

Identifying the better strategy to increase a student's reading rate

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to identify if reading rate can be improved by students reading multiple stories one time or do they need to read fewer stories multiple times? In this study, four students read one passage three times for one minute each time in one sitting and the other four students read three different passages for one minute each in one sitting. Words per minute read by each student were recorded and compared. This procedure was repeated with these same students three times a week for a total of three weeks. The findings show a larger increase in the student's words per minute from the ABC group than the student's in the AAA group. Students reading rate in the ABC group increased 60 words per minute over all and students from the AAA group only increased 46 words per minute overall. This shows a 14 word difference between the two groups of students.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	Page
Description of Research Question.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Limitations.....	6
 Chapter 2: Review of Literature	
Review of Literature.....	8
What is reading rate and fluency?.....	8
What is the correlation between fluency and comprehension.....	9
What are some strategies to increase a child’s fluency.....	11
 Chapter 3: Methodology	
Description of participants.....	15
Informed consent procedures.....	15
Confidentiality.....	16
Demographics.....	16
Instrumentation.....	16
 Chapter 4: Results	
Analysis of Data.....	18
Conclusions	24
Recommendations for Further Research.....	24
References.....	25

Chapter 1

Introduction to the study

All early childhood educators across the country struggle with their student's ability to read and comprehend what they are reading. I believe that one way to better increase reading comprehension is to increase their reading rate. The ability to read fluently has been found to serve as a strong predictor of reading comprehension (Lo, Cooke, & Starling, 2011). As educators, we know that the main goal of reading is to comprehend and understand. If a student doesn't understand or even remember what they read, then why are they reading? Many students feel this way also. They feel that if they can't understand it or remember it, then why read. We need to make sure that they are given the tools and strategies to be successful. We need to make sure that they not only value reading but want to read. One way to ensure this is to increase their reading skills and reading rate. If they are using so much energy and brain power on simply decoding, then they aren't going to be able to focus on the actual meaning of the text.

There are several aspects to fluency; speed, comprehension, expression, and accuracy but for this study the focus is not on true fluency, only on reading rate. Once reading rate is established, the student can then work on the other aspects of fluency.

Description of Research Question

This project is designed to identify the better way to increase a student's reading rate. What is the better way to increase a student's reading rate? Should they read multiple stories one time or do they need to read fewer stories multiple times?

Purpose of the study

There are many reasons for doing this research study. The most important is to find the better way to increase a student's reading rate. As an early childhood teacher, I am constantly

looking for ways to increase my students reading rate and fluency. There are many studies on how to increase reading rate and many suggestions on things to try, but we only have a limited time throughout the year to work with these students, so we need a technique or strategy that will get us the most positive results in the least amount of time. There have been several studies done that show a strong correlation between a student's reading rate and their comprehension (Williams, J.C., Klubnik, C., & McCall, M., 2009; Lo, Cooke, & Starling, 2011). Students with a higher reading rate, tend to comprehend what they read better. If they don't have to focus so much on decoding and identifying unknown words, they can focus more on the meaning of the text and therefore gather meaning of the written text. The main goal of reading is to understand. If you don't understand or remember what you read, then why read? So many of my students have trouble comprehending what they read. I feel that if they were able to read more fluently and at a higher rate of words per minute, then they would have better comprehension.

Definition of Terms

Fluency- Fluency is a speech language pathology term that means the smoothness or flow with which sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together when speaking quickly.

Reading Rate- This refers to the number of words per minute you can read correctly.

Comprehension- The act or action of grasping with the intellect; understanding.

WPM- Acronym for words per minute.

Limitations

This project includes some limitations. I am the teacher in the classroom where this study is being conducted. The students are familiar and comfortable with me. They are used to reading out loud to me: therefore, they may perform a little better than if they were reading with a stranger. Another limitation is that the students participating in this study are used to repeated

readings and have been doing them throughout the year. Since they are used to repeated readings, this may increase performance. They realize that the goal when performing a repeated reading is to read farther in the passage each time so they try harder each time to read farther than they did before.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to provide research based findings identifying the better way to increase a student's reading rate. All educators know the importance of comprehension. Many may not know how to increase a child's comprehension though. It has been shown that there is a strong correlation between children's reading rate and their reading comprehension (Williams, J.C., Klubnik, C., & McCall, M., 2009; Lo, Cooke, & Starling, 2011). So why not start with increasing their reading rate? But how? This literature review focuses on the importance of reading rate and strategies as to how to increase reading rate. This review is divided into three subsections: 1) What is reading rate? 2) What is the correlation between fluency and comprehension? and 3) What strategies are used to increase a child's reading rate? Through this literature review, the difference between reading rate and fluency, the importance of increasing a child's reading rate, and strategies for increasing reading rate are discussed. Although there has been a substantial amount of research on repeated readings, there isn't a lot on the different types of repeated readings. The results and findings from this research will help to identify the differences as well as suggest the better way to improve a child's reading rate.

What is reading rate and fluency?

One of the key components for attaining reading success is the ability to read fluently (National Reading Panel, 2000). Cathy Block (2005) states "no doubt, mathematics, social studies, science, and other content domains are essential for academic and intellectual development, but to learn information in these disciplines in school, students must know how to read" (p. 2). Depending on whom you ask, fluency means something different. There are many

definitions of the word but many will agree that whatever the definition, it is an essential component to the reading process. The National Reading Panel (2000) describes fluency as “the ability to orally read quickly, accurately, and with proper expression.” (p. 17) Disfluent readers struggle with word recognition, fail to comprehend various types of text, have little motivation to read, and spend less time reading (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002). Block (2005) explains, that reading in general has four characteristics: accuracy and ease in decoding, speed of reading, simultaneous comprehension and decoding, and expression in oral reading prosody: tone, sequences, stresses, and pauses (p. 82). All of these characteristics create a person's overall reading fluency. The term “reading rate” varies slightly from fluency. A child's reading rate focuses solely on their number of words they can read correctly in one minute. It does not take into account all the other aspects of fluency. Many of the researchers tend to use these terms interchangeably. For the purpose of this literature review, I will do the same.

There are no set or universal numbers for how many words per minute a child should be reading at a certain time, but Hasbrouck and Tindal (1991) do offer some guidelines for oral reading fluency (ORF). According to Hasbrouck and Tindal (1991), an “average” 3rd grade reader should be reading approximately 79 words per minute in the fall, 93 wpm in the winter and 114 wpm in the spring (p. 41). These numbers can be used as a guideline and reference to help identify if a child is struggling with fluency or if he or she should be targeted for intervention.

What is the correlation between fluency and comprehension?

Reading fluency is a key skill of effective readers. The speed and effort-lessness with which readers process text is highly correlated with comprehension. (Hasbrouck, Innot, & Rogers, 1999). Steven Krashen (2004) points out that fluent readers score higher on standardized

tests. This is because they don't have to spend so much time and effort on decoding and can focus more on meaning. The correlation between fluency and comprehension was clearly established by a large-scale data analysis from the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Reading (Pinnell et al., 1995). In that study, 44% of the subjects were not fluent when reading grade-level appropriate materials; the study also showed a significant, positive relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. However, the relationship between fluency and comprehension is fairly complex. This complexity was summed up well by Stecker, Roser, & Martinez (1998) in their review of fluency research: "The issue of whether fluency is an outgrowth [of] or a contributor to comprehension is unresolved. There is empirical evidence to support both positions" (p. 300). However, in the end they concluded, "Fluency has been shown to have a 'reciprocal relationship' with comprehension, with each fostering the other" (p. 306).

When LaBerge and Samuels (1974) introduced their theory of automatic information processing, they proposed that to be an efficient reader, a student should be able to recognize and identify words instantly and then connect the words as they read to make meaning. This supports the notion that fluency and comprehension are interrelated and depend upon each other. LaBerge and Samuels also argued that the surface-level processing of words in reading should ideally be done at an automatic level, a level that required minimal attentional or cognitive capacity. In doing so, readers could reserve their finite cognitive resources for the more important task in reading--comprehension. LaBerge and Samuels hypothesized that for many readers poor comprehension could be explained by too much investment of their cognitive resources in the surface-level aspects of reading or slow, laborious, conscious-filled decoding of words. This investment of resources into the surface-level component of reading depleted or

exhausted what could be invested in making sense of what they read. If he/she is spending all of their efforts on simply sounding out or decoding the words of a text, then they cannot and are not putting enough effort into actually making meaning of the text.

Comprehension is one of the hardest concepts to teach to a young child. How do you teach a child to “think” and “understand”? Throughout my career as an educator, I have found it hardest to “teach” comprehension. I have found many strategies and graphic organizers to help, but no concrete and best way to teach it. I have decided in my classroom that I will first focus on increasing the children's fluency and then build in teaching the process of comprehending.

Modeling fluency is another essential component to teaching fluency. Many children learn by seeing and mimicking. If we model explicitly how to read fluently, it will give the students a visual and model to guide them. Frayer and Klausmeier 1972, stated that:

The primary task of a school is to teach children subject matter knowledge and skills. This requires communicating information, demonstrating skills, and motivating children to attend to the subject matter and to persist until mastery is achieved. Modeling is an important vehicle for teaching knowledge and skills, motivating children to learn, and helping them to develop a value system. Research has shown that a behavior may be acquired through observing and imitating a model. A behavior that has already been acquired may be inhibited, disinhibited, or elicited by observing and imitating. Thus, modeling may be an effective way of facilitating learning, bringing about desirable behavior, and controlling undesirable behavior in the classroom. (p. 9)

What are some strategies to increase a child's fluency?

There are several strategies and programs on the market today to increase reading rate and fluency. Through much of the research found while conducting the review, repeated readings

was the most common and most effective strategy. Most research found (e.g., Therrien, 2004; Williams, J.C., Klubnik, C., & McCall, M., 2009; Silber & Martens, 2010; Lo, Cooke, & Starling, 2011) only referred to repeated readings as reading the same passage multiple times. One article found (Williams, Klubnik, & McCall, 2009) debated whether it's more beneficial to read the same passage 3 times or 6 times. In a study done by Williams, Klubnik, & McCall (2009) results indicated that doubling the number of reading opportunities usually resulted in students reading practice passages with greater fluency but did not significantly increase their fluency on generalization passages. I use the repeated reading strategy a lot in my classroom. I see great results with it. It not only improves their fluency, but it also increases their confidence. It gives my lower readers, who struggle with decoding and automaticity, a chance to be successful. Every child wants to feel successful and by using repeated readings, it lets them be. In my experience, each reading seems to serve a different function. The first reading of a repeated reading usually focuses on the child decoding and identifying the words. The second reading usually focuses on the child reading the words he previously figured out and getting slightly further in the passage. The third reading allows the student to focus a little more on the other components of fluency; speed, accuracy, and expression.

Repeated readings is an evidenced based strategy assigned to increase reading fluency and comprehension. In a meta-analysis done by Therrien (2004), his findings indicate that repeated reading improves the reading fluency and comprehension of both nondisabled students and students with learning disabilities. All students in the study obtained a moderate mean increase in fluency and a somewhat smaller mean increase in comprehension.

Another strategy to help increase a child's reading rate is to practice and teach sight words. Some people refer to them as high frequency words. These sight words occur frequently

in the English language. They can comprise between 50-75% of text, making them important to learn. They are often exceptions to phonetic analysis and many are service words which are words that do not provide a visual image (Rebboah, J.,2010).

Read Naturally (RN) is another great strategy used for increasing fluency. Candyce Ihnot, a Title I reading teacher with the Minneapolis Public Schools, developed the RN strategy during her master's degree program. The Read naturally strategy to improve reading fluency combines the three techniques of; reading from a model, repeated readings, and progress monitoring. This four-step strategy combines research--based components into a process that teachers at elementary and middle schools, who work with remedial as well as special education students, have found can have a positive effect on their students' reading fluency and comprehension, as well as on their attitudes and motivation, that exceeds expectations (Hasbrouck, Ihnot, & Rogers, 1999). One of the strengths of the RN strategy is that the majority of activities can be successfully self-directed by the students themselves; the teacher only participates in one step of the process. Before step one even starts, the students' reading levels are assessed to place students in an appropriate level. Once their appropriate level is identified, step one begins. Step one involves an unpracticed cold reading of a student selected passage from their targeted level. Students read the passage for one minute and mark the number of words read correctly. During the second step of this strategy, students practice reading this same passage 3-4 times along with a model. This model can be an audiotape or a trained reader. The important part here is that the student reads along with the model, he/she does not just listen. In step three, the child reads the passage independently. She/he will set the timer again for one minute and read the passage several times until they reach their predetermined goal of so many words per minute. When they reach their goal, they indicate to the teacher that they need to be checked. This is the last step of

the strategy, step four. The teacher times the student's reading of the practiced passage for one minute and records the number of correct words read. The teacher then decides if the student "passes" based on three certain criteria; 1) the words correct per minute score meets or exceeds the predetermined goal, 2) three or fewer errors were made, and 3) the student read the passage with correct phrasing and attention to punctuation. If the student "passes" they move on to another passage at the same level, if the goal was not met, they continue practicing the same passage until it is met. Students continue reading passages at this same level for 10-12 passages. At that point, the teacher determines if the child is ready to move up a level or if they feel the child should continue where he/she is. "Since the strategy was developed, teaches in many different settings, from different states, and working with different types and grade levels of students have used RN with demonstrated success" (Hasbrouck, Ihnot, & Rogers, 1999).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Description of participants

There were six 3rd Grade students who participated in this study. There were three boys and three girls. All of the participants were nine years old at the time of this study. All students participate in the regular education classroom for all subject content areas. When choosing the participants for this study, their Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) scores were considered (a reading assessments used school wide to determine a child's reading rate). These are scores that have been collected and identified throughout this school year. Their average words per minute (WPM) were used to match the students into pairs. Two students whose averages were similar were paired with one placed in group of students who read one passage three times (the AAA group). The other was placed in group that read three different passages (the ABC group). This process was repeated until there was a total of three students in the AAA group and three students in the ABC group. Then I found two more students with similar averages and divided them into the separate groups. Student 1 and student 2 had similar scores of 60 and 63 WPM respectively. Student 3 and student 4 had similar scores of 94 WPM and 93 WPM respectively. Student 5 and 6 had similar scores of 83 WPM and 82 WPM respectively. Student Gender was not considered in establishing the groups. Interestingly, it did work out that there were even numbers of boys and girls.

Informed consent procedures

The research topic chosen does not require informed consent papers in order to carry out the study. Since the topic, reading rate and repeated readings, is already implemented as a part of our schools curriculum, students were not required to do anything additional that is not already

mandated by the school. Through this research design, the children did not take part in any tasks that would cause harm to themselves or their learning.

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, no names were used in this study. They were assigned a number from 1 to 6 and were identified using their assigned number. When all testing and analysis is complete, all materials and documents containing student's names will be shredded.

Demographics

This study was conducted at a rural Appalachian school district in Ohio. The district is comprised of a single Pre-K -- 12 complex. It currently has approximately 1,652 students. The High School serves approximately 516 students in grades 9 - 12, while the Middle School serves approximately 354 students in grades 6 - 8, and the Elementary School consisting of grades Pre-K -- 5 has an enrollment of approximately 782 students. There are approximately 130 teachers and administrators. The student/teacher ratio in grades K-6 is one teacher to 21 students.

Instrumentation

This study took place over a three week time period. Each student read a total of 27 one minute timed readings. Students in group AAA read 9 different passages each three times and students in group ABC read 27 different passages, three at a time, each one time. The data was then collected and analyzed to see which group of students gained the most WPM by the conclusion of this study. The passages used in this study were grade level quick read fluency passages selected from Scott Foresman's Reading Street Series. This assured that all passages were research based grade level and comparable to each other.

During week 1, on Monday, student 1 read passage A to me for one minute and I recorded the WPM. I then had the same student read the same passage to me again a second

time, recording the WPM again. The same student repeated this one more time for a total of three one minute readings of the same passage. I then repeated this procedure with students 2 and 3 each reading independently. Then I had student 4 read three different passages (A, B, and C) for one minute each and record the WPM for each reading. I then repeated this procedure with students 5 and 6 each reading independently.

On Wednesday of the same week, I repeated the same process as Monday except using different passages. Students 1, 2 and 3 read passage D three times each for one minute each time for a total of three readings. Students 4, 5, and 6 will read passages D, E, and F for one minute each for a total of three readings.

On Friday of the same week, I repeated the same process as Monday and Wednesday except using different passages. Students 1, 2, and 3 read passage G three times each for one minute each time for a total of three readings. Students 4, 5, and 6 read passages G, H, and I for one minute each for a total of three readings. I did this for a total of three weeks and then analyzed the data to see which set of students gained the most WPM over the three week period.

Chapter 4

Results

The research question posed at the beginning of this Mater's Research Project was what is the better way to increase a child's reading rate? Should he/she read one story multiple times or does he/she need to read multiple stories one time? As an early childhood educator, I am always looking for better ways and strategies to increase my students reading rate and feel that this study will be very beneficial to my classroom as well as other educator's classrooms. During this three week study, the six students who participated read a total of 27 passages for one minute each and their number of words read correctly was recorded. Three of the students read 9 different passages three times each and the remaining three students read 27 different passages. The results from this study were analyzed and presented in this chapter.

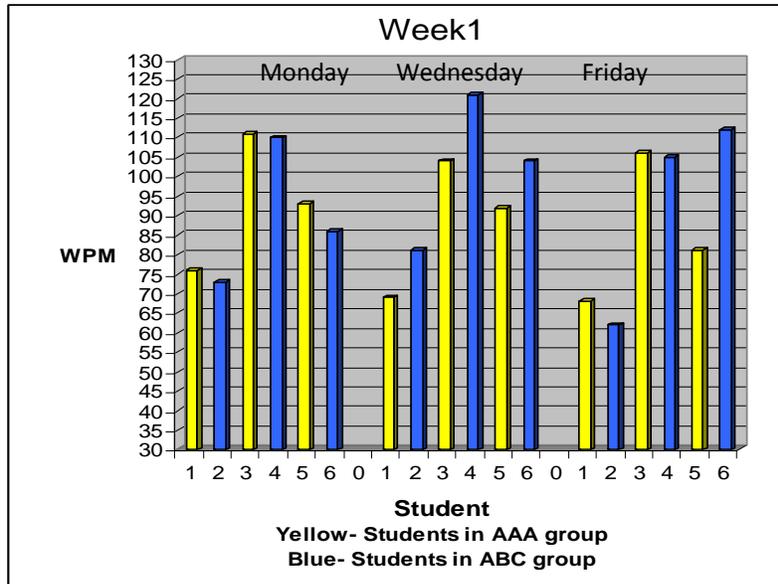
Analysis of Data

The following shows the results of the study. Each time of implementation will be displayed in graphic form identifying the student and the number of words read correctly for each reading. Also, the results of the average words read correctly per minute by each student will be compared to identify the strategy that showed the most gains in the student's words per minute.

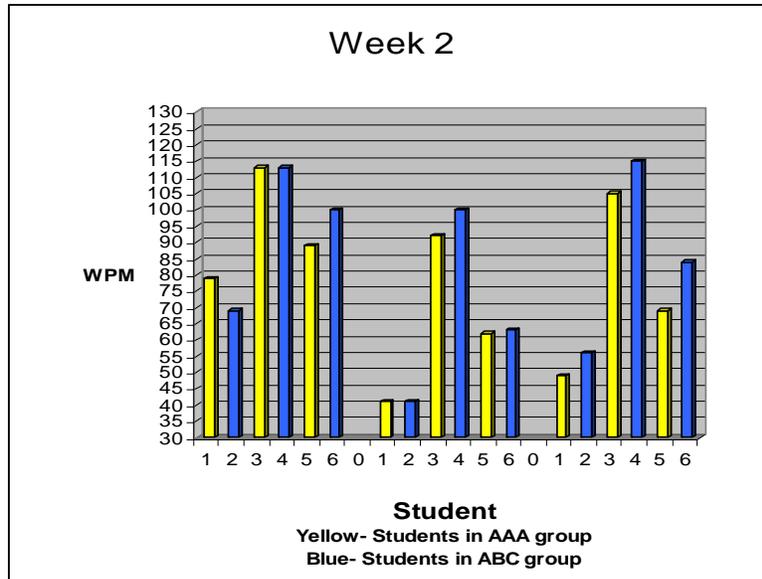
Baseline Assessment: To begin the study, I wanted a baseline words per minute assessment. As part of our schools curriculum, we use Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as our fluency assessment. For this reason, each students DIBELS scores were used as their baseline assessment. For the baseline assessment, student 1 read 60 WPM, student 2 read 63 WPM, student 3 read 94 WPM, student 4 read 93 WPM, student 5 read 83 WPM, and student 6 read 82 WPM. This assessment was also used to place the students into

their assigned group. Since student 1 and student 2 had similar results in WPM, one student was placed into the AAA group and the other student was placed into the ABC group. Since student 3 and 4 had similar WPM, one was placed into the AAA group while the other was placed into the ABC group. Again, since the number of WPM read by student 5 and 6 were similar, one was assigned to group AAA and the other was assigned to group ABC. This assured that each group started with students of similar abilities.

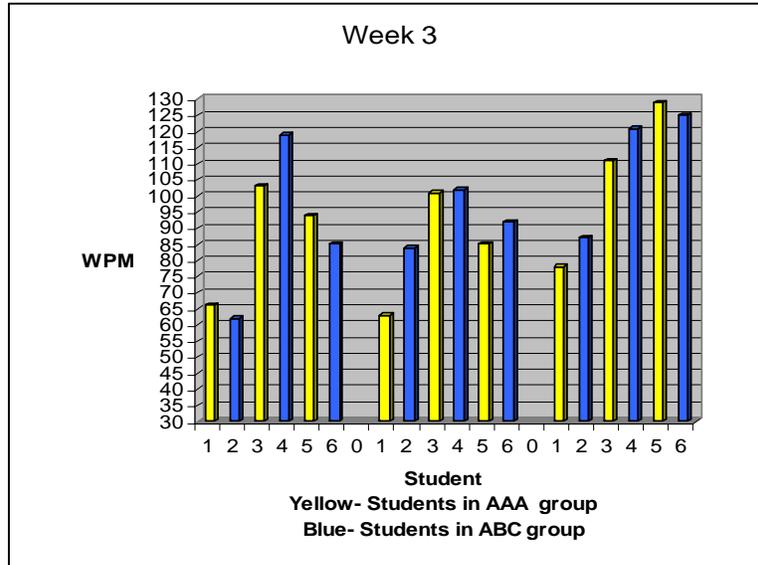
Week One: On Monday of the first week of the study, each of the six students read three one minute timed readings. Students 1, 3, and 5 read passage A (See appendix A for a list of all passages used) three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages A, B and C each one time. Each group of students read a total of three one minute readings with the difference being that student 1, 3, and 5 read the same passage and students 2, 4, and 6 read three different passages. After each one minute reading, each student's number of words read correctly was recorded. This same process was repeated on Wednesday and Friday this same week using different passages. On Wednesday, students 1, 3, and 5 read passage D three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages D, E, and F one time each. Again after each reading, their number of words read correctly was recorded. On Friday, students 1, 3, and 5 read passage G three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages G, H and I one time each with each student's WPM recorded. The following graph shows the results from week one of implementation.



Week Two: On Monday of the second week of the study, each of the six students read three one minute timed readings. Students 1, 3, and 5 read passage J three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages J, K and L each one time. Each group of students read a total of three one minute readings with the difference being that student 1, 3, and 5 read the same passage and students 2, 4, and 6 read three different passages. After each one minute reading, each student's number of word read correctly were recorded. This same process was repeated on Wednesday and Friday this same week using different passages. On Wednesday, students 1, 3, and 5 read passage M three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages M, N, and O one time each. Again after each reading, their number of words read correctly was recorded. On Friday, students 1, 3, and 5 read passage P three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages P, Q, and R one time each with their number of words read correctly recorded. The following graph shows the results from week one of implementation.

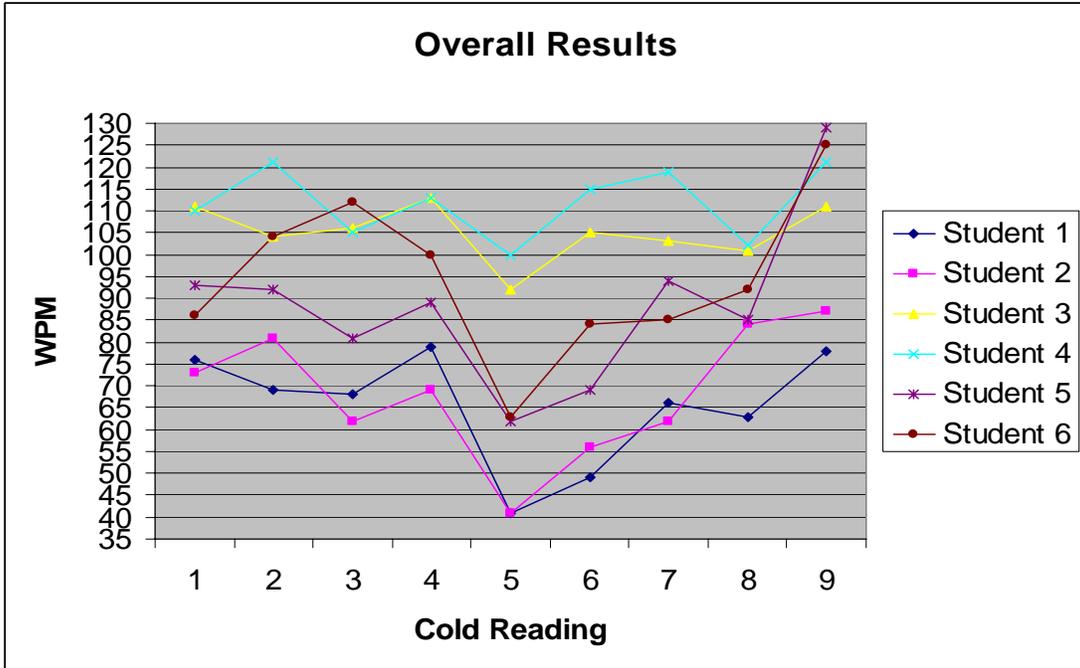


Week Three: On Monday of the third week of the study, each of the six students read three one minute timed readings. Students 1, 3, and 5 read passage S three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages S, T, and U each one time. Each group of students read a total of three one minute readings with the difference being that student 1, 3, and 5 read the same passage and students 2, 4, and 6 read three different passages. After each one minute reading, each student's number of word read correctly were recorded. This same process was repeated on Wednesday and Friday this same week using different passages. On Wednesday, students 1, 3, and 5 read passage V three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages V, W, and X one time each. Again after each reading, their number of words read correctly was recorded. On Friday, students 1, 3, and 5 read passage Y three times and students 2, 4, and 6 read passages Y, Z, and AA one time each with each student's WPM recorded. The following graph shows the results from week one of implementation.

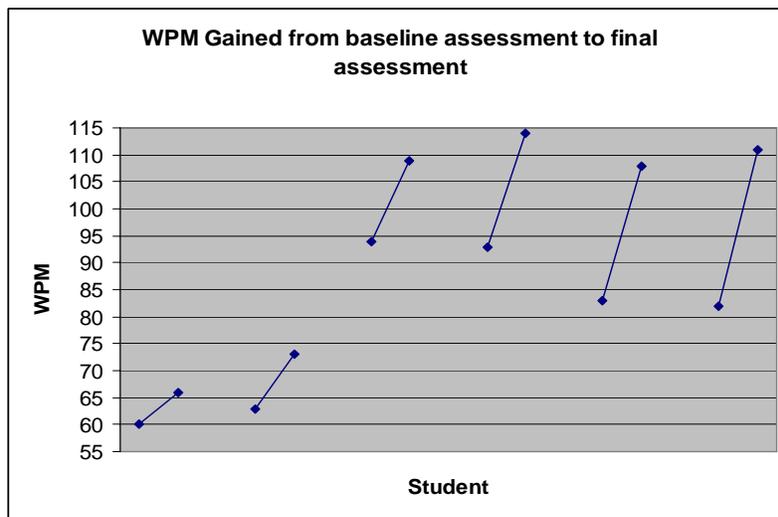


Overall results:

As you can see, the overall results show that students 1, 3, and 5 who participated in group AAA did not gain as many words per minute overall on their cold reads as group ABC did when looking at their baseline assessment number to their end assessment number. It is important to note that all students' words per minute did increase from the start of the project to the end. From the beginning of the study students 1, 3, and 5 gained a total of 46 words per minute and students 2, 4, and 6 who participated in group ABC gained a total of 60 words per minute. This is a 14 word difference between the two groups of students. The following graph shows the number of words read for each of the students each time they read during the three week study.



During this study, student 1 increased 6 words per minute, student 2 increased 10 words per minute, student 3 increased 15 words per minute, student 4 increased 21 words per minute, student 5 increased 25 words per minute, and student 6 increased 29 words per minute. The following graph shows each student's beginning baseline assessment and their final words per minute assessment.



Conclusions:

From the data collected, it can be concluded that the students who read 27 different passages one time each as opposed to the students that read 9 different passages three times each gained more words per minute on their overall end reading rate. There was a 14 word difference between the number of words per minute that group AAA read and group ABC read with group ABC reading more. This is a significant difference. It is important to note that all students involved in the study did increase their fluency from the beginning of the study to the end. I believe that either strategy used would be beneficial in a classroom to increase a student's reading rate.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although the research I collected had significant results, there are some recommendations I have for further research to seek confirmation of my results. This project would benefit from being extended into a long term project. I believe there would be more substantial differences in the number of words read per minute from the very first reading to the very last reading if the project was carried out for a longer period of time. I also believe that the project would have more solid results if it were done with a larger sample size. There would be more data to look at and analyze. I recommend taking a baseline fluency assessment at the beginning of the quarter, carry out this project with all of the students, placing half in the AAA group and the other half in the ABC group, for the entire quarter and then taking another fluency assessment at the end of that quarter and then analyze the results.

Another recommendation for this project would be to add a comprehension factor. It would be greatly beneficial to see if the different types of repeated readings had any influence on a student's overall comprehension of unpracticed text. As an educator, we know the importance

of reading comprehension and how hard it is for some student's to understand. It would be ideal to see if either one of these strategies increased their comprehension more than the other.

Also, studies of increasing a child's reading rate could be done by using different strategies. As much of the research pointed out, repeated readings are one of the most popular and most beneficial strategies for increasing reading rate, but it is not the only strategy. It would be nice to compare repeated readings with another strategy to see which one increases their reading rate more significantly.

Overall, the topic of the study done can be changed and modified in many different ways to further confirm the results already found in this study.

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Appendix A

Student Readings

All passages were taken from the Reading Street 3rd Grade Reading Series.

Passage A.....Blue House

Passage B.....The Car Puzzle

Passage C.....The Laundry Room Fort

Passage D.....Katie Bakes a Cake

Passage E.....Birthday for Ducklings

Passage F.....A Great Day

Passage G.....Something for Everyone

Passage H.....Meet Tom Sawyer

Passage I..... The Tree House

Passage J..... A Giant Garden

Passage K..... How the Reindeer Got Antlers

Passage L.....A Mysterious Scene

Passage M.....Sailing Home

Passage N.....Hiking?

Passage O.....Zora the Zebra

Passage P.....Ring of Fire

Passage Q.....Mona's Stamp Collection

Passage R..... The Duck Olympics

Passage S.....Bats Are Special

Passage T.....Cinco de Mayo
Passage U.....A Day at the Circus
Passage V..... Stuck at the Airport
Passage W.....Making Challah
Passage X.....Hunting Treasure
Passage Y..... Grace's Place
Passage Z.....The Secret Recipe
Passage AA.....Tips for Taking Great Travel Pictures