Using an Intervention Reading Program to Improve the Comprehension Skills of Middle School Students

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Submitted to the Master of Arts in Education Program of Defiance College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

April, 2003

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Abstract

Fifteen at-risk seventh grade students enrolled in an urban Midwest school participated in the study. The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of the Read XL program with seventh grade at-risk students would improve their comprehension skills. This program, developed by Scholastic Inc., was designed to help struggling readers increase their reading level and comprehension skills through both direct instruction and practice. The Read XL program was implemented during the first twelve weeks of the school year. There were gains in achievement as measured by a pre and posttest and scores on weekly reading selection assessments.
I would like to acknowledge and thank all the people who have lent their support and guidance toward the completion of this project. Sincere appreciation is given to my advisor, Dr. Jo Ann Burkhardt. I am grateful for her inspiration, constant direction, and wonderful sense of humor, as she kept me on the ball to get this project finished. Special thanks goes to my husband, Rich, for his patience and support during the preparation and completion of this project. Sincere gratitude is also expressed to my children, family, and friends whose encouragement and understanding served as an inspiration toward the accomplishment of this important education goal.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this project was to determine if the use of the Read XL program with seventh grade at-risk students would improve their comprehension skills. The research questions were:

1) What comprehension skills were necessary for middle school students to be successful?
2) What programs were available that helped improve comprehension skills for middle school students?
3) What were the common components of these programs?
4) Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students?

Justification

The justification for choosing this subject was based on the researcher’s desire to improve her students’ comprehension skills. The intervention program used in this study was designed to target the skills most needed by middle school students.

Many classroom tests, as well as proficiency tests, and most of the homework that middle school students completed were dependent on some sort of reading comprehension. The researcher found that several of her students had trouble comprehending their textbooks and needed additional instruction and practice. With the improvement of these skills, the researcher was hoping to give her students the ability to improve in both proficiency testing and classroom achievement.
Definition of Terms

At-risk: students that did not pass the sixth grade proficiency test in reading.

Students: seventh graders who are in a reading intervention program the last 45 minutes of the day at a middle school in a small city school district in Northwest Ohio.

Improve: to better oneself, increase abilities, increase scores.

Comprehension Skills: the ability to use context and prior knowledge to aid reading and to make sense of what one reads and hears.

Read XL: a researched-based program that builds essential skills through a variety of reading experiences.

Limitations and Appropriate Use of Results

This study was limited to one, seventh grade intervention class in a small city school district in Northwest Ohio. The sample study was small as the study involved only fifteen at-risk students. Therefore, there was only one group to draw data from to determine the success of the program.

Another possible limitation was time. The researcher only had this group of students for twelve weeks, making it possible to intervene with only one group of students. Class time was limited to 40 minutes per day, which in some cases did not allow all objectives to be met. Due to these factors, the results may not be generalized to other populations.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

The purpose of this project was to determine if the use of the Read XL program with seventh grade at-risk students would improve their comprehension skills. The research questions were, 1. What comprehension skills were necessary for middle school students to be successful? 2. What programs were available that helped improve comprehension skills for middle school students? 3. What were the common components of these programs? 4. Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students?

Question #1: What comprehension skills were necessary for middle school students to be successful?

In order to answer the first research question, a review of literature was conducted to determine which skills were necessary for middle school students to be successful in reading comprehension. Through the research, there were a total of six comprehension skills that were found to be necessary for the success of the middle school student. Each skill will be listed, and explained in detail, throughout this chapter.

Activate Prior Knowledge

Robb (2000) stated that to every text, a reader brings his/her personality, present mood, and memories, making each person’s experience of a text almost as unique as a fingerprint. Rosenblatt (1983) illustrated that readers used prior knowledge, information, and experiences stored in their mind to make meaning from a text. She stated that during reading, a reader integrated his/her personal knowledge with the author’s words, creating an original text. She therefore concluded that what readers bring to a text affected their ability to comprehend the author’s words.

Minsky and Anderson’s study (as cited in Robb 2000) developed a schema theory, which observed the readers’ behaviors in relationship to prior knowledge and comprehension. This theory suggested that each child brought a unique set of experiences and knowledge, called schemata, to his/her reading.
Robb (2000) stated that teachers who initiated prereading strategies provided their student with additional reading support. When a topic was introduced, teachers questioned the students to discover and reflect on what students knew about the topic. If students' background knowledge were limited, building additional knowledge prior to reading would improve comprehension and engagement.

Synthesize and Summarize Information

Brown, Day, and Jones' study (as cited in Robb 2000) highlighted five operations readers used as they synthesized and summarized:

1. They removed irrelevant data.
2. They removed repeated information.
3. They categorized information into lists, such as “fruit” for peaches, tomatoes, apples.
4. They tried to locate topic sentences in the text and used these for their internal summaries.
5. They created topic sentences when they couldn’t find any in the text.

Robb (2000) explained that this was a complex process that moved beyond retelling, since synthesizing involved determining the main idea of a passage or chapter and chose points that related to that idea.

Identify text structure and type of reasoning

Pearson & Camperell (1994) stated that making meaning from text was easier if the reader was familiar with the way material was conventionally structured. Young children became familiar with the conventional format from hearing stories. They learned that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Research indicated that middle school students understood expository, or informational, text better if they used an author’s overall text structure to organize the material (McNeil, 1992).

Chall (1996) suggested that middle-school students were at a stage in which they were reading to “learn the new.” Chall asserted that at this stage readers needed to learn a process,
which allowed them to find information in a paragraph, chapter, or book, and how to go about finding what one is looking for efficiently. Niles (1965) described several ways of instructing students to perceive the organization of expository material. Niles defended that teachers of content subjects should take on the responsibility for this instruction in identifying macrostructure, or organization of text. Niles suggested the following steps:

1. Discuss with students the general concept of patterns, then the patterned arrangement of ideas in expository text
2. Have students identify the structure of short passages of text and recognize how the structure helps them to comprehend and remember what they read.

Additionally, Niles (1965) suggested that students needed to familiarize themselves with the typical words and phrases associated with the various conventional structures. By skimming the text for various types of elements, students could identify the macrostructure prior to reading. Martin (1991) stated that students needed to determine if the author used cause and effect reasoning, hypothesis, model building, induction or deduction, or systems thinking.

**Anticipate and Predict**

Calkins, (1991); Robb, (1994) believed that reading between the lines to determine a character’s motivation and personality, to discover themes, and to identify the main points in informational texts is what comprehension is all about. Although in most curricula, inferential thinking was delayed until students became proficient readers. Anderson and Pearson (as cited in Robb 2000) believed that students should be taught to make inferences beginning in the primary grades.

According to Addison (2002), prediction was an important aspect of reading; a process that began with the title. He stated that the better the reader could predict what he or she was going to read, the faster and more effective he or she would read. Proficient readers posed questions before, during, and after reading (Robb, 2000). Gillet and Temple (1990) believed questioning allowed good readers to assess what they already knew and established set guidelines
for what they needed to learn in order to increase their knowledge Robb (2000) stated:

Making this thinking process explicit for students by encouraging them to pose questions could set purpose for reading and deepen students' involvement in fiction and nonfiction as they kept reading to satisfy their wondering. Prediction was a form of questioning that engaged readers in fiction as they asked what would happen next, and then read to confirm and adjust. Nonfiction texts also raised questions in readers' minds as they confronted new information and tried to link it to what they already knew. (p. 16)

**Build Vocabulary & Develop Fluency**

Barr's study (as cited in Robb 2000) stressed that most middle school students' comprehension difficulties were due to inadequate vocabularies because of the dozens of unfamiliar words they were faced with in such content areas as science and history. According to Robb (1999), word study before, during, and after reading should be integrated into the middle school curriculum.

Robb (2000) stated that middle school students who read in halting, word-by-word manner, who struggled with phrasing, expression, and reading in meaningful chunk, were at greater risk of being turned off by reading. Their lack of fluency hindered recall and comprehension, making reading an unpleasant, unrewarding chore. She believed that disfluent reading was an embarrassment to middle school students concerned with peer acceptance and looking cool. For these students, it was safer to avoid completing assignments than to risk exposing their "flaw" (Cunningham and Allington, 1999).

**Self-Monitor Comprehension**

Martin (1991) believed that good readers monitored their attention, concentration, and effectiveness. They quickly recognized if they had missed an idea and must reread. Struggling readers, on the other hand, tended to skip over difficult passages and unfamiliar words, unaware that the information was important. This resulted in diminished comprehension and an inability to recall details in retellings, frustration with reading for meaning, and lowered self-esteem,
according to Schunk, Zimmerman, Sweet's study (as cited in Robb 2000).

Through the review of literature the researcher had found six comprehension skills that were necessary for middle school students to be successful. Each of the six skills were researched and explained in detail. The researcher also provided examples and benefits of each skill used. The six skills reviewed were: activate prior knowledge, synthesize and summarize information, identify text structure and type of reasoning, anticipate and predict, build vocabulary and develop fluency, and self-monitor comprehension.

Question #2: What programs were available that helped improve comprehension skills for middle school students?

In order to answer the second research question, literature was reviewed to determine what programs were available that helped improve comprehension skills for middle school students. Several programs aimed at middle school students with reading difficulties were found.

The first program, The Rita System, was derived from an approach (Nicolson, 1990) that combined the advantages of human and computer support by creating an 'intelligent teaching assistant'. Nicolson explained that a critical designed principle for RITA was that the teacher should have the central role in instruction whereas the computer would act as assistant rather than director.

Another program, Project SUCCESS (Cooper, Boschklen, Pistochni, & McWilliams; 1997) emphasized the role of metacognitive processes in the improvement of reading comprehension. Bradshaw (2000) stated that Project SUCCESS was a program designed for upper elementary and middle grades and included small-group, daily, fast-paced, literature-based instruction; reciprocal teaching and response activities.

A third program reviewed by the researcher was called S.T.A.R.T, or Systematic Teaching and Recording Tactic. The S.T.A.R.T. program, as studied by Mastropieri, Scruggs, Palincsar, & Brown (as cited in Deno, Markell, & Rogers 2001), was a compilation of basic generic teaching techniques in reading that included empirically validated components such as
curriculum-based measurement, rereading, reciprocal teaching, and teaching to mastery criteria. Deno, Markell Rogers (2001) stated that the S.T.A.R.T. program was designed to be easy to learn for both teachers and students and applicable to students from elementary to high school.

The fourth program reviewed was called Making Connections: A workshop for adolescents who struggled with reading. Williams (2001) stated that she developed a readers’ workshop to help struggling middle school students improve their reading as well as their attitude toward reading. She explained that the basic components for the readers’ workshop was daily read-alouds, mini-lessons, status of the class, conferences, daily silent reading time, and sharing.

The last program reviewed by the researcher was called Read XL, a program designed by Scholastic Books. This program was designed to build reading skills through a balance of Instructional and Independent Reading. Scholastic Incorporated (2001), explained:

Instructional Reading used high-interest reading selections in all genres as a launching point for in-depth, systematic instruction in reading skills and strategies. All instruction was customized to the needs of struggling readers through the use of learning scaffolds, such as graphic organizers, high-interest materials, modeling, and instructional plans that took into account the student’s level, background, interests, and self-esteem.

Independent Reading promoted practice and application of reading skills and strategies at students’ reading level through the use of the Independent Library, Audiobook Library, and an Electronic Text Collection on CD-Rom. Scholastic (2001) explained that Read XL could be used in various time blocks, with two-thirds of the class time devoted to Instructional Reading, and one-third to Independent Reading.

Through the review of literature, the researcher examined several intervention programs for improved comprehension skills at the middle school level. They included The Rita System, SUCCESS, S.T.A.R.T., Making Connections, and Read XL. In addition, the review of literature defined specific components found in these comprehension programs.
Question #3: What were the common components of these programs?

Through the review of literature, it was found that the intervention programs used to aid in the teaching of comprehension skills included several common components. The following components were used to help students achieve higher levels of comprehension: whole class discussions, small group work, one-on-one discussions, and independent practice. The remaining section of this chapter gives examples of these components.

Whole Class Discussions

Read-Aloud.

Williams (2001) explained that during her Read-Aloud time, she would read to the students using expression and volume to make the text come alive for them. Each day began with a 10-15 minute read-aloud. Atwell (1998) referred to reading aloud to students as “a bridge for kids, taking them to territories they might never have explored”. Williams (2001) stated that reading aloud benefited reluctant adolescent readers in several ways. First, it helped students feel a sense of belonging to a community of readers, for everyone was brought together to laugh, cry, and wonder as a group. Second, it gave the teacher the opportunity to model his/her thinking while reading aloud to the students. The students heard the teacher stop reading to reflect on parts of the reading that made him/her wonder or confused them. The students could then see how one could clear up the confusion and misunderstanding.

Think-Alouds.

Wilhelm (2001) explained that while reading, teachers model their thinking by voicing all the things they were noticing, doing, seeing, feeling, and asking as they process the text. He also stated that Think-Alouds made invisible mental processes visible to children and allowed students to “borrow” the various strategies teachers used, and applied them in their own reading. Wilhelm said that middle school students were challenged with more complex narratives that in turn decrease their confidence, motivation, and achievement. He felt that Think-Alouds that focused on inferencing, going beyond the directly stated story facts to elaborate on those facts
and arrive at conclusions, would be helpful to students’ comprehension at this age.

*Mini-lessons.*

Dole (2000) stated that mini-lessons lend themselves nicely to the “direct and explicit instruction shown to improve reading comprehension for low achieving readers. He explained that mini lessons worked well when they were planned ahead of time and included the following components:

1. **Focus statement** - remarks made at the very beginning of the lesson that explained what the strategy was and how and why it was being learned.
2. **Modeling** - examples of the skill or strategy being learned, usually provided by the teacher.
3. **Practice** - opportunities for students to practice the skill with independent or instructional-leveled materials as a group.
4. **Reminder** - directions to the students to continue practicing the skill or strategy during their silent reading time.

*Small Group Work*  
*PALS.*

Fuchs & Fuchs’ study (as cited in Williams, 2001) of PALS, or Peer Assisted Learning Strategies, was a collaborative learning activity in which students, through paired reading activities, served as coaches and tutors to one another. Williams (2001) explained that PALS, based on reciprocal teaching, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring, was designed to help students improve in fluency, comprehension summarizing, and forming and validating predictions. She suggested three strategies while working in PALS:

1. **Partner reading and retelling** - students read for five minutes each, learned strategies to help their partner correct word recognition errors, and retold the most important information they had read in the order that it occurred in the text.
2. **Paragraph shrinking** - students read again for five minutes each, identified the most
important information in each paragraph, made a main idea statement in ten words or less, and summarized what they had read.

3. Prediction relay - for five minutes students predicted what they thought they would read next, read one half of a page, and checked to see if the prediction was correct.

Quick Book Share.

The Quick Book Share (Eldridge, 1998) provided a format for sharing, usually in groups of three. This method allowed the first student two minutes to share information about his/her book. The sharing could be what they enjoyed, disliked, or found confusing. For nonfiction texts, students could share what they found most interesting or provided new information. When the two minutes were up the rest of the students had one minute to comment on or ask questions about the shared reading. Williams (2001) explained that this timed format worked well with students unaccustomed to talking in front of a whole class.

One-On-One Discussions

Conferences.

Cox (1996) stated that with the completion of a detailed conference form, the teacher could learn a great deal about the student’s use of strategies and comprehension. Williams (2001) described her one-on-one conferences as follows:

A comfortable and relaxed atmosphere kept the conference non-threatening to the students. I encouraged students to refer to their conference forms as we worked our way down the list of questions. The questions asked for knowledge of character, setting, events, strategy use, and genre. One section asked the reader to identify and read aloud a favorite part of the book. If the student had read an informational book, a conference form for expository text was available as well. On this form, students addressed questions dealing with new and interesting information; author’s purpose; and connections to other books, movies, or experiences. (p. 8)

Williams (2001) also explained that conferences gave teachers the opportunity to provide
students with the help they needed right away, thus, they could teach on the spot and used ongoing assessment.

**Independent Practice**

**Silent Reading.**

Ross (1996) said that if we thought reading was important and wanted our students to see its importance as well, then we must allow students time in school to read. Matthewson (1985) recommended placing students in a “pleasant physical location in order to change attitudes toward reading”. According to Williams (2001), students learned that silent reading worked best when the following groundwork was given:

1. Always have plenty to read - if the book was close to being finished, have another one chosen and brought to class.
2. Try to think about reading, not about stopping - it helped if the student had found something interesting to read.
3. Try to read as much as possible in the time that was given - 10 or 15 minutes was not much time, but it needed to be made good use of.
4. Avoid sitting next to someone who would distract you.

Villaume and Brabham (2002) suggested that teachers could minimize negative attitudes toward reading if they allowed students to choose text that was comfortable and interesting. They also felt that it was important for the teacher to model skills and strategies that would enable the student to become actively involved in the text.

**Journal Writing.**

Ross (1996) stated that from the responses that students wrote in their journals, the teacher could understand students’ comprehension of the text and how involved they were in the reading of their book. Journal writing afforded the teacher another opportunity to look for application of newly learned strategies as well. Scholastic Books (2001) encouraged the use of graphic organizers and writing prompts to assess students’ comprehension of the text they read.
Robb (2002) stated that prompts for journal writing should invite the students to dig deeper into a book, stirring them to make emotional connections, explore the significance of the theme, and unearth students' feelings about the characters. She provided the following suggestions for writing prompts:

1. Identify the main character, list several problems he or she faced, and explain how the problem was solved.
2. Summarize and evaluate two or three decisions the main character made.
3. Select an important quote from the story, explain how you connected to the quote, and show how the quote related to a theme, conflict, or character in the text.
4. Select three key events and show how each provided insight into a character's personality.
5. List several things that you valued or that were important to you. List your favorite character's values. Compare and contrast the lists, pointing out similarities and differences.
6. Visualize a scene or a character and use illustrations or words to help others see your mental images.

Williams (2001) stated that this personalized approach to teaching and assessment was invaluable. She recommended that students react to their reading two or three times a week, as they are also provided with guidelines for responding in the form of a rubric. Therefore, each response is assigned a point value. Williams went on to say that the value of journal writing made it worth the time and effort it took to get students writing.

Computer Programs.

Pearson and Camperall (1994) had found that students learned new ways of understanding text when they were instructed and had the opportunity to practice at the same time. Grossman (2002) stated that software could provide just such a learning environment—one that combined instruction and hands-on manipulation. She further explained that feedback via software was likely to reduce students' inhibitions to respond because they did not have to fear
being embarrassed as they interacted with the program.

Gavriel Salomon and her colleagues’ study (as cited in Grossman, 2002) designed a computer-aided reading tool called the Reading Partner, which encouraged students to respond to questions as they read. They found that by using the program, the students’ reading improved significantly. They also found that given a writing task a month later, students who had used the Reading Partner showed a transfer of skills. The Reading Partner program encouraged students to form a mental image of text structure, to identify main elements of the text, such as the title and key sentences, and to make predictions based on these structures.

Grossman (2002) explained that software afforded the user the ability to interact with information, respond to prompted questions or click on hypertext to gain immediate access to definitions and descriptions. Software also could provide an effective medium for graphically organizing written material. The Inspiration software program allowed users to create concept maps. Grossman concluded by stating that some kinds of software may be effective in facilitating the reading comprehension of middle school students, especially those students who would benefit from scaffold instruction.

Thus, the review of literature has indicated that when choosing an intervention program to increase the comprehension skills of middle school students, it is necessary that teachers and administrators understand the need for a variety of strategies, instructional methods, and techniques such as whole class discussions, small group work, one-on-one discussions, and independent practice.

Summary

Through the review of literature, the researcher was able to provide and describe six comprehension skills that were found to be necessary for the success of the middle school student. Several programs that were aimed at middle school students with reading difficulties were reviewed. Through the review of the programs used, the researcher included a brief summary of how the implementation would work in a middle school classroom. These reviews also described the techniques used and explained which comprehension skills were targeted. It
was found that the intervention programs used to aid in the teaching of comprehension skills to at-risk middle school students included several common components. These components were reviewed and examples of these methods were given.

After reviewing the researched programs, the Read XL program was chosen for this study. The teacher researcher chose the Read XL program due to its variety of strategies, instructional methods, and techniques. This program also stood out because it was user friendly and appealing to the middle school student, which made both teaching and learning a fun experience.
The purpose of this project was to determine if the use of the Read XL program (See Appendix A for a copy) with seventh grade at-risk students would improve their comprehension skills. The research questions were, 1. What comprehension skills were necessary for middle school students to be successful? 2. What programs were available that helped improve comprehension skills for middle school students? 3. What were the common components of these programs? 4. Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students? This study was designed to implement Scholastics' Read XL program as an intervention reading program for seventh grade at-risk students.

Participants

Fifteen middle school seventh graders participated in the study, ranging in age from 11-13. They were enrolled in a heterogeneous classroom in a small city school. This public school was located in Northwest Ohio. Of the fifteen students, seven were male and eight were female. These students were chosen because the researcher wanted to develop a reading intervention program for students who did not pass the sixth grade proficiency test. In order to determine the class list, a copy of the proficiency test scores for all of the sixth grade students was obtained. The test scores were reviewed and each student who did not pass the sixth grade reading proficiency test was scheduled for the reading intervention program. These fifteen students failed to pass the above mentioned proficiency test as sixth graders, and therefore became the participants in this study.
Instruments/Protocols

Research question 4 asked: “Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students?” In order to answer this question, the researcher collected data using a pretest, a weekly selection assessment, and a posttest. The tests and assessments were completed individually by each student and recorded by the researcher.

Pretest

For the pretest, the Full-Length Test 1 was used. (See Appendix B for a copy). This test was provided by Scholastic Inc. as part of the Read XL program. The test consisted of six separate sections which required the student to read a segment and answer multiple-choice questions. The six sections included one article, two stories and three passages, including one map, one pie chart, and one guideline. The students were given one section of the full-length test each day. They read the article, passage, or story and then answered a variety of multiple-choice questions on an answer sheet (See Appendix C). The answer sheet was numbered 1-45 and each number was followed by four bubbles. The student was to choose the correct answer on the test and fill in the bubble that coincided with his/her answer. Each section of the test averaged seven to eight questions, and the students were given thirty minutes to complete it. Prior to the administration of the pretest, both the principal and the parents were informed about the students’ participation in the Read XL program. (See Appendices D and E for copies of the letters).

Weekly Selection Assessment

At the end of each week, or unit, the researcher used a Weekly Selection Assessment (See Appendix F for a copy). This assessment was developed by Scholastic Inc. to be used in conjunction with the Read XL anthologies. The weekly selection assessment was a set of four questions that related to the anthology that the class had read the week prior. Each of the four assessment questions was followed by four possible multiple-choice answers. The student was to
read the question and then fill in the bubble that coincided with the correct choice. The students were given approximately twenty minutes to complete the weekly selection assessment.

Posttest

As a posttest, the researcher repeated the Scholastic's Full-Length Test 1 at the end of the twelve-weeks. The same test was used as a posttest in order to get an accurate measurement of any gains or losses made using the Read XL program. The format of the test was divided into six sections which included one article, two stories, and three passages. Each section was followed by seven to eight multiple-choice questions. The students completed one section of the test a day for six days. Each student was given an answer sheet that was numbered 1-45 and each number was followed by four bubbles. The student was to locate the correct answer in the article, passage, or story and highlight it with a highlighter. They were then instructed to find the correct answer from the four choices and fill in the corresponding bubble on their answer sheet. The students were given thirty minutes to complete each section. (See Appendix B for a copy of Full-Length Test 1).

Procedures

Research question number 4 questioned: Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students? A pretest, weekly selection assessments, and a posttest were used to determine the answer to this question.

Before the collection of data could begin, it had to be determined which students would be involved in the Read XL program. To determine which students were at-risk, a copy of the sixth grade proficiency test scores was obtained. All of the present seventh graders had taken the test. An intervention list of those students who did not pass the reading portion of the proficiency test was created. These students became the research group.
The data collection took place over a twelve-week period and began with the use of a pretest. On the first day of class, the teacher researcher passed out an answer sheet that had been created by Scholastic, Incorporated. This answer sheet was designed to use in conjunction with Full-Length Test 1. Fifteen copies were made by the teacher researcher with the permission of Scholastic, Incorporated (See Appendix G and H for a copy), and distributed to each student. The students were instructed to write their names and the date at the top of their answer sheets.

The students were then given a copy of Full-Length Test 1. Full-Length Test 1 was also copied by the teacher researcher with permission from Scholastic, Incorporated. The test was divided into six sections. The first section was an article and the second section was a story. The next three sections were passages that contained a map, a pie chart, and a guideline, respectively. The last section of the test was another story. Full-Length Test 1 was given over a period of six days. The students completed one section a day. The teacher research made sure every student had a copy of the test and an answer sheet before they began reading. The students read through their article, passage, or story, and then completed the multiple-choice questions for that section. They put their answers on their separate answer sheet. Each student was also given a folder to keep his/her test and answer sheet in. After all of the test questions were answered, the students put both their test and answer sheet in their folder and returned it to the teacher researcher. The folders were then handed out the following day to complete the next section. This routine continued until all six sections were completed. The tests were graded and recorded and then put away for future use.

Over the next nine weeks the students read a variety of anthologies. They concentrated on one analogy a week and practiced various types of comprehension skills. Each week followed a specific format: On Monday and Tuesday, the teacher researcher prepared the student readers through class discussions and vocabulary study. On Wednesday and Thursday, the teacher
researcher guided the student readers through two reading selections. Once the students established a purpose for reading, they were guided to apply comprehension skills and strategies to the text they read. The students were also guided in connecting ideas across the two reading selections. The reading selections varied each week. The types of reading selections included short stories, author profiles, plays, nonfiction, and fiction. Friday of each week was designated as assessment day. Students came into class, took their seats, and cleared their desks. The weekly selection assessment was handed out, and students were instructed to put their names at the top of the paper. The assessment consisted of four multiple-choice comprehension questions. The students read each question and crossed out the answers they knew were wrong and marked the one they felt was correct. After all four questions were answered, each student placed his/her selection assessment in a folder marked 'Read XL' at the front of the classroom. The teacher researcher graded and recorded each student's score weekly. Approximately eight weekly selection assessments were given over the twelve-week period.

The posttest was administered during the last week and a half of the twelve-week period. The posttest was the same test as the pretest which was provided by Scholastic, Incorporated. The teacher researcher once again made fifteen copies of the answer sheet as was done for the pretest. Students were never allowed to see their pretest before taking the posttest. Each student was given Full-Length Test 1 and an answer sheet. They read one section a day for six days, however the test-taking format was a bit different for the posttest. The students first read the selection, then they highlighted where in the selection they found the answer to each question. Beside the highlighted marks, the students wrote the question number that the information went with. When the students were done highlighting where they found the answers, they marked their answer sheets with the answer they felt was correct. After all questions were answered, the student placed his/her test and answer sheet in the respective folder and turned it into the teacher.
researcher. This format continued until all six sections were completed. The tests were then
graded and recorded. Both the pretest and the posttest scores were recorded on a spreadsheet to
determine if the scores had improved.

Timeline

During the summer of 2002, the teacher researcher obtained a copy of the 2002 sixth
grade proficiency scores. Any student who did not pass the Reading Proficiency was scheduled
for a reading intervention class, and thus became the participants for this study.

The pretest was given at the beginning of the Read XL program which began on August
28, 2002. On the first day of class, the students were informed about the study and were asked to
take home a parent newsletter explaining the Read XL program. The pretest was administered
over the next six school days. These test dates were: August 28 – 30, 2002 and September 3 – 6,
2002. The teacher researcher graded the six sections, and the scores were recorded in the grade
book on September 7, 2002. Over the next nine weeks of school, from September 9, 2002 to
November 8, 2002, the students participated in various reading activities.

The posttest was given at the end of the reading program in November of 2002. The first
two posttests were given November 11 and 12, 2002. The remaining four were given November
18 – 21, 2002. The posttest was administered in the same manner that the pretest was
administered. On the last day of testing, which was November 21, 2002, the teacher graded all of
the tests and recorded the scores into the grade book. On November 22, 2002 the students were
given their pretests from the beginning of the Read XL program and their posttests from the end
of the Read XL program. The students were asked to compare the two test scores and determine
if any progress had been made over the twelve-week reading program. The week of November
25, 2002 was used to record all scores onto a spreadsheet. The eight weekly selection assessment
scores were then recorded onto the spreadsheet, which were then divided into the first four-weeks and last four-weeks. All scores were recorded by November 27, 2002.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed to allow research question number 4 to be answered: Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students? A spreadsheet was used to record all of the collected data. Four pieces of information for each student were recorded on the spreadsheet (See Appendix I for a copy). They were: the pretest, the posttest, the total score of the first four weekly selection assessments, and the total score of the last four weekly selection assessments. The spreadsheet contained each student’s name, the score out of a possible 45 points for the pretest, the score out of a possible 45 points for the posttest, the score out of a possible 16 points for the first half of the weekly selection assessments, and the score out of a possible 16 points for the last half of the weekly selection assessments.

Scholastic’s Full-Length Test 1 was used for both the pretest and the posttest in order to determine if the students’ comprehension skills improved after the use of the Read XL program. The first four weekly selection assessment scores were added together as was the last four weekly selection assessment scores. These two scores were used to show change in scores from the first half of the study to the last half of the study.

Summary

Fifteen seventh grade at-risk students participated in this study. The study attempted to show that the comprehension skills of these students increased with the use of the Read XL program.

The researcher administered a pretest prior to the use of the Read XL program and a posttest after the use of the said program. The pretest was graded and recorded by the teacher.
The students did not get to see the results nor did the teacher go over the correct answers. The same test used for the pretest, Full-Length Test 1, was also given as a posttest at the end of the reading program. The scores for the posttest were recorded along side the scores for the pretest in an attempt to analyze the improvements of her students’ comprehension skills.

Data was collected at the end of each reading segment with the use of the weekly selection assessment. The researcher added the first four weekly assessments together and the last four weekly assessments together. These two scores were then recorded on the spreadsheet.

The data received from the tests and weekly selection assessments were analyzed. The individual scores were noted, as was any improvements or change from the pretest to the posttest, and from the first four weekly selection assessments to the last four weekly selection assessments. The data was then organized to determine the results of the study.
Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students would improve after the use of the Read XL reading intervention program. The research questions were as follows: 1. What comprehension skills were necessary for middle school students to be successful? 2. What programs were available that helped improve comprehension skills for middle school students? 3. What were the common components of these programs? 4. Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students?

The study attempted to answer the following research question: Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students? Methods of data collection included a pretest prior to the reading program and a posttest at the end of the program. Both, the pretest and the posttest, scores were recorded in the grade book and then transferred to a spreadsheet. The students were also given a weekly selection assessment at the end of each reading selection. The researcher combined the first four weeks scores and the last four weeks scores and recorded them in the grade book. These scores were then transferred to the spreadsheet that contained the pretest and posttest scores. Chapter IV will describe the results obtained by the use of the Read XL program.

Data Results

The students' pretest and posttest scores were compared and the data recorded on a spreadsheet. On the pretest, none of the students scored in the A range, which was a score of 41-45 points on their test. Nor did any of the students fall into the B range, which was 36-40 points. Five students (33%) scored in the C range, which were scores from a 30-35. Six students (40%)
scored in the D range, which required a score of 27-29. Four students (27%) failed the test by receiving a score of 26 or lower.

On the posttest, none of the students received an A. Six of the students (40%) scored in the B range. Four of the students (27%) scored in the C range, and three of the students (20%) scored in the D range. Two of the students (13%) failed the test. The following graph summarized the pretest and posttest scores of the students.

![Pretest Scores and Posttest Scores](image)

Figure 1. A Comparison of Students’ Scores on the Pretest and the Posttest

The data confirmed that twelve of the fifteen students or 80%, performed better on the posttest than on the pretest.

On the first half of the weekly selection assessments, one student (.07%) scored in the A range, with a score of 15-16 points. Four students (27%) scored in the B range, which meant a
score of 13-14 points. One student (.07%) scored in the C range, or received a score of 12. Seven students (46%) fell in the D range and scored 9-11. Two students (13%) failed the first half of the assessments, which meant they received an eight or lower.

For the last half of the weekly selection assessments, four of the students (27%) scored in the A range. Six of the students (40%) achieved B’s, and three of the students (20%) received scores in the C range. Two of the students (13%) fell in the D range, while none of the students failed the last half of the weekly selection assessments. The following graph summarized the differences between the first half and the last half of the weekly selection assessments.

Figure 2. Comparison of Student Scores (in percents) during the First Half and the Last Half of the Weekly Selection Assessments
The data recorded in Figure 2 confirmed that 80% of the students did as well, or better, during the last half of the weekly selection assessments than in the first half of weekly selection assessments.

Summary

Individual scores for each student were tallied and this analysis showed that twelve of the students (80%) improved from the pretest score to the posttest score; and the scores of three students (20%) were lower on the posttest. The low score on the posttest went up three points from the low score on the pretest – from a 22 on the pretest to a 25 on the posttest, which showed overall improvement. It was interesting to note that this was the same student. There were two students who had the lowest score, 22, on the pretest. One of the students improved his pretest score from a 22 to a 25. The other student who scored a 22 on the pretest improved his posttest score to a 29. The student who scored the highest on the pretest actually scored four points lower on the posttest – from a 35 on the pretest to a 31 on the posttest. The most improved student went from a pretest score of 29 to a posttest score of 39.

The results of weekly selection assessments showed that twelve students (80%) improved from the first half of weekly assessments to the last half of weekly assessments. Two students (13%) received lower scores in the last half of weekly selection assessments. One student’s score remained the same.
Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students would improve with the use of a reading intervention program. The research questions were as follows: 1. What comprehension skills were necessary for middle school students to be successful? 2. What programs were available that helped improve comprehension skills? 3. What were the common components of these programs? 4. Did the use of the Read XL program improve the comprehension skills of seventh grade at-risk students?

Discussion

The researcher found that 80% of the participants improved their comprehension skills through the use of the Read XL program. This program was directed at the middle childhood level student. It appealed and motivated the middle childhood student, and may explain why the students looked forward to reading the weekly anthologies. This may also explain why their text scores improved. When students were interested in what they were doing, or reading, they were able to make better connections and conceptualize the information.

Another factor for the increase in scores could be due to the fact the teacher researcher strictly followed the procedures and guidelines of the Read XL program. The program came equipped with specific procedures, guidelines, and lesson plans that were extremely helpful and easy to follow. These procedures were clear to the researcher and to the students. It is believed that perhaps the consistency in procedures, explained the increase in scores from the first half of the weekly selection assessments to the last half of the weekly selection assessments.

The teacher researcher also felt that the class size contributed to the positive student outcomes. With only fifteen students, the teacher was able to work with students on a one-on-one basis, hold small group discussions, and create partnerships for practicing reading strategies. This seemed to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere where the students felt free to discuss their problems and ask questions where they usually wouldn’t ask in the regular classroom.

It was also noted that during the pretest, the participants were faced with adverse testing conditions due to the hot weather and high temperature in the classroom. Due to the extremely
hot temperatures in late August and early September, the participants may have rushed through their reading passages in order to relieve their discomfort from the heat. The teacher researcher felt that concentration and comprehension might have been very difficult under these conditions. When the students took the posttest in November, the temperature of the classroom was much more comfortable. Therefore, the students were more apt to be focused in their reading and may have been able to comprehend what they were reading at a higher level, which in turn reflected higher scores on the posttest.

Perhaps the greatest contributing factor to the outcomes of this project was that most of the students were genuinely interested in improving their comprehension skills. These students were aware that comprehension skills were a weakness for them and desired to improve this skill.

Most students at this age, and particularly at-risk students, need a more structured environment. With structure and routine being critical at this stage in the learning process, the teacher researcher felt that the Read XL program was successful at accomplishing this task.

Summary

The participants of this study consisted of 15 seventh grade at-risk students. The students were enrolled in a public middle school in a small Midwest city. The purpose of this study was to determine if comprehension skills would improve if the students were involved in a reading intervention program. Students were instructed using the Read XL program for nine weeks. The students completed a pretest before formal instruction began and a posttest after the nine weeks of instruction were completed. Twelve of the fifteen students did show improvement from the pretest to the posttest. Students also completed a weekly selection assessment at the end of each unit. The first half of the weekly selection assessment scores were compared to the last half of the weekly selection assessment scores. Twelve of the fifteen students improved their scores from the first half of the program to the last half of the program, while one students' score remained the same.
Recommendations

Recommendations for changes to the procedures, instruments, techniques

Several recommendations have evolved from this investigation. One recommendation would be to conduct this reading intervention class at the beginning of the school day instead of the last forty-five minutes of the school day. The students seemed to be ready for their day to end by the time they came to class, and although they worked hard, the researcher felt that production might have been higher if the class was earlier in the day.

Another recommendation would be to lengthen the study. It was believed that by providing a longer timeline for the investigation, more data could be collected. It would also be more valuable if the program started later in the school year. The participant wouldn’t be faced with the uncomfortably hot classroom conditions. Pretest scores might be more accurate if the students were able to focus on the task at hand instead of being disrupted by the classroom conditions.

Perhaps a survey would have been beneficial to the research as well. The survey could have been given at the end of the study to determine if the students’ felt better about their comprehension skills. A survey could also have been given to the students’ content area teachers to note any improvements noticed.

Recommendations for advancing further research

Further investigation of teaching reading comprehension skills to at-risk students might include a variety of changes to this study. The study could be extended to include word study and test-taking strategies in relation to comprehension. Further research would be needed to determine if a focus on these strategies would improve the students’ comprehension skills that are needed when taking achievement tests such as the Ohio Proficiency Test.

Another recommendation would be to determine if increased reading time for students to practice their reading comprehension skills would improve results. Additional reading time could be done individually, with a small group, silently, or orally. The researcher felt that further research would be needed to determine if increased reading practice would improve the
comprehension of what was read.

*Recommendations for class use*

The researcher has considered implementing a specific program for building comprehension skills within her content area classroom. The results of the study indicated that the Read XL program might help students improve their reading skills. The researcher felt that at the middle childhood level, students are faced with more difficult reading due to the increased amount of expository text. Since the completion of this study, the researcher has tried new reading strategies with her content area students hoping to increase the comprehension skills of all students.
References


*Reading Partner* [Computer software]. Gavriel Salomon.


Wilhelm, J.D. (2001). Think-alouds boost reading comprehension. *Instructor, 111 no4 N/D,*
Appendix A: Read XL Program Overview

Read XL has been designed to meet the unique needs of the older struggling student, one or more years below grade level. It is a captive and adjusted instruction in a program that addresses the problems of structured and individualized instruction to meet these needs.

Read XL incorporates research-based methods of acceleration, today's best practices, and a variety of student-friendly instructional activities. A combination of reading levels and test scores is used to identify the content areas.

Read XL program, the results of reading improvement, and provides a comprehensive approach for achieving reading success.
Welcome To...

READ XL™

Scholastic has designed READ XL to respond to the specific educational needs of the older, struggling reader who is reading one to three years below grade level. Because these students require adaptive and adjusted instruction in order to accelerate achievement, READ XL is based on a model of teaching and learning that anticipates and addresses the problems of struggling readers as it scaffolds instruction to meet their needs.

Using a combination of research-based approaches, direct instruction, today's best practices, and engaging materials, READ XL will help students to

- raise reading levels and test scores.
- find success in the content areas.
- increase motivation and the desire to read.

READ XL addresses the needs of reading-improvement students and provides the framework for achieving reading excellence.
The READ XL Formula for Success

>> Engaging and Relevant Content
In READ XL, reading success begins with high-interest text that will draw students into reading—plus a relevant Real-World Reading curriculum that will appeal to and support the most reluctant readers.

>> Increasingly Demanding Text
The instructional text in READ XL begins approximately three years below grade level and progresses developmentally to grade-level difficulty. As students gain confidence from reading accessible text, they more easily gain the necessary skills for tackling increasingly difficult material.

>> Emphasis on Nonfiction Reading
READ XL emphasizes nonfiction with over 60 percent of the anthology made up of expository text. Lesson Plans deliver specific strategies for building success in content-area reading. Study Skills Lessons reinforce content-area learning strategies using electronic text.

>> Instruction That Targets the Specific Needs of Struggling Readers
While traditional reading programs tend to focus on the text rather than the reader, READ XL has been carefully designed to address the instructional and self-esteem issues of struggling readers. Plus, reading experts and consultants have provided modeling and coaching tips to support the teachers of struggling readers.
A Sound Ratio of Instructional and Independent Reading

The daily instructional model for READ X incorporates both contexted reading instruction and sustained independent practice, thus promoting reading comprehension and fluency.

Explicit and Systematic Skills Instruction

READ X lesson plans provide direct instruction in comprehension, vocabulary, writing, research, and study skills. Through modelling, graphic organizers, reteaching, and additional practice, this instructional approach builds skill mastery.

Development of Vocabulary Concepts

In READ X, the reader is prepared for a successful experience by the reteaching of essential vocabulary concepts and word study strategies. These concepts and strategies are further developed in context during reading. Additional opportunities for guided and independent practice reinforce learning.

Support for Second-Language Learners

READ X supports all learners—including those who speak English as a second language—by the introduction of vocabulary and language concepts before reading. In addition, selection-specific language concepts and activities for the second-language learner are provided in each lesson.
Struggling Readers

Improving Reading: A Handbook of Strategies

Vocabulary


Comprehension

Brain Research

Writing
Reading Materials to Motivate Struggling Readers

> READ XL Student Anthology

High-interest selections that engage middle-school readers are the springboard for instructional reading.

The Anthology presents a wide variety of relevant, age-appropriate reading selections at students' instructional reading levels.

- Over 60 percent nonfiction with engaging topics
- Contemporary young-adult fiction
- Plays
- Debates
- Real-Life Hero Profiles
- Poetry
- Graphic Classics
- Real-World Reading

Anthology selections are arranged developmentally, beginning three years below grade level and progressing up to grade level to accelerate students' skill development.

Selections are sequenced through the use of the Lexile Framework™, a sophisticated system that determines the reading level of text to facilitate matching students to text at their instructional level.

>> READ XL Shared Novels

Favorite titles promote reading enjoyment and skill development through shared reading.

Shared reading provides meaningful opportunities for struggling readers to benefit from teacher modeling of fluent reading, as well as comprehension, vocabulary, and self-monitoring strategies used by good readers.
**READ XL Independent Library**

High-Interest paperbacks are matched to students' independent reading levels.

Leveled books for independent reading foster success by providing students with a wide choice of genres and topics that interest them, along with text that they can read with comprehension to foster reading development.

Leveled using the Lexile™ system.

---

**READ XL Audiobook Library**

Audiobooks give students access to grade-level literature with support.

Audiobooks provide modeled reading through a cassette with two voices: a narrator who reads the text and a reading coach who models strategies that good readers use. Students follow along in the print version of the book.

---

**READ XL Practice Book**

Skill pages for every lesson offer selection-specific independent practice and skill reinforcement.

Includes:

- Vocabulary
- Word Study
- Comprehension
- ESL/Language Support
- Writing and Grammar
- Real-World Reading
- Electronic Text/Study Skills
- Research Skills/Projects

---

**Electronic Text Collection on CD-ROM**

Content-area related Electronic Text selections provide opportunities for independent reading practice and study skill development.

- Designed to develop study skills and proficiency in the use of technology, these high-interest, non-fiction reading selections include interactive links, "clickable" vocabulary words, and state-of-the-art graphics.
**Teacher's Guide**

Comprehensive student-focused teaching plans address the specific needs of struggling middle-school readers.

The Teacher's Guide presents skills and strategy instruction that supports students at every stage. In-depth, explicit instruction develops reading skills and strategies with step-by-step explanation, modeling, and practice.

**Includes:**

- **Comprehensive Lesson Plans** for Anthology selections, Electronic Text/Study Skills, and Research Skills/Projects
- **Systematic Instruction and Practice** with supportive modeling and graphic organizers
- **Extra Support** for reteaching, strategy instruction, and practice of key skills

**READ XL** offers explicit and scaffolded skills instruction, with modeling, guidance, and support to help bring students up to grade level.

**Focus on Skills and Strategies for the Struggling Reader**

- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Word Study and Recognition
- Self-Monitoring Strategies
- Fluency
- ESL Support
- Writing
- Test-Taking Strategies
- Research Skills
- Study Skills
**READ XL Assessment**
Tests for each Anthology selection measure progress in comprehension, vocabulary, and word study, and provide important practice in applying test-taking strategies. (See page 15 for more about formal and informal assessment.)

**READ XL Test Preparation**
Weekly reading passages with multiple-choice answers provide frequent practice in standardized test-taking at grade level.

**Additional Teaching Support**

**Independent Library Teacher’s Guide**
Teaching materials to support independent reading include

- **Teaching Plans** with detailed summaries, discussion questions, fluency development ideas, and project options.
- **Reproducible Practice pages** for vocabulary and comprehension to support students in independent reading and literature groups.

**Audiobook Library Teacher’s Guide**
Teaching suggestions provide support for Audiobook use.

**Teacher’s Guides for Shared Novels**
Teaching suggestions, discussion questions, and instruction support skill development and provide structure for shared reading.
The READ XL Instructional Model

>> Supported and Independent Reading

READ XL builds reading skills through a balance of Instructional and Independent Reading. This balance includes a two-thirds to one-third class time ratio and provides students with a variety of supported and independent reading experiences.

- **Instructional Reading** provides direct and systematic skills instruction and development.

- **Independent Reading** promotes practice and application of reading skills and strategies at students’ reading level.

>> Instructional Reading

Instructional Reading in READ XL uses high-interest reading selections in all genres as a launching point for in-depth, systematic instruction in reading skills and strategies. All instruction is customized to the needs of struggling readers through the use of learning scaffolds, such as graphic organizers, high-interest materials, modeling, and instructional plans that take into account the students’ level, background, interests, and self-esteem.

Sequenced Lessons for Instructional Reading

- **Selection Lesson Plans** present sequenced skill and strategy instruction that builds on the selections in the student Anthology. These Lesson Plans are the core instructional reading component of READ XL.

Flexible Options for Instructional Reading

- **Electronic Text/Study Skill Lessons** use content-area nonfiction on CD-ROM as the springboard for study skill development, including taking notes, organizing information, outlining, and more.

- **Research Skill/Project Lessons** teach a five-step inquiry process for conducting research for a variety of projects.


- **Shared Novel Teacher’s Guides** provide suggestions for shared reading in which the teacher models reading fluency, skills and strategy application, and enjoyment of literature.

Instructional Reading Skills and Strategies

READ XL delivers essential skills and strategies in context.

- **Vocabulary and Word Study**: Explicit instruction in determining word meaning, using structural analysis, and applying vocabulary strategies is presented in context. Multiple opportunities for independent practice and reteaching are provided.
- **Comprehension**: Skills and strategies are presented through selection-specific discussion questions and direct-instruction lessons that model and practice strategies before assigning tasks to students. Graphic organizers are used to scaffold students as they learn to organize information. Practice pages and reteaching opportunities provide reinforcement.

- **Self-Monitoring Strategies**: Techniques that good readers use when their comprehension breaks down are consistently presented through modeling and instruction.

- **Writing**: Writing assignments are linked to each selection’s targeted comprehension skill to promote strategy transfer and application.

- **Reading Support (Fluency, ESL, Word Analysis)**: Instructional activities promote skill practice that supports individual needs.

- **Real-World Reading**: Reading and instruction using real-life documents promote literacy in real-life contexts.

**Independent Reading**

The READ XL Independent Library presents a collection of high-interest, leveled paperbacks to facilitate independent practice of reading skills and strategies. To bolster student success, the Independent Library:

- includes texts that students can read with sufficient comprehension to encourage skill development.
- lets students choose relevant, appealing books that interest them.
- features engaging, high-interest topics in a wide variety of genres.

The READ XL Audiobook Library builds fluency and self-monitoring strategies through grade-level books and audiocassettes that:

- model fluent reading and metacognitive strategies.
- provide access to grade-level literature.

The READ XL Electronic Text Collection presents additional independent reading opportunities on CD-ROM. Motivating text guides students in learning to navigate electronic text and enjoy reading content-area nonfiction.
**Pacing and READ XL**

**>> READ XL Daily Schedule**

*READ XL* can be flexibly used in various time blocks with two-thirds of the class time devoted to Instructional Reading and one-third to Independent Reading. The optimal model is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Plan</th>
<th>45-Minute Class Period</th>
<th>60-Minute Class Period</th>
<th>90-Minute Class Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Reading (2/3 of each class period)</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading (1/3 of each class period)</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**>> READ XL Five-Day Plan**

The core of *READ XL* Instructional Reading is delivered through the *READ XL* Anthology and *Teacher's Guide*. Each Lesson Plan provides a week's worth of Instructional Reading, including:

- Prepare the Reader
- Guide the Reader
- Evaluate Success
- Real-World Reading

The chart below suggests a pacing option for the *Teacher's Guide* Lesson Plan—plus Independent Reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Plan</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Reading</td>
<td>Prepare the Reader</td>
<td>Guide the Reader</td>
<td>Evaluate Success</td>
<td>Real-World Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading</td>
<td>is delivered through the <em>READ XL</em> Anthology and <em>Teacher's Guide</em> Lesson Plans.</td>
<td>Independent Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The READ XL Student Anthology

High-interest nonfiction and fiction engage students in reading to build skills.

>> Over 60 percent nonfiction selections relate to content-area learning.

>> Relevant, age-appropriate fiction motivates and engages students.

>> Supportive text introductions draw students into the selection and scaffold comprehension.

>> Carefully chosen selections at students' instructional reading level are the springboard for skill development.

>> Ask Yourself questions promote application of comprehension and self-monitoring skills and strategies as students read.

>> Words, Words, Words provides definitions of high-utility words to develop vocabulary in context.

>> PROGRAM OVERVIEW
Connected selections
present concept-related reading and content-area connections to promote reading across texts and to expand on ideas.

Wrap-Ups
help students synthesize ideas and practice targeted selection skills, including Comprehension and Vocabulary. Writing prompts provide ideas that provoke meaningful reader response.

Real-World Reading
builds literacy using real-world sources. Activities promote skills application and extension in new contexts.
Using the READ XL Teacher’s Guide

Systematic, direct instruction focuses on the needs of struggling readers.

>> Instructional Plan
Survey the Planner for an overview of how the lesson supports students before, during, and after reading.

>> Resources
Gather program materials for practice and reteaching.

>> Skills and Strategies
Locate the selection-specific skills and strategies covered in the lesson.

>> Content-Area Learning
Use content-area learning references to tie instruction to subject areas.

>> Create Interest
Use the discussion/writing prompt to engage students with a provocative idea related to the reading.

>> Concept and Context Vocabulary
Use teaching suggestions to introduce concept words and relate vocabulary to selection ideas.

>> ESL Strategy
Use teaching suggestions to help students build background and vocabulary prior to reading.

>> Unlock Text Structure/Genre
Focus on the type of information students can expect to gain from a wide variety of text structures and genres.

>> Word Study
Present strategies for identifying and understanding selection words.

>> Skills Practice
Provide frequent independent practice of key skills by assigning Practice Book pages.
>> Recommended Reading Option
Follow the selection-specific suggestions that recommend a way to navigate the selection for best results and student success.

>> Questions
Use strategic questions during reading to engage students, build comprehension, analyze, and enjoy the text.

>> Comprehension
Use the teaching suggestions to explain skills and strategies and provide direct instruction. Use graphic organizers to demonstrate how to organize information visually.

>> Wrap Up the Reading
Use the selection Wrap-Up to informally assess student comprehension, vocabulary, and writing.

>> Reading Support
Meet individual needs with Fluency, ESL Support, and Word Analysis.

>> Strategy Transfer
Provide opportunities for students to transfer strategies to new contexts by presenting the step-by-step overview of the strategy.

>> Writing
Teach lessons for selection-specific writing assignments that relate to the targeted comprehension skill for each selection.
Ancient Societies

The Maya were the first major civilization in Mesoamerica. Although the Aztecs are known as the most advanced and cultured people, they started as hunters and gatherers. Actually, there were several advanced societies in Mexico before the Aztecs.

The Olmecs and the Zapotecs

The Olmecs were the first major civilization in Mesoamerica and influenced the other cultures in the region. The Olmecs settled in the central parts of Mexico around 1200 BCE. They were farmers and raised corn, beans, and squash. They built a series of enormous statues and ceremonial stone heads that are over 10 meters tall. They also built massive pyramids for their religious ceremonies.

The Aztecs

The Aztecs were an advanced culture that learned skills from the people of Toltec, Maya, and other cultures. They were excellent craftsmen and made stone, textiles, ceramics, and jewelry. They also learned a great deal about the Aztecs from the many pictures, which still exist today.

The Aztecs were also excellent stonemasons. Like the Maya, the Aztecs did such careful work that they used mortar to keep their city walls and buildings together.
Ancient Societies of Mexico

The Aztecs
The Aztecs of Mexico settled on an island in Lake Texcoco around 1325. Although the Aztecs are known as a well-educated and cultured people, they started as a tribe of hunters and gatherers. Actually, there were several advanced societies in Mexico before the Aztecs.

The Olmecs and the Zapotecs
The Olmecs were the first major civilization in Mexico and Central America and influenced most of the later cultures in the region. The Olmecs settled in the lowlands of Mexico's Gulf Coast around 1200 B.C. They cleared the land for farming and raised corn, beans, squash, chili peppers, and cotton. They built a permanent settlement and carved colossal stone heads that weighed as much as 18 tons and stood 9 feet high. They produced fine pottery and played a ceremonial ballgame that was important to all later Indian societies.

The Olmecs had a large trade network and spread their cultural influence to the Zapotecs. The Zapotecs extended what they learned from the Olmecs and developed writing and a written calendar.

The Mixtecs
The Mixtecs were master craftsmen who worked with gold and made beautiful jewelry. The Mixtecs also built one of the largest pyramids in the ancient world. It was wider at the base than the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt.

The Maya
The Maya began to develop their civilization as early as 1500 B.C. Like the Olmecs, they settled in the rain forest and cleared the land to plant crops and later built great cities. They had no iron tools, but shaped stone blocks that fit together perfectly to build pyramids that still stand today.

The Maya measured the nightly movements of the moon and stars. Keeping careful track of time was important, so they developed a calendar system that was both accurate and complex.

The Maya developed a characteristic style of painting and sculpture that was very delicate when compared to the massive stone sculptures of other native civilizations in Mexico. They were skilled mathematicians who discovered the theory of zero as early as 300 B.C.

The Toltecs
The Toltecs were one of the groups of northern warriors that invaded the Valley of Mexico, site of the present-day capital Mexico City. They were builders and craftsmen who built pyramids and ball courts and created huge stone statues and fine metalwork.

The Aztecs
The Aztecs learned many artistic and technical skills from the people they conquered, including the Toltecs, Maya, and Zapotecs. They became fine craftspeople and made much of the equipment they needed for their daily lives. They borrowed ideas from other cultures and made a stone-wheel calendar, stone sculptures, buildings, and jewelry. Scholars learned a great deal about the Aztecs from their many picture writings, which still exist today.

The Aztecs were also excellent stonemasons. Like the Maya, the Aztecs did such careful work that they didn’t need mortar to keep their city walls and buildings intact.
The region of Texas west of the Pecos River and north of the Rio Grande River is a sparsely populated, massive territory. For a region that covers a large part of Texas, the population is quite small. Traveling long distances to go anywhere is not unusual in this part of Texas. However, once you’ve traveled a long way to get to the Trans-Pecos region, there is plenty to explore.

**Big Bend National Park**

Big Bend is so named because it is surrounded on three sides by a large bend in the Rio Grande River. The mountain and desert scenery are spectacular. The principal mountains are the Chisos, the tallest of which is Mount Emory at 7,825 feet. The Rio Grande has cut three of the noteworthy canyons in North America—Santa Elena, Mariscal, and Boquillas—through the landscape.

Big Bend contains a unique variety of life forms. Desert, mountain, and river ecosystems all thrive within the Big Bend area. The salt cedars and reed grass near the river give way to cactus and creosote bush in the desert. The Chisos Mountains provide shade and protection to both plants and animals.

**Fort Davis National Historical Site**

Fort Davis was an important post in the West Texas defense system. Soldiers from Fort Davis provided protection for travelers on the San Antonio-El Paso Road.

**McDonald Observatory**

The McDonald Observatory was built with a gift of $1,000,000 from William McDonald, a wealthy banker from Paris, Texas. The observatory has one of the world’s largest and most powerful telescopes. The observatory is located in a region with almost no interference from city lights or smog. Visitors are welcome and Star Parties are held at sunset three nights a week.
8 In this passage, the word *sparsely* means —
   F greatly
   G thinly
   H quickly
   J irregularly

9 Based on the map and information in the passage, which two locations could a visitor expect to see and explore in one day?
   A Big Bend National Park and Carlsbad Caverns
   B New York and Fort Davis
   C Fort Davis and McDonald Observatory
   D Chicago and Big Bend National Park

10 The Rio Grande River is essential to the formation of Big Bend because —
   F it is the second longest river in the United States
   G it supplies water to the desert regions
   H it has a bend that surrounds three sides of the area
   J it provides a waterway for swimming

11 Which of these is the best summary of this passage?
   A Texas west of the Pecos is a large region with few people living in it.
   B The Rio Grande River forms an important boundary between Texas and Mexico.
   C Traveling west of the Pecos is not easy because there are few cities and airports, but there are plenty of mountains and a desert.
   D It is worth traveling west of the Pecos because there are many important geographical, historical, and scientific sites.

12 In this passage, the word *noteworthy* means —
   F steepest
   G rugged
   H irregular
   J remarkable

13 The author probably wrote this passage to —
   A describe the benefits of traveling west of the Pecos
   B warn that there are no longer soldiers at Fort Davis to protect travelers
   C persuade people to move west of the Pecos
   D discuss the mountains and the canyons found in the Big Bend National Park

14 The reader can tell that the McDonald Observatory is in an isolated area because —
   F it is near Fort Davis
   G it has one of the world's largest and most powerful telescopes
   H there is almost no interference from city lights or smog
   J Star Parties are held only three nights a week
Read the story. Then answer numbers 15 through 22.

A Family Tradition

All the nieces and nephews loved to visit Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Terry. Just before the school year was over each summer, they would plan when each child would visit. Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Terry had two sons. However, their boys had summer jobs and other activities just when the nieces and nephews were old enough to be away from home for more than one night.

Dorothy and Terry would have each of the children come stay with them for a week or so. Dorothy planned great activities. No one was ever allowed to sit and watch television, and the escapades were always fun.

Christina, who is in college now, is the oldest and started the tradition. Christina was five years old the first time she visited Dorothy and Terry. Dorothy and Christina went to the museum, the zoo, shopping, and to an amusement park. Dorothy took Christina on her first roller coaster ride. In the evenings when Terry got home they went to the swimming pool, then had dinner on the deck at Christina’s favorite restaurant. Christina’s favorite restaurant had a placemat for her to color and peanut butter sandwiches on the menu!

Dorothy also took Matthew and Stephanie, Christina’s younger brother and sister, on their first roller coaster rides. Stephanie sat next to Dorothy on her first coaster ride. She held Dorothy’s hand and squeezed her eyes shut. She didn’t open her eyes once during the entire ride; however, when it was over, she was ready to ride again.

Matthew loved history, so Terry and Dorothy took him to see historical landmarks in Central Texas. They visited the capitol building in Austin and drove along the Texas Independence Trail. They read historical markers along the way and visited old forts, battle sites, and missions. Matthew knew about the Alamo, so that was definitely in the travel plans. Dorothy and Matthew spent time at the library doing research on the various places he wanted to visit. Matthew had difficulty with reading, so Dorothy found books and stories he could read. As long as he was reading history, he kept trying until he realized that reading had actually become easier.

Erin and Angela are the youngest nieces. They loved horses, so their visits usually included horseback riding. One year, Dorothy and Terry took them on a trail ride. They rode all day and camped at night. It was a two-day trail ride. The girls had a great time and asked to do a longer trail ride the next year. Dorothy took them, but she did tell us that roller coasters were more fun. The rides were shorter, faster, and didn’t make her legs sore!

Terry and Dorothy now have grandchildren. Their nieces and nephews have college and summer jobs. The last time we talked to Dorothy and Terry, they were off to the art museum with the oldest grandchild—who is six years old—for her first look at famous art.

Dorothy and Terry are still young at heart and will continue their tradition with their grandchildren. But we are glad they started practicing on all of us nieces and nephews.
The word **escapades** in this passage means —
A stories  
B ideas  
C adventures  
D memories

What is the main idea of this passage?
F Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Terry were young at heart and enjoyed having fun with their nieces and nephews.  
G Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Terry took their nieces and nephews on roller coaster rides.  
H Aunt Dorothy enjoyed shopping and going to museums.  
J Uncle Terry enjoyed swimming in the summer after a day at the office.

Which is an OPINION in this passage?
A Christina was five years old the first time she visited Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Terry.  
B Children should not watch too much television.  
C Matthew visited old forts and missions because he liked history.  
D Roller coasters are more fun to ride than horses.

According to information provided in the passage, Dorothy and Terry will probably —
F go camping and horseback riding every summer  
G plan fun activities with their grandchildren  
H have more nieces and nephews  
J be too tired to do much with their grandchildren

During the nieces' and nephews' visits with Dorothy and Terry, which of these events happened last?
A Christina went to the museum.  
B They took Matthew on the Texas Independence Trail.  
C They took Erin and Angela on a trail ride.  
D Stephanie rode the roller coaster with her eyes closed.

Dorothy and Terry started doing things with their nieces and nephews instead of their sons because the boys —
F got married and moved away  
G got older and had summer jobs  
H went to college  
J didn't like adventures

Based on information in the passage, Christina probably —
A made good grades in school  
B liked peanut butter sandwiches  
C didn't eat lunch  
D wanted to be an artist

The author seems to feel that Aunt Dorothy was —
F boring  
G cold  
H fun-loving  
J secretive
Sometimes people buy exotic pets and allow them to escape. Other times, wild animals wander into places where they don’t belong. These sorts of situations usually cause trouble.

Todd Hardwick has made a living out of taking care of these tricky situations. Todd owns Pesky Critters Wildlife Control. Based in South Florida, Pesky Critters is available twenty-four hours a day to catch animals that are where they shouldn’t be and take them to where they belong.

Todd charges a fee to capture native animals like raccoons, opossums, or foxes, but he catches exotic animals for free. He says that 20 percent of the animals he captures are exotic pets. Although in cold climates the escaped animals would not be able to survive, in Florida’s warm climate they survive extremely well. The exotic animals can then become a big problem.

Introduced species can be dangerous for native species. Tropical birds can take nesting places away from local birds. Pet fish released into streams can eat local fish populations. Even exotic plants can be a threat to native plants.

Most of Todd’s work results from conflicts between animals and people. People and animals share the same environment, but animals don’t understand the concepts of property lines, traffic lanes, and private homes. As a result, armadillos end up on golf courses, buffalo appear on turnpikes, and snakes crawl into basements.

In fact, Todd’s most famous job involved an escaped snake. The former pet was the largest python ever found in America—twenty-three feet long. It had wandered into a Florida couple’s basement. Todd needed to catch it before it went upstairs to look for food. With some help, Todd got the python into a sleeping bag and took it to the zoo.

Todd has special equipment to help him do his job, such as cages, traps, and shoulder-length gloves, but none of these are as important as his understanding of animals. As a child, Todd spent his time catching and studying animals, and reading about them. By the time he was in junior high, he was considered an animal expert and neighbors would call him to get raccoons out of their houses. He was licensed to run a wildlife control business before he had even graduated from high school.

People like Todd Hardwick perform a valuable service. They keep native plant and animal species safe from exotic species, but native plants and animals can be threatened by other problems. The chart below shows the major reasons that species become endangered.

### Natural causes
- Bad weather conditions; reproductive problems: 0.5%
- Habitat destruction: Especially for development and agriculture; includes pollution: 59%
- Introduced species: Humans release new species that prey on or compete with native plants and animals: 26%
- Overuse: Humans hunt, collect, or sell species: 14.5%

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<th>Natural causes</th>
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<td>Bad weather conditions;</td>
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<td>reproductive problems</td>
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<td>native plants and animals</td>
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23 What is the main idea of this passage?
   A Todd Hardwick makes a living capturing wild and exotic animals that have wandered into places where they do not belong.
   B Invader species need to be controlled because they pose a danger to their new environments.
   C A 23-foot-long python, the largest snake ever found loose in the U.S., was captured in a Florida basement.
   D Todd Hardwick has become famous for capturing a giant python.

24 In this passage, the word introduced means —
   F proposed
   G imported
   H began
   J included

25 Escaped exotic pets can survive more easily in Florida because Florida —
   A is like a jungle
   B has a warm climate
   C has a small population
   D is near the ocean

26 In this passage, the word concepts means —
   F dangers
   G goals
   H ideas
   J costs

27 Which of these best describes Todd Hardwick?
   A Adventurous
   B Impatient
   C Violent
   D Cautious

28 Which of the following is an OPINION in this passage?
   F Todd Hardwick gained fame when he caught a giant python.
   G Todd Hardwick has a strange job that would not appeal to most people.
   H Exotic pets are often brought to the U.S. from other countries.
   J The service Todd Hardwick performs is valuable.

29 Based on the information in the pie chart, what is the main reason animals and plants become endangered?
   A Overuse
   B Natural causes
   C Introduced species
   D Habitat destruction

30 According to the article, exotic pet birds released into the wild hurt native birds by —
   F taking their nesting places
   G attacking their young
   H chasing them away
   J eating their food
Every six weeks, Mrs. Dillard assigns the students in her reading class a new project. For the last project, students had to read 15 short stories and compare the settings, plots, and characters. For the new project, they will put the short stories into an anthology.

Mrs. Dillard explained that an anthology is a collection of works such as stories, essays, or poems. She brought several anthologies to class to provide examples. Students noted that anthologies contain more than stories or poems; they also include information about the authors, the period during which something was written, and other important details that benefit the reader. Students also observed that the entire story was not always reproduced in the anthology. Often, a summary of the missing portion is given.

Mrs. Dillard went on to tell the students that their anthologies would be put together as books. The class decided it would be best to work in groups so they could divide the work.

Mrs. Dillard provided the class with this handout to serve as their guidelines.

**SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY GUIDELINES**

**Objective:** Students will create a short story anthology using the short stories read for the previous project.

- Each selection in the anthology should include: the title of the story; an analysis of the main idea; a list of the main characters with a description of each one; an explanation of the setting; and a summary of the plot. Each group should create an entry for each of the 15 selections read.

- The anthology should also include a brief author biography and any background information that would increase the reader's understanding of the story.

- Please include a copyright page, a table of contents, a preface, and an index. It will be the responsibility of the group to check the table of contents and the index for completeness and accuracy. The index should include an entry not only for the title of the short story, but also for the author's name. Any additional reference material should also have an index entry, but not all stories will have extra information.

- Please have a schedule, a bookmark to show what you plan to put on each page of the anthology, and a list of each group member's assignment by next Friday. The final product is due in four weeks.

**Grade points will be awarded as follows:**

- Copyright page, Table of Contents, Preface . . . .10 points
- Index ...........................................15 points
- Each entry ........................................20 points

One point will be subtracted for each grammar, usage, punctuation, or spelling mistake.
31 In this passage, the word reproduced means —
A prepared
B rated
C created
D copied

32 Which of the following is a FACT in this passage?
F An anthology is a collection of works such as short stories.
G Students have read poems for other projects.
H Short stories are easier to read than biographies.
J These projects are harder than science projects.

33 According to the guidelines, how many points can you earn for having a complete index?
A 10 points
B 15 points
C 200 points
D 250 points

34 According to the guidelines, what are the entries in the index that every story should have?
F Just one for the title
G One for the title, one for the author’s name, and one for any reference material
H One for the title and one for the table of contents
J One for the plot summary

35 Mrs. Dillard probably wants students to make a bookmap to help students —
A write the author biographies
B check their grammar and spelling
C organize their anthologies
D start working quickly

36 According to the guidelines, a misspelled word will lower the grade for the project by —
F one point
G three points
H six points
J ten points

37 Which of the following is the best summary of this passage?
A Students must select some short stories to summarize.
B Students in Mrs. Dillard’s reading class have a new project every six weeks.
C Students in Mrs. Dillard’s class are going to follow guidelines and write short story anthologies.
D Students in Mrs. Dillard’s reading class looked at some anthologies.
River’s Bend National Park offered a variety of outdoor activities for any park visitor. Dane, his family, and Dane’s friend Dillon were camping in the park for a few days. They were planning to do some biking and to explore some of the trails in the park. River’s Bend is so big that there are mountains, forests, and deserts to explore.

Each day a different family member chose the trail to be hiked. Today was Dane and Dillon’s turn to plan the family outing. The boys had chosen to hike to the Window to the World. The Window to the World was a trail that went up the mountain to a natural rock formation. The rock formation looked like a window cut out of the rocks. The view was down into the canyon that had been cut through the mountains by the river. The guidebook said it was a spectacular view.

The boys planned the hike. It would be a total of four miles on a mountain trail. The guidebook explained how rugged the trail was so they knew each family member would be able to complete the hike. Actually, Dane’s younger sister was very excited because the guidebook also said they might see some bears along the trail. They checked their gear to make sure they had everything: camera, water, snacks, first aid kit, sunscreen, a walking stick, and the trail map.

The morning of the hike was sunny and cool. What a perfect day for a mountain hike! Everyone had their backpacks, their hiking boots, hats and jackets, so off they went to the Window to the World.

At the beginning of the trail they saw a sign that told about the bears that lived in the mountains and could sometimes be seen along the trail. The sign cautioned hikers not to feed the bears or try to play with them. The bears didn’t bother people, but they certainly weren’t tame. Dane’s sister got even more excited about seeing a bear. She wanted a picture to show her friends at home. After all, the only bears in the city were the ones in the zoo.

The trail started out fairly easy and flat, but soon became steeper as it went up the mountain. The trees provided shade and there were benches along the trail. They saw a variety of birds, squirrels, chipmunks, unusual plants, and beautiful flowers. Everyone they saw on the trail seemed to be having a good time. It was a great feeling to be outdoors on a cool morning, hiking and enjoying nature.

As the group came around a bend in the trail, they noticed a cluster of people stopped on the trail. They were watching and pointing. “I hope there isn’t a problem,” thought Dane. There wasn’t any problem at all; the group had stopped on the trail to watch a small black bear eating some berries on the other side of a clearing. Very soon, there was a rustling in the brush and another bear appeared. Although the first bear had paid no attention to the people staring up at it, the second bear diverted it from eating. The two bears chased each other, then settled down to eat more berries.

Dane’s sister was happy about seeing the bears. She made sure Father took lots of pictures. The view at the Window to the World was spectacular, and they took more pictures, but the bears were really the main attraction that day.
38 In this passage, the word **diverted** means —
F challenged
G moved
H distracted
J helped

39 According to the passage, Dane and Dillon were —
A brothers
B cousins
C neighbors
D friends

40 The setting for most of this passage is —
F Dane’s house
G a tent
H a mountain trail
J the zoo

41 Which of these is a FACT in the passage?
A River’s Bend National Park is a spectacular ski resort.
B Hikers should beware of dangerous animals they see on the trail.
C The mountain trails are far from the park hotel.
D The Window to the World is a natural rock formation.

42 What is the main idea of this passage?
F River’s Bend National Park has different environments to explore.
G A family goes camping, does some hiking, and gets to see some bears.
H Bears like to chase each other.
J Hiking in the mountains is a good way to see canyons.

43 According to the passage, hikers should not try to feed the bears because the bears —
A are too shy
B cannot digest food that people eat
C are not tame
D must have a special diet

44 Based on the information in the passage, the reader can conclude that Dane and his family —
F complained to the rangers about the bears
G would recommend a trip to River’s Bend to other families
H don’t like nature
J are bear hunters

45 The author of this passage seems to feel that Dane and Dillon —
A planned the hike carefully
B didn’t read enough about bears
C acted in a dangerous way
D took plenty of food for the hike
Appendix C: Pretest/Posttest Answer Sheet

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2  F G H J  14  F G H J  26  F G H J  38  F G H J
3  A B C D  15  A B C D  27  A B C D  39  A B C D
4  F G H J  16  F G H J  28  F G H J  40  F G H J
5  A B C D  17  A B C D  29  A B C D  41  A B C D
6  F G H J  18  F G H J  30  F G H J  42  F G H J
7  A B C D  19  A B C D  31  A B C D  43  A B C D
8  F G H J  20  F G H J  32  F G H J  44  F G H J
9  A B C D  21  A B C D  33  A B C D  45  A B C D
10 F G H J  22 F G H J  34 F G H J
11 A B C D  23 A B C D  35 A B C D
12 F G H J  24 F G H J  36 F G H J
Appendix D: Letter to Principal

Dear Mr. Beard,

I am presently enrolled in the Master's of Education and am currently working on my final project. This project will be completed in the upcoming period as an Intervention Reading program. The purpose of this program is to improve the reading abilities of students in the midst of the Read XL program with seventh-grade students. Here is a description of the project:

- Completed Chapter I, the theoretical framework that explains the intervention program. I am presently working on Chapter II, which is a plan of action that will be used during the intervention and will consist of a twelve-week project. During this period, I will conduct a series of meetings for their son or daughter's school.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Edithson M. Davis
July 17, 2002

Mr. Charlie Beard, Principal
Napoleon Middle School
303 W. Main Street
Napoleon, OH 43545

Dear Mr. Beard,

I am presently enrolled in the Master's of Education program at The Defiance College. I am currently working on my final project. This project will involve the use of my flex period as an Intervention Reading program. The purpose of this project is to determine if the use of the Read XL program with seventh grade at-risk students would improve their comprehension skills.

Over the summer, I completed Chapter 1, the introduction of the project, and Chapter 2, the review of literature. I am presently working on Chapter 3, the development of the instruments and/or protocols that will be used during this intervention program. The intervention program will consist of a twelve-week period and all parents will be contacted to obtain permission for their son or daughter to participate in the study.

Upon the completion of this study, I will write Chapters 4 and 5. These chapters will discuss the results of the study and provide a general discussion from the researcher. It is my goal to have the final copy of this project completed by March of 2003 and to graduate with my Master's Degree in May of 2003.

Sincerely,

Christina M. Risner

Christina M. Risner
Dear Parents,

I appreciate your further involvement in our school’s learning environment.

I want to focus on student expectations.

I hope we can work together as we work on these projects.

I am excited about the improvement in our studies.

I encourage you to encourage your children to complete their homework.

I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Dear Parents,

I am currently enrolled in the Master's Program at The Defiance College and over the summer I started on my Master's Project. I spent the last several months conducting research on Intervention Reading programs that have been designed to help students improve their reading comprehension skills. After reviewing several different programs, I decided to use *Scholastic Read XL* as a part of my study.

The reason you are receiving this letter, is because your child will have me for his/her flex period for the first twelve weeks of school. I wanted to write and let you know that I will be using this class to conduct the Read XL Program. This group of students will, therefore, be helping me with this study. Please reassure your child, as I will also do, that this is nothing to panic over. This is not a graded class and no one can fail. I will, however, need everyone to put his or her best effort forward each day.

Listed below are some of the activities we will be doing throughout the week:

- **Mondays** - Prepare for the story of the week by creating interest and working on vocabulary
- **Tues./Wed.** - Guided reading. Read the story together and work on reading skills and strategies (time will be given for academic assistance if your child needs help with homework)
- **Thursdays** - Evaluation day - Share thoughts about story and apply learned skills and strategies (time will be given for academic assistance)
- **Fridays** - Real-World Reading - Fun activities to promote real-life skills

I will also administer a pretest during week one, and a posttest during week twelve, to verify improvements made by each student.

I am looking forward to working with your child. If you have any questions or suggestions on how I can best help your child, please include them on the following questionnaire. I also welcome you to call or send a note if any concerns or suggestions come up at a later date. I would like to mention a couple of things that would be extremely helpful to both your child and me for the duration of this study. The first is attendance. Attendance is very important because we will continually be building on the prior day's work. The second is reading at home. It would be wonderful if your child could find 10-15 minutes to read at home. This could be silent reading, or reading to a parent, grandparent, or sibling, or you and your child could take turns reading each page. The third request I have is for you to ask your child questions about the class. Have him/her tell you about the story of the week, or what Real-World skill they learned. I hope they are excited to share this with you.

I would like to thank you in advance for your help and support as we work to increase your child's reading skills. I think we'll have a lot of fun as we put the Read XL Program to the test. Please try to have your questionnaire completed and returned by next Wednesday, September 4.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Risner
Dear Parents,

August 27, 2002

Our class is using *Scholastic READ XL* to build reading skills this year. Throughout the year students will read a variety of high interest materials, such as stories, plays, nonfiction selections, and books, both independently and with support. Each week students practice reading skills and strategies that build success in reading increasingly difficult text.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could fill out the following questionnaire. This will help give me a better understanding of your child and determine how I can best help him/her. Thank you for your time.

Name __________________________ Parent of __________________________

1. Does your child like to read? ______yes ______no
   *Does he/she prefer to read silently or aloud to a parent or sibling? ______silently ______aloud ______both

2. What types of literature does your child like to read for pleasure?
   (check all that apply) ______magazines ______baseball/collector cards
      ______comic books ______newspapers
      ______fiction ______nonfiction

3. Does your child have good phonics skills? (check questions below)
   *Does he/she sound words out as he/she reads? ______yes ______no
   *Does he/she stumble over words often? ______yes ______no

4. In the past, have you noticed your child having trouble reading and/or comprehending science or social studies text? ______yes ______no

5. What do you feel are your child’s academic strengths?
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

6. What skills would you like to see strengthened?
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

7. Please list any additional information you feel would be helpful in working with your child.
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

Please write a note back to me whenever you would like to share at-home reading experiences, concerns, or questions.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Risner
Appendix F: Weekly Selection Assessments

2. Which phrase best sums up

A) rude and stuck up
B) clever and distant
C) graceful and polite
D)smart and attractive

Describe Mr. Book

Speculative

Long relationship with

Seeking to escape

number French to

and girlfriend

together
SELECTION TEST: Seventh Grade

Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. Which sentence is true about Victor?
   - [a] He is always in trouble for arriving late to class.
   - [b] He is the most well-liked boy in seventh grade.
   - [c] He is unpopular because he brags about himself.
   - [d] He tries to impress a girl he likes.

2. Which phrase best sums up Teresa as a character?
   - [a] rude and stuck up
   - [b] clever but distant
   - [c] graceful and polite
   - [d] small and afraid

3. How would you describe Mr. Bueller’s character?
   - [a] kind and sympathetic
   - [b] cruel and uncaring
   - [c] strict but fair
   - [d] wild and crazy

4. What is Victor and Teresa’s relationship at the end of the story?
   - [a] They are no longer speaking to each other.
   - [b] Victor is going to become her French tutor.
   - [c] They become boyfriend and girlfriend.
   - [d] They form a French club together.
SELECTION TEST: **Fighting Fire**

>>Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. Which of the following events from “Fighting Fire” is NOT in its proper sequence?
   - a) The author sees the father but does not know what to say to him.
   - b) The Chief reveals that two people are trapped in the building.
   - c) The author and her partner head to the rear of the house.
   - d) The author falls through a roof.

2. Which of the following sentences contains a time-order word?
   - a) The alarm bell in the station goes off.
   - b) All the firefighters rush toward their stations on the truck.
   - c) After everyone is on board, the truck rushes out into the night.
   - d) The fire blazes in the night.

3. Which of the following events in the story happens first?
   - a) Caroline and William enter the garage but are driven back by the fire.
   - b) A chief notifies Caroline that an adult and baby are in the back room.
   - c) William saws through a wall.
   - d) Caroline and William walk on a greenhouse roof.

4. Which sentence does NOT contain a time-order word?
   - a) When they first arrive, they learn two people are inside.
   - b) Then they learn one is a child.
   - c) William’s face is frozen in stunned quiet over the child’s death.
   - d) Next, they searched for a way to the back.
**SELECTION TEST: Short Story Collection**

>>Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. Which of the following statements is a conclusion that can be drawn about Mr. Watts' behavior?
   
   a. Mr. Watts is old.
   
   b. Mr. Watts acts mean to cover his embarrassment.
   
   c. Mr. Watts wants free gas.
   
   d. Mr. Watts is really wealthy, but stingy.

2. Which of the following is a conclusion that can be drawn from Mr. Kirkland's actions?
   
   a. He is a good judge of why people act as they do.
   
   b. He is the owner of the gas station Isabel works at.
   
   c. Deep down, he resents Mr. Watts for being so stingy.
   
   d. He tells Isabel not to let Mr. Watts get to her.

3. Which is a fact that supports the conclusion that Terrence is a good person?
   
   a. He feels good walking home after work with a paycheck in his pocket.
   
   b. He hopes the vet will not charge him.
   
   c. He is willing to make a sacrifice for an injured pigeon.
   
   d. His friends make fun of him.

4. Which is a conclusion that can logically be drawn from Tina's dilemma in "A Matter of Honor"?
   
   a. She doesn't mind losing friends.
   
   b. She thinks Miss Lopez is the best teacher ever.
   
   c. She believes in doing what is right.
   
   d. She doesn't mind telling on her friends.
**SELECTED TEST: Confessions of a Gym-Class Dropout**

Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. What is the main problem in this play?
   - (a) Travis is insulted by Rocco and wants to beat him at pull-ups.
   - (b) Rocco is bigger than Travis and threatens to fight him.
   - (c) Ultrabodies won't accept Travis as a member.
   - (d) Coach Willis likes Rocco better than Travis.

2. What does Travis decide to do to solve his problem?
   - (a) ask the coach to stop insulting him
   - (b) join a gym and get in shape
   - (c) avoid Rocco
   - (d) sneak into Ultrabodies to work out

3. What is the turning point in the play?
   - (a) Rocco's girlfriend finally talks to Travis.
   - (b) Mr. Underwood lets Travis join a gym.
   - (c) In September, Travis and Rocco compete at pull-ups.
   - (d) In September, Rocco insults Travis again.

4. How does the play end?
   - (a) Travis is glad to be in shape, even though he can't beat Rocco.
   - (b) Travis is determined to beat Rocco, no matter what.
   - (c) When Rocco beats Travis, the coach thinks Travis is a wimp.
   - (d) Travis dumps his girlfriend to go out with Rocco's girlfriend.
SELECTION TEST: Smelly Feat

Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. Which sentence about the story is true?
   a) "Smelly Feat" is the story of a boy attempting to rescue a sea turtle.
   b) "Smelly Feat" is the story of a boy who is able to accomplish little in life.
   c) "Smelly Feat" is the story of a boy who will do anything to be accepted by a classmate nicknamed Horse.
   d) "Smelly Feat" is the story of a boy who uses a secret smell to trap a turtle.

2. Which sentence best describes a problem Berin has?
   a) Everyone makes fun of his laziness.
   b) He wants to rescue an old woman whose home is to be torn down.
   c) His feet smell.
   d) He is failing his math class.

3. What is Berin’s first plan to save Old Shelly?
   a) dress up like a sea turtle to confuse Horse
   b) use his smelly feet to distract dangerous sea creatures
   c) find the secret smell
   d) use his smelly feet to scare off Horse

4. Berin is forced to come up with a new solution for the problem of saving Old Shelly when
   a) the wrecking crew arrives early.
   b) he leaves on vacation.
   c) the sea washes away his foot odor.
   d) his parents surprise him with a new bicycle.
Selection Test: Iqbal Masih: Crusader for Children

Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. Iqbal Masih and Craig Kielburger both ________.
   a) helped free children who were slaves in factories
   b) worked as knotters in a carpet factory
   c) were born and raised in Pakistan
   d) had died by the time they were thirteen

2. A difference between American children and Iqbal Masih is that while American children might enjoy a day at the park, Iqbal ________.
   a) would enjoy a day at the mall
   b) worked as a slave in Pakistan
   c) ran a carpet factory in his hometown
   d) spent summers working for his father

3. A similarity between Iqbal Masih and American children is that they both ________.
   a) spend their day in school
   b) work to pay off a parent’s debt
   c) free child slaves in Asia
   d) like to play with friends

4. Students in Broad Meadows Middle School in Quincy, Massachusetts, and children who belong to Free the Children ________.
   a) are lawyers who have clients in Pakistan
   b) have parents who own or work in factories
   c) work for fair labor laws for children
   d) have all worked in factories
SELECTION TEST: The Man Who Changed America

>> Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. Jackie Robinson was the first African American to play in what?
   a) baseball's major leagues
   b) a stadium
   c) any sport

2. What was the main reason that Branch Rickey hired Robinson?
   a) He wanted people to treat Robinson badly.
   b) He wanted African-American players in major league sports.
   c) He liked Robinson.
   d) He wanted the Dodgers to make the news.

3. What happened to Robinson when he moved to a white neighborhood in California?
   a) He decided to learn to surf.
   b) He was threatened by his neighbors because he was African American.
   c) He won the Most Valuable Player award.
   d) He won a prize for having the best-kept garden in his neighborhood.

4. According to this story, what law was passed?
   a) Businesses had to serve all people.
   b) Women were given the right to vote.
   c) Baseball players couldn't threaten each other.
   d) Young people could buy only small plots of land.
Selection Test: The Latino New Wave

Choose the best answer to each question. Fill in the bubble.

1. By 2050, _______ Americans will be Latinos.
   a) one in seven
   b) half of all
   c) one in four
   d) one in ten

2. What five states have the largest Latino population?
   a) New York, Texas, California, Florida, and Illinois
   b) Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Florida, and Massachusetts
   c) New York, California, Florida, New Hampshire, and New Mexico
   d) Ohio, New Jersey, Texas, Illinois, and Virginia

3. Que pasa? means ________.
   a) a pastime
   b) something in the past
   c) “What’s up?”
   d) “Good morning”

4. Hispanic teens feel confused about their identities because ________.
   a) they can’t speak English
   b) many of them feel they have at least two cultural identities
   c) they love Latino music and dance
   d) they speak English better than most non-Hispanics
Appendix G: Letter to Scholastic Incorporated

As a graduate student enrolled in the Master's Program for Teachers at [University], I am currently conducting a research study on the effectiveness of the Read 180 program in improving the reading skills of students in Grades 3-5. As part of the Master's Project, I am interested in incorporating the Read 180 program in my classroom for this school year starting in August. I would like to collect data on the effectiveness of the program in improving students' reading skills.

I have reviewed the Read 180 program and found that it aligns well with the objectives of my Grade 5 classroom. The program includes a comprehensive curriculum that focuses on building reading skills, vocabulary, and comprehension.

I would like to request a trial of the Read 180 program for my classroom. I am interested in obtaining the Read 180 Student Books, along with the teacher's guide and instructional materials. I am willing to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the program and share any insights with other educators who may be interested in implementing the program.

I would appreciate it if you could provide me with the necessary materials and support for the implementation of the Read 180 program in my classroom. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Teacher, [School]]
Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a graduate student enrolled in the Master's of Education program at The Defiance College. I am presently working on my Master's Project under the guidance of Dr. Jo Ann Burkhardt. This project is an action research study to determine if the use of the Read XL program with seventh grade at-risk students would improve their comprehension skills. I will implement the Read XL program at the beginning of this school year starting in August of 2002. The study will be conducted over a twelve-week period for forty-five minutes a day.

As part of the Master's Project, I will need to include any instruments or protocols that I used to collect data during this study. Therefore, I am writing to obtain permission from Scholastic to include the following instruments from the Read XL program in my project:

- I will use Full-Length Test 1, which is in the Read XL Test Preparation booklet on pages 54-65, in August, and Full-Length Test 2, pages 66-77, in November to determine if comprehension skills improved over the twelve-week program.

- I will also use questions 1-4 of the Selection Tests on pages 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, and 23 from the Read XL Assessment book, along with the Student Progress Chart on page 55, to track progress made in comprehension skills.

- I may also include in my final project, the results from the Comprehension Check questions in the Wrap Up section of the Read XL Student Book. I will use the Comprehension Check questions located on pages 12, 22, 34, 48, 64, 74, 84, 96, 110, 124, 138, and 152 as an informal assessment of reading selections.

I am excited about this action research study and feel that my students will benefit greatly from the Read XL program for grade 7. Please feel free to call me if you have any questions or concerns. I can be reached at 1-888-592-6991. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Christina M. Risner
Teacher, Seventh Gr.
Appendix H: Permission Letter from Scholastic Incorporated
This is to notify you that you are granted full permission to use and reproduce Scholastic READ XL for your research project. We wish you success in this research endeavor. Naturally, we would be most interested in learning more about your findings and happy to learn how we can improve the program. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need a more formal letter.

Sincerely,
Peter Cipkowski
Director of Product Marketing, 4-12
Scholastic Education
212/965-7458
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Appendix I: Score Spreadsheet
## READ XL RECORD SHEET

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