The Implementation of Reading Strategies to Increase Reading Fluency with Basic Leveled Readers

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Abstract

Eleven third grade students enrolled in a rural Midwest school participated in the study. The purpose of the study was to determine if the implementation of specific reading strategies with basic leveled readers would increase their reading fluency. The reading strategies that were implemented included repeated reading, passage previewing, and word isolation methods. Students’ reading fluency was measured by a Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills pre-assessment, post-assessment, and application of specific reading strategies. Results indicated that ten students increased their reading fluency and one student remained the same.
Acknowledgements

I dedicate this work to those whom helped me succeed in completing this project. I would like to thank my wonderful family for always loving, supporting, and encouraging me. I would also like to thank my eleven reading students for participating and cooperating throughout the project. In addition, I would like to thank my principal, Mr. Mark Miller for providing materials and encouraging me to be an educator. Next, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Fred Coulter for helping and working with me on a weekly basis. Finally I would like to thank the Education Department at Defiance College for making my graduate classes meaningful and constructive.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

As a third grade teacher of three years, the teacher was interested in improving reading fluency among her basic leveled reading students. In addition, the teacher was looking for ways to increase student reading fluency to benefit reading test scores given in the third grade. After working with reading interventions, her desire was to implement reading strategies that helped to improve reading fluency allowing students to become better fluent readers. Ardoin, McCall, and Klubnik (2007) stated the ultimate goal of reading interventions was to provide students with reading strategies to understand what was read fluently. The teacher decided to research reading strategies for her graduate project and determine if the implemented reading strategies would increase the student’s fluency. Kuhn (2005) described fluency as reading words accurately and automatically that incorporated expressive elements with meaningful representation.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of specific reading strategies with basic leveled readers would increase their reading fluency. The research questions were: (1) According to the professional literature reviewed, how was reading fluency defined? (2) What were the types of reading strategies used to increase reading fluency based on the literature reviewed? (3) What were the benefits of these reading strategies according to the professional literature reviewed? (4) How were reading strategies implemented according to the professional literature reviewed? (5) Did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers reading fluency?
Justification

The teacher wanted to implement reading strategies to increase student reading fluency. As a third grade teacher, observations confirmed that students reading at the basic level would spend additional time decoding, recognizing words, and rereading. This slowed down the students’ fluency and interrupted the capability to comprehend what was being read. O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) stated that reading fluency was important because students who recognized words effortlessly would devote more attention to reading comprehension. Therefore, the benefits of increased reading fluency would allow students to read with ease and focus more on comprehension. The teacher concluded that implementing reading strategies would help increase students reading fluency so other third grade teachers may want to incorporate them into their Reading instructions.

Definitions of Terms

**Basic Leveled Readers:** students that read at the current grade or age of their ability that includes clearly written materials using familiar vocabulary.

**Comprehension:** understanding the meaning or context of something that was read.

**Decoding:** the ability to apply your knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce written words.

**Reading Fluency:** the ability to read accurately, quickly, effortlessly, and with appropriate expression and meaning.

**Reading Strategies:** the process of identifying and understanding the meaning of the characters and words in written or printed material devised through a plan of action to achieve a goal.
Limitations

There were several limitations that included geographical location, limited diversity among students, size of the group, and time period conducted. The teacher conducted the action research project in a rural town in Northwest Ohio. The students were similar in age, racial, and economical backgrounds. The size of the group consisted of eleven students at or above the basic reading level. The study was conducted over one month for thirty minutes every day during reading instruction. The long term benefits cannot be assessed due to the length of time the research project was conducted. Results of this study cannot be generalized to other settings, grade levels, or number of students.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of specific reading strategies with basic leveled readers would increase their reading fluency. The research questions were: (1) According to the professional literature reviewed, how was reading fluency defined? (2) What were the types of reading strategies used to increase reading fluency based on the literature reviewed? (3) What were the benefits of these reading strategies according to the professional literature reviewed? (4) How were reading strategies implemented according to the professional literature reviewed? (5) Did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers, reading fluency?

Research question (1): According to the professional literature reviewed, how was reading fluency defined?

According to the literature reviewed, Kiley (2006) stated that reading fluency consisted of three simultaneously occurring components: accuracy, rate, and expression. She indicated that accuracy involved recognizing most words automatically. Next, Kiley declared that rate consisted of reading, determined by the words per minute or words correct per minute. Then, she acknowledged that expression was the result of using phrasing, tone, and pitch so oral reading sounded conversational. Finally, Kiley described fluency as the product of students reading accurately connected passages at a comfortable rate with appropriate expression. She affirmed that reading fluency was making print sound like speech.

Eckert, Dunn, and Ardoin (2006) defined three related components of oral reading fluency as the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with proper expression. They stated
that these components were usually assessed by asking a student to read a passage for a selected period of time. Eckert et al. also believed that comprehension was another critical component for students to develop inadvertently corresponding with reading fluency. They noted that strong oral reading fluency skills were critical for students to develop reading comprehension skills.

The review of the professional literature confirmed a connectedness of reading fluency components that included accuracy, rate, and expression. Kiley (2006) confirmed that the product of accuracy reading connected text at a conversational rate with appropriate expression. Whereas Eckert, Dunn, and Ardoin (2006) recognized the same three reading fluency components yet introduced a forth component that included comprehension. The consensus of reading fluency concluded that reading strategies were used to increase accuracy, rate, expression, and helped to build students’ comprehension skills.

Research question (2): What were the types of reading strategies used to increase reading fluency based on the literature reviewed?

In the professional literature that was reviewed, it was determined that many different types of reading strategies were used to help increase student reading fluency. Bengeny and Martens (2006) stated that these reading strategies included repeated reading, passage previewing, and practicing word isolation. They suggested that the effects of these particular interventional strategies have helped students to read more accurately and with confidence. In addition, O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) supported the intervention of repeated reading to help improve the reading rate of students.
Bengeny and Martens (2006) indicated that repeated reading allowed students to reread short passages several times until it was read at a higher reading level. They reported repeated reading has shown positive results in student reading through research. O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) recommended that repeated reading procedure helped improve reading rates. These reading rates increased accuracy through repeated reading because of word recognition due to several opportunities to read the same words. Kuhn (2005) stated that repeated exposure to the same passages, students were able to recognize words with increased accuracy and automaticity. Automaticity was quick and effortless word recognition that allowed students to focus their attention upon a text’s meaning rather on its words. Repeated reading allowed students to practice passages multiple times yet was more effective when they previewed the passages first.

Bengeny and Martens (2006) specified that passage previewing allowed students the opportunity to read or listen to a passage before being instructed or tested on the passage. One kind of passage previewing included students listening to a more skilled reader read a passage while following along silently. Other kinds of passage previewing that have been used included book walks, skimming words throughout the story, and reading captions underneath pictures or charts. Bengeny and Martens suggested that the strategies mentioned allowed students to practice passage previewing without the direct assistance from a teacher. Passage previewing has helped students to observe information and practice words within the passage before fluently reading the passage.

Bengeny and Martens (2006) acknowledged that practicing word isolation also increased reading fluency to connect text. Continuous word isolation practice consisted of reading a list of content words aloud many times daily. The results indicated that students
read the passage containing practiced words more quickly, with fewer errors, and with improved comprehension. Kuhn (2005) believed that students needed to be exposed to a wider range of words that connected passages at both at instructional and dependent levels. The instructional level included every student within the classroom whereas the dependent level concentrated on individual reading needs. Wide ranges of reading levels also allowed students to continuously practice word lists that helped increased their vocabulary and build fluency.

Kuhn (2005) indicated there were a number of effective reading strategies that were shown to increase fluency development. The reading strategies included repeated reading, passage previewing, and practicing word isolation. Repeated reading gave students the opportunity to reread a passage until they reached mastery. Passage previewing allowed opportunities for students to listen, skim, or walk through a passage before reading. Practicing word isolation included sight word skills that were practiced by using words found within the passage. Kuhn confirmed that reading strategies have helped through continuous practice resulting in the development of increased student fluency.

Research question (3): What were the benefits of these reading strategies according to the professional literature reviewed?

According to the professional literature reviewed, many students received benefits from utilizing specific reading strategies. Bengeny and Martens (2006) described that the benefits students received included development in fluency, accuracy of word recognition, and reading comprehension. Their research indicated that the use of more than one reading strategy had a bigger impact on student growth. Bengeny and Martens
also stated that interventions had been shown to produce larger immediate gains and provided students with added benefits.

Bengeny and Martens (2006) confirmed that fluency was developed through the use of specific reading strategies. They affirmed that reading strategies such as repeated reading produced large fluency gains, doubling the oral reading rate in generalization passages. Additionally, Bengeny and Martens found significant gains of fluency over time on nonpracticed passages. Ardoin, McCall, and Klubnik (2007) acknowledged that reading strategies were effective in increasing students reading fluency on generalization passages. They recognized that repeated reading interventions produced greater gains in fluency on generalized passages. O'Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) acknowledged the most commonly recommended strategy for improving the reading rate and fluency of students was repeated reading. They found that repeated reading not only increased rate and fluency, but also increased accuracy of word recognition due to the several opportunities to read the same words within a passage.

O'Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) established improvements in word recognition as well as rate through repeated reading but only when students were assisted with their errors during practice. They indicated when students read a passage several times with corrected feedback; the students read the words more accurately and correctly. Bengeny and Martens (2006) described one predictor of reading fluency was the students' ability to rapidly name words and practice words in isolation. They indicated that students read the passage containing practiced words more quickly, with fewer errors, and in some cases with better comprehension.
O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) stated that repeated reading improved comprehension of the particular passages that students read. They proposed that the benefits of repeated reading exposed students to a broader number of words that influenced growth in vocabulary, in turn influencing overall comprehension. Bengeny and Martens (2006) believed that passage comprehension was connected to word decoding. If a student spent more time decoding, they spent less time comprehending. Ardoin, McCall, and Klubnik (2007) confirmed that the ultimate goal of reading instruction was to provide students with strategies to comprehend passages.

Fluency, accuracy of word recognition, and reading comprehension were all benefits that students received through reading strategies. Eckert, Dunn, and Ardoin (2006) declared that a relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension existed. They believed that strong oral reading fluency skills were critical for students to develop reading comprehension skills. Ardoin, McCall, and Klubnik (2007) claimed that teaching reading strategies was a beneficial task for schools given the importance reading plays in our lives.

Research question (4): How were reading strategies implemented according to the professional literature reviewed?

In the professional literature that was reviewed, reading strategies were implemented to help increase student fluency. These implemented reading strategies included repeated reading, passage previewing, and practicing word isolation. Kuhn (2005) expressed that opportunities for extensive practice through implemented reading strategies allowed students to strengthen their fluency development.
Bengeny and Martens (2006) stated that repeated reading required students to reread a short passage several times until it was read at an appropriate fluency level. They implemented repeated reading by pairing the students that took turns reading a passage to each other; with the nonreader following along and helping the reading with any words he or she did not know. O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) originated that fluency through repeated reading increased when students were assisted with their errors during practice. They also believed that as a student read the passage several times with corrective feedback, students read the words in the practiced passage more accurately and quickly. Ardoin, McCall, and Klubnik (2007) indicated that repeated reading generally involved students previewing and re-reading a story numerous times at level of fluency then increase to a story above their level.

Bengeny and Martens (2006) affirmed that passage previewing gave the student an opportunity to read and listen to a passage before being instructed or tested on that passage. They indicated that one implementation included listening Passage previewing where the student listens to one or more skilled reader read the passage while following along silently. Another implementation incorporated listening to the story being read by an adult, as a whole group or independently using headphones at a listening center. O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) stated that passage previewing and repeated exposure to sets of words within passages helped students to improve word identification while building their reading rate.

Bengeny and Martens (2006) believed that one strong predictor of reading fluency was students’ ability to rapidly name words. They thought that by allowing students to practice words in isolation it would help increase their reading fluency of connected
passages. Practicing words in isolation involved students reading a list of words over and over again that were found or missed pronounced within a passage. Eckert, Dunn, and Ardoin (2006) acknowledged that in the area of reading, word isolation practice was effective in improving students’ decoding, word meaning, and reading comprehension.

Bengeney and Martens (2006) recognized that repeated reading, passage previewing, and practicing words in isolation showed to be effective when implemented both alone and together. They discussed that by providing implemented reading strategies; students expanded their sight-word vocabulary, read words more rapidly, increased fluency, and developed comprehension skills. In addition, Ardoin, McCall, and Klubnik (2007) promoted repeated reading, passage previewing, and practicing word isolation implementations that contributed to effectiveness and increased student’s fluency on generalization passages.

Research question (5): Did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers, reading fluency?

In order to answer the fifth research question, the teacher gathered and recorded data before and after implementation of specific reading strategies that included repeated reading, passage previewing, and word isolation. In the project, she evaluated the students after practicing with four third grade reading stories from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good and Kaminski, 2003) utilizing different repeated reading styles, practiced passage-previewing techniques, and created isolated word lists from the DIBELS reading stories. To assess the progress of her students and to determine if students’ reading fluency had increased, the teacher administered a third grade DIBELS reading assessment at the beginning of January 2008.
to establish a reading average for the project. A second DIBELS third grade reading assessment that was identical to the first was administered at the beginning of February 2008 to assess students’ progress and to evaluate if increased reading fluency occurred after implementation of the specific reading strategies. According to the DIBELS assessment results, ten out of eleven students increased his or her words per minute reading score.

Summary

In the professional literature that was reviewed, it was determined that when specific reading strategies such as repeated reading, passage previewing, and practicing words in isolation were implemented with basic leveled readers, their reading fluency increased. Bengeny and Martens (2006) acknowledged that reading fluency was described as an important link between word recognition and passage comprehension. They indicated that after reading strategies were implemented, students read the passage containing practiced words more quickly, with fewer errors, and comprehended what was read. O’Conner, White, and Swanson (2007) suggested an increase in practice time was one feature of interventions that helped improve the reading rate of all students. They believed if students practiced reading connected text, such as stories and books, their decoding skills would improve word recognition therefore increasing the reading rate. Kuhn (2005) explained that fluent reading consisted of more than simply reading words accurately and automatically; it also incorporated strategies that made for an expressive and meaningful description of a passage. She depicted that the ultimate goal of reading was the construction of meaning yet considered the ways in which fluency contributed to reading comprehension. In agreement, Ardoin, McCall, and Klubnik (2007) stated that
the ultimate goal of reading implementation has provided students with necessary skills to increase their fluency and comprehend passages.
CHAPTER III: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of specific reading strategies with basic leveled readers would increase third-grade students’ reading fluency. The research questions were: (1) According to the professional literature reviewed, how was reading fluency defined? (2) What were the types of reading strategies used to increase reading fluency based on the literature reviewed? (3) What were the benefits of these reading strategies according to the professional literature reviewed? (4) How were reading strategies implemented according to the professional literature reviewed? (5) Did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers, reading fluency?

In order to answer the fifth research question, (Did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers, reading fluency?) the teacher gathered and recorded data before and after implementation of specific reading strategies that included repeated reading, passage previewing, and word isolation. In the project, she evaluated the students after using third grade reading stories from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good and Kaminski, 2003) practiced passage-previewing techniques, and created isolated word lists from the DIBELS reading stories. To assess the progress of her students and to determine if students’ reading fluency had increased, the researcher administered a third grade DIBELS reading assessment at the beginning of January 2008 to establish a reading average for the project. A second DIBELS third grade reading assessment was administered at the beginning of February 2008 to assess students’ progress and to evaluate if increased reading fluency occurred after implementation of the specific reading strategies.
Participants

Eleven third-grade students participated in the study. The ages of the students ranged from eight to nine. They were enrolled in a homogenous classroom in a small rural school in Northwest Ohio. Gender of the students consisted of six girls and five boys. These students were chosen to participate in the research study because they remained in the researcher’s classroom when the other nine students were out of the room for daily reading instruction. All students were developmentally and academically at the third grade reading level. The students were basic level readers according to DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) assessment that the researcher administered.

Treatment/Intervention

The teacher introduced a new DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) reading story each week to the students then provided instruction about specific reading strategies. These reading strategies included repeated reading, passage previewing, and word isolation methods. Repeated reading consisted of rereading a passage for practice and performance. After the teacher gave the students a DIBELS one page reading story, they would read or listen to the story several times as a whole group, silently to themselves, and then with a partner. The repeated reading strategy allowed the students to become familiar with the words and supported reading fluency.

Next, the teacher introduced and demonstrated the strategy of passage previewing when using a DIBELS reading story. Passage previewing allowed students the opportunity to view, skim or listen to a story before being tested for reading fluency. The passage previewing reading strategy was practiced several times when a new DIBELS reading story was introduced to the students.
Subsequently, students then utilized word isolation strategies that were taught by the teacher. The word isolation strategies consisted of underlining missed pronounced words in a story, breaking down unfamiliar words into syllables, reading a list of content words aloud many times daily, and looking up vocabulary definitions. The specific reading strategies of repeated reading, passage previewing, and word isolation methods were obtained by the students and continuously practiced throughout the project then reassessed by the researcher.

Specific reading instruction provided by the teacher included strategies that provided students with multiple ways of how to reread information, preview a passage, and practice word isolation methods. Students worked either as a whole group, independently, or in partners. The DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) reading stories allowed individual students to set goals that helped improve their reading fluency with the teachers assistance. Each student DIBELS reading story scores were recorded, passages were reread, and word isolation methods collected. Word isolation methods that were collected consisted of underlining missed words in a passage, syllable breakdowns, word lists, and vocabulary definitions. At the end of the research project, a DIBELS post-reading assessment identical to the pre-reading assessment was reread by each student then compared and examined to see if his or her reading fluency increased.

The treatment intervention was conducted over a four-week course. Each week a different DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) reading story was used for practice. Throughout the week, different reading strategies were implemented on particular days. On Monday, a DIBELS reading story was introduced by the teacher, read independently, and reread several times by students. Tuesday, as a whole group, students listened to the
researcher read the story aloud, practiced repeated reading, and learned how to preview a passage. Wednesday consisted of partner reading and practiced word isolation strategies. On Thursday, students worked in partners with word isolation and practiced rereading strategies. Friday, students independently completed word isolation strategies and practiced reading the DIBELS reading story to the researcher.

Instruments/Protocols

A DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) reading story scoring protocol was the instrument used in this research project to assess students’ reading fluency progression. DIBELS was developed to monitor student’s reading fluency by using a reading story pertaining to a specific grade level. One selected reading story and scoring sheets were used for both the pre- and post- assessment within the research project. The reading story measured a student’s reading fluency by how many words they read for one minute. (See Appendix for reading story instrument)

Procedures

The research began with asking for permission from the elementary principal to complete a research project on reading fluency. The principal approved the project then provided reading fluency materials for the teacher to employ from the elementary school system. In addition, parents were informed and the teacher received verbal approval about the research project that involved their child at the parent teacher conferences in November 2007. The reading fluency project was developed and completed within the teacher’s third grade classroom. First, the teacher administered a DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) pre- reading assessment to determine students reading fluency level.
Next, the teacher developed reading strategies that included repeated reading, preview a passage, and word isolation methods.

At the beginning of the project, a DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) pre-reading assessment was administered to determine students' reading fluency level. The teacher met individually with each student to administer the pre-reading assessment as directed. An unnumbered DIBELS reading story was placed in front of the student. A numbered copy of the same DIBELS reading story was placed in front of the teacher. Specific directions were spoken to the student for the pre-reading story:

"When I say 'begin', start reading aloud at the top of the page. Read across the page (demonstrate by pointing). Try to read each word. If you come to a word you do not know, I will tell it to you. Be sure to do your best reading. You will have one minute to read. Are there any questions?"

The teacher then said, "begin" to the student and started a stopwatch when the student said the first word. If the student failed to say the first word of the passage after three seconds, the teacher told him or her the word and marked it as incorrect then the stopwatch was started. The teacher followed along on their copy as the student read. If a word was read incorrectly or skipped, the teacher put a slash through the word. In addition, if a student struggled with a word for three seconds, the word is told to the student and marked incorrect. At the end of the minute, the teacher placed a bracket after the last word and said, "Stop." The correct words were counted and recorded. The procedure was continued until every student was pre-assessed. After the DIBELS pre-reading assessment was administered, specific reading strategies were introduced and practiced.
At the end of the project, the teacher administered a DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) post-reading assessment to determine if individual students reading fluency had increased. The post-reading assessment was identical to the pre-reading assessment and administered in the same process. Concluding that all students were assessed, individual results were collected and documented. Finally, the teacher compared the students’ identical pre-reading assessment to the post-reading assessment determining if reading fluency increased and progressed.

Timeline

The teacher began the project at the beginning of January 2008, by administering a DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) pre-reading assessment to each student in her reading class. After collecting the test results, the teacher introduced and instructed specific reading strategies that included repeated reading, preview a passage, and word isolation methods. These specific reading strategies were separately introduced, demonstrated, and then practiced as described in the treatment/intervention section. At the beginning of February 2008, a DIBELS post-reading assessment was administered, compared to the pre-reading assessment, and evaluated by the teacher.

Data Analysis

DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) reading assessment stories evaluated student fluency by the number of words read per minute before and after specific reading strategies were implemented. The data included how many words per minute each student read on the DIBELS pre- and post-reading assessment stories. The average numbers of words read per minute was calculated across the eleven students. This calculation included the pre-assessment story then post-assessment story average. The
DIBELS pre- and post- reading assessment stories measured student reading fluency, accuracy, and increased speed. Words that students mispronounced on the DIBELS reading stories were underlined then put into a word lists to practice pronunciation and effortlessness. In addition, mispronounced complex words were broken down into syllables then vocabulary definitions were written for accurate pronunciation, practice, and perception.

Conclusion

In order to answer the research question, did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers reading fluency, specific reading strategies were pre-assessed, applied, and post-assessed. The teacher administered a DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) reading pre- and post- assessment that evaluated students reading fluency before and after specific reading strategy implementation. The specific reading strategy interventions included repeated reading, passage previewing, and word isolation. After the intervention, the teacher collected and analyzed the data then interpreted the results.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of specific reading strategies with basic leveled readers would increase their reading fluency. The research questions were: (1) According to the professional literature reviewed, how was reading fluency defined? (2) What were the types of reading strategies used to increase reading fluency based on the literature reviewed? (3) What were the benefits of these reading strategies according to the professional literature reviewed? (4) How were reading strategies implemented according to the professional literature reviewed? (5) Did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers, reading fluency?

In order to answer the fifth research question, data was collected using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2003) reading assessment instrument that was administered in January 2008 and February 2008. For the purpose of this project, reading assessments measured the number of words per minute a third grade student could read. The words per minute measured reading fluency progression before and after specific reading strategies were introduced and implemented. The specific reading strategies consisted of repeated reading, preview a passage, and word isolation methods. According to Good and Kaminski (2003), reading fluency—measured accuracy, speed, and correct pronunciation of words read in grade leveled reading stories.

Reading Fluency

In order to determine students’ progression in reading fluency, data was collected using the results of the DIBELS (Good & Kaminski, 2003) assessment reading instrument at two intervals. Results indicated that ten students increased their reading
fluency and one student remained the same. The DIBELS indicators of student improvement were related to specific reading strategies implemented during the treatment section of the project.

The results of the first DIBELS assessment was administered in January 2008 determined the number of words read per minute average by students for the project. The DIBELS reading assessment ranged from 101 to 148 words read per minute. Each student was assessed then his or her data was collected and recorded. This data indicated that all students were at a third grade basic leveled reading level before specific reading strategies were implemented.

In February 2008, the second DIBELS assessment, identical to the first was administered to determine if reading fluency increased after specific reading strategies were implemented. The DIBELS second reading assessment ranged from 119 to 148 words read per minute. This data meant that ten students increased their reading score while one student’s reading score remained the same.

![DIBELS Assessments](image)

**Figure 1. DIBELS Pre- and Post- Assessments for January and February**
The data indicated that after specific reading strategies were implemented over a four-week intervention program, ten out of eleven students increased his or her reading assessment scores. The reading assessments scores were evaluated by how many words per minute a student read.

![DIBELS Average](image)

**Figure 2. DIBELS Class Average Scores for Assessments**

The data indicated that in January, the class average for the first DIBELS assessment consisted of 124 words read per minute. In February, the class average increased to 142 words per minute. The class average increased difference consisted of 18 words per minute.

**Summary**

The eleven third grade students who participated in this research project were assessed and then instructed using specific reading strategies to help increase their reading fluency. The students were able to apply and utilize reading strategies after completing the intervention program. Following implementation of specific reading strategies another assessment was given to evaluate student progression. According to the
DIBELS assessment results, ten out of eleven students increased his or her words per minute reading score.

The findings indicated that after implementation of specific reading strategies that included exposure to fluency.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of specific reading strategies with basic leveled readers would increase their reading fluency. The research questions were: (1) According to the professional literature reviewed, how was reading fluency defined? (2) What were the types of reading strategies used to increase reading fluency based on the literature reviewed? (3) What were the benefits of these reading strategies according to the professional literature reviewed? (4) How were reading strategies implemented according to the professional literature reviewed? (5) Did the implementation of reading strategies increase basic leveled readers reading fluency?

Meaning of Findings

The findings indicated that the majority of the students increased their reading fluency after implementation of specific reading strategies. It is worth mentioning that the chosen reading strategies that included repeated reading, passage previewing, and word isolation implementation helped increase almost all students’ fluency. This means that reading strategies reinforce learning capabilities to teach students how to become more fluent readers within a small group setting. The project was developed to assist students through specific reading strategies to gain independence, confidence, and increase their fluency to achieve higher scoring on reading assessments within a small group setting that conducted credibility to the findings.

Implementation of specific reading strategies allowed students to gain independence, confidence, and increase their fluency by practicing with DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) related reading stories. This independence provided freedom for students to learn reading strategies at their own pace and helped organize information
effectively. An increase in confidence assured students' self ability to succeed in reaching a higher goal through strategizing when reading stories or completing reading assessments. As a result, students increased their reading fluency through strategies they learned. These three strategies were effective when conducted within a small group setting.

Through specific reading strategy instruction, the small group setting of eleven students who were basic leveled readers received enrichment to increase their reading fluency. The small group instruction was created because nine students with disabilities under IEP’s or Title I services were receiving selected reading instruction from other teachers. This allowed the classroom teacher to instruct specific reading strategies to a smaller group giving them the opportunity to increase their reading fluency.

The findings indicated that if specific reading strategies were implemented within a small group, reading fluency would increase and assessment scores would be higher. This project concluded that ten out eleven students increased his or her reading fluency on DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) assessments while one remained the same. The students increased fluency was reinforced through practicing with specific reading strategies that consisted of repeated reading, passage preview, and word isolation. The strategies were practiced each week using a different DIBELS reading story over a four-week course. Strategies provided students with listening, reading, previewing, word decoding, and vocabulary skills. These skills provided students with the capability to effectively comprehend words on DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) assessments and within reading stories therefore their reading fluency increased.
Summary

The purpose of this project was to determine if the implementation of specific reading strategies in a rural mid-western third grade classroom increased students’ reading fluency. The eleven students in the classroom were assessed, instructed over a four-week course, and reassessed using DIBELS reading stories and specific reading strategies. Results of the DIBELS assessments were conducted four weeks apart from the beginning of January to February, indicating that most of the students increased their words read per minute reading fluency scores. The conclusion to be drawn from this project was that specific reading strategies might be an effective method to increase students’ reading fluency.

Recommendations

At this time, the teacher did not feel a need to modify any procedures that were integrated within the four-week research project. The project was completed according to plan without any changes being made. A reason that changes were not needed was that the teacher had used similar reading strategies in her classroom and taught related reading strategies to other students during intervention classes for a several years. The only alteration the teacher had to make was to be flexible throughout the four-week research project because of inclement weather conditions during the month of January.

One recommendation the teacher would make included the extension of the project timeline from four-weeks to nine-weeks or a year. This longer period of time to conduct the study would allow students to practice and become familiar with strategies that could be used on any kind of reading test throughout the year. Many tests that are taken in third grade include DIBELS (Good and Kaminski. 2003), Ohio Reading
Achievement, and Reading Counts. These tests indicate if students are reading below, at or above grade level indicators and standards. Testing is a part of today’s education system and if students had sufficient opportunities to learn additional reading strategies they would have a better chance to become more fluent readers.

Conclusion

In this study, which was conducted over a four-week time period in a rural midwestern school, the majority of students’ increased their fluency after implementation of specific reading strategies. Results of the DIBELS (Good and Kaminski, 2003) assessments indicated that ten out of eleven third grade made improvements in reading fluency while one remained the same. Introducing, practicing, and applying specific reading strategies helped students become more fluent readers.
References


The kids in room 207 were misbehaving again. Spitballs stuck to the ceiling. Paper planes whizzed through the air. They were the worst-behaved class in the whole school.

“Now settle down,” said Miss Nelson in a sweet voice. But the class would not settle down. They whispered and giggled. They squired and made faces. They were even rude during story hour. And they always refused to do their lessons.

“Something will have to be done,” said Miss Nelson. The next morning Miss Nelson did not come to school. “Wow!” yelled the kids. “Now we can really act up!” They began to make more spitballs and paper planes. “Today let’s be just terrible!” they said.

“Not so fast!” hissed an unpleasant voice.

A woman in an ugly black dress stood before them. “I am your new teacher, Miss Viola Swamp.” And she rapped the desk with her ruler.