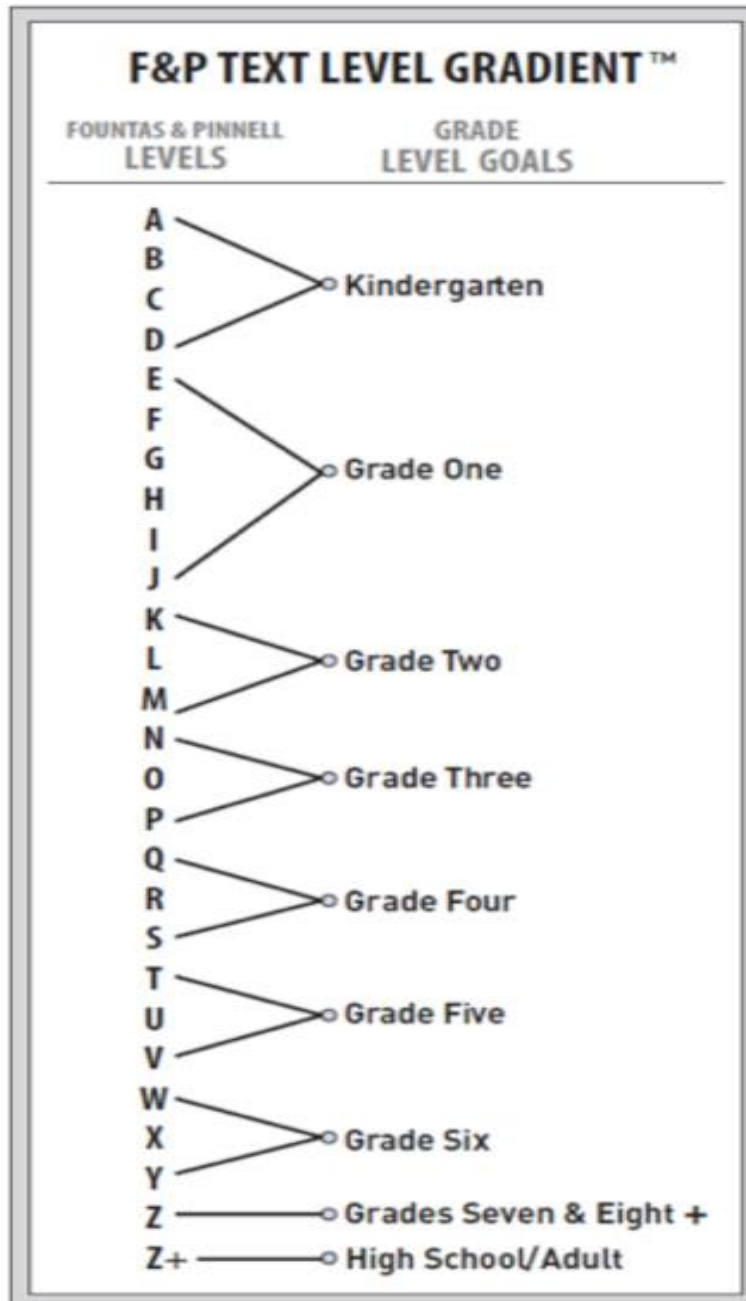
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APPENDIX A

Fountas and Pinnell Ladder of Progress



APPENDIX B

Guided Reading Assessment Grid

Student:	Book:				
Connections					
Vocabulary					
Comprehension					
Predicting					
Sight Word Rec					
Rating Scale 1-5 (rubric) Sight word Rec: S- sometimes A- Always N- never 5 DAY TOTAL: /100 5 DAY TOTAL: /100					

Questions prompted by the teacher:

Making Connection:

What does this story remind you of?
 (Students can make self-text, text- text, or text- world connections)

Vocabulary:

Student will define two vocabulary words taken from the text.

Comprehension:

Student will answer the Big 5 questions to retell the story
 (who, what, when, where, why)

Predicating/Making inferences:

What will happen next in the story?
 By reading the title, what can you infer about what the story will be about?

Guided Reading Rubric

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3-4	Above and Beyond
Making Connections <i>Text-to-Text</i> <i>Text-to-Self</i> <i>Text-to-World</i>	Reader made no connections between text and self/text/or world.	Reader made simple connections but did not explain them all in detail.	Reader made connections and based them on background knowledge and/or experiences . Reader also had clear explanations on most connections.	With all connections, reader explained in detail how their background experiences aided in the comprehension of text.
Vocabulary <i>Word Recognition</i>	Reader did not identify any vocabulary words. Reader seems to have difficulty understanding meaning of many words in the book.	Reader identified some unknown words but seems to have some difficulty understanding meaning of some words in the book.	Reader identified many unknown words and was able to identify the meaning of most words discussed.	Reader identified the majority words that he/she did not understand. Reader seemed to gain a vast amount of knowledge through the word study and was also willing to share that with the group.
Comprehension <i>Summarizing</i>	Reader showed little or no awareness of what the story was about through the assigned comprehension questions and discussions.	Reader included some main details in the comprehension questions and discussions but left out some very important events.	Reader retold the story using main ideas and supporting details in the comprehension questions and discussions.	Reader retold the story effectively and efficiently and was always willing to share with the group.
Predicting <i>Making Inferences</i>	Reader's predictions seemed to lack any connection to what previously happened in the story or what could happen in the story.	Reader attempted to make predictions or draw conclusions but did not use the text to defend the statement .	Reader drew conclusions and/or made predictions based on what could happen in the story . The reader also defended these predictions by using information found in the story.	Reader's predictions, interpretations, and/or conclusions about the story included connections between the text and the reader's background knowledge, ideas, and/or beliefs.

