The purpose of the this study was to examine the effective use of community volunteers in four third grade classrooms at one rural elementary school in Northeast Ohio in a program called the Poetry Academy. A sequential-explanatory mixed methods research paradigm framed this study. The research questions were: (1) Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on student’s fluency and comprehension scores, as shown through the use of a curriculum-based measurement given before and after the implementation of the program, measuring (a) words correct per minute (WCPM); (b) word recognition; and (c) score on a retelling? (2) Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on students’ attitude towards reading, as measured both before and after the implementation of the program by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990)? (3) What observations or changes have students, parents, teachers, and volunteers observed in the students towards reading, if any, during the implementation of the program? and (4) What have students, parents, teachers, and volunteers observed as advantages and disadvantages of the program?

Thirty-six students were purposefully sampled from a population of 86 third graders to participate in the Poetry Academy based on their score on a curriculum-based assessment measuring words correct per minute, word recognition, and a score on a
retelling. During the eleven weeks of the program, six volunteers read poetry with the sampled students in a weekly cycle. Components of repeated reading (Homan, Klesius, & Hite, 1993; Khun & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979; Therrien, 2004), listening-while-reading (Lionetti & Cole, 2004; Rasinski, 1990), assisted reading (Hoskisson & Krohm, 1974; Kuhn & Stahl, 2004), and modeling (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002) were used during their ten minute, weekly sessions.

Findings reveal that significant gain was made in the treatment population when compared to the control group in the areas of words correct per minute, word recognition, and attitude toward academic reading, while a marginally significant gain was made in the area of comprehension. Change in the treatment group was observed by the students, themselves, volunteers, teachers, and parents and included an increase in confidence when reading and improved attitude toward school.

The most notable contribution of this study is the combination of tutoring methods used during the ten minute, weekly sessions between volunteer and Poetry Academy student. Using the methods described above, the volunteers were able to affect change in students identified as disfluent when compared to national norms (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006). Also significant is the use of poetry. The Poetry Academy used poetry with positive results with students. Teachers, students, volunteers, and parents mentioned the short nature of poetry, combined with its usually humorous text, in conjunction with the improvements of the apprentices in their reading skills and attitudes towards reading. The use of poetry in the classroom could be used to help build confidence in students, as
well as improve their reading skills and attitudes (Certo, 2004; Homan et al., 1993; Moyer, 1982; Perfect, 2005; Rasinski, 2000; Rasinski et al., 1994).
COMBINING THE POWER OF POETRY, REPEATED READINGS, AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS FOR LITERACY INTERVENTION: THE POETRY ACADEMY

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University Graduate School of Education, Health and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Lori G. Wilfong

August 2006
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

I never thought much about fluent reading until I became a teacher of bilingual students in East Los Angeles. It wasn’t until I heard the halting reading of a child struggling with a text above his/her reading level that my eyes were opened to the problems that disfluent reading signals. Later, as a reading specialist with a small school district, fluency was again a focus as student after student was labeled as a struggling reader. As I listened to students make their way through a text and spend so much time decoding, it wasn’t a surprise to me that their faces would often go blank when I asked them to retell the story to me. It was then that I knew that I had to do more than identify the problem; I had to act.

The above is an excerpt from a researcher’s memo drawn up hastily during an advanced qualitative research class. The professor instructed us to go to the root of the problem we were interested in studying and find out what made us design the study we did. I was impassioned to speak about my students in diverse locations who inspired me to find a way to help them with their fluency.

The area of fluency within reading instruction has become a hotbed of research lately because high fluency has been shown to correlate with higher achievement in most students (Pinnell, 2000). It is also being investigated because it is one of the few areas within reading that can be tested quantitatively, thereby providing the data needed to
show student improvement, as laid out in the “No Child Left Behind Act” (NCLB, 2000). Specific fluency intervention has been researched with varying results.

Fluency interventions vary. Some teachers and reading specialists use single method interventions, like Readers’ Theatre (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Keehn, 2003), whereas others use packaged methods like “Read Naturally” (Hasbrouck, Ihnot, & Rogers, 1999) or Rave-O (Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001).

Repeated reading is a single strategy that is often used as a basis for fluency intervention (Homan, Klesius, & Hite, 1993; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Therrien, 2004). Repeated readings is defined as having a child read a short passage more than once with differing amounts of support (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979; Vacca, Vacca, & Gove, 1995). The use of poetry with repeated readings has been researched with positive results (Rasinski & Padak, 2001).

The use of community volunteers to help boost literacy skills, like fluency, is ripe for research. Of the volunteer programs that have been reviewed, few are still in existence, and most do not have the specifics needed to spread beyond the starter school (Wasik, 1998a, 1998b). Unfortunately, community volunteers in schools are often used as copying specialists or bulletin board masters (O’Connor, 2001; Sanacore, 1997). A program specific to Ohio, called OhioReads, is a community volunteer program where community members are used specifically for assisting in reading instruction. OhioReads has specifications; however, this program can be unstructured, and community volunteers may be left to their own devices to find methods and materials to use with the different classrooms and students to which they are assigned.
Introduction to the Research Problem

This study examined the effective use of community volunteers in four third grade classrooms at one rural elementary school in Northeast Ohio. Volunteers were recruited through the OhioReads program at the school and trained to be a part of a program called The Poetry Academy.

The Poetry Academy was created after looking at the fluency scores of the entire third grade at Colina Elementary School (CES; pseudonyms are used throughout). One third of the third grade population was significantly below the national average in fluency scores for the beginning of the year. The national average for words correct per minute (WCPM) at the beginning of third grade is 79 words (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006); 36 students out of 95 were identified as 65 WCPM or below. Kuhn and Stahl (2002) stated that by third grade most students are able to read any text aloud and make it sound like speech. The fact that 36 students were unable to accomplish this signaled a problem.

To combat this phenomenon, I looked at a program used with preschoolers and primary students called “Fast Start” (Rasinski & Padak, 2000; Padak & Rasinski, 2005). This program used poetry and repeated readings to boost the fluency levels of emergent readers with positive results. I hypothesized that a similar program would work well with the struggling third grade readers. I combined the researched, successful strategies of repeated reading, assisted reading, and listening-while-reading to create the program that I called the Poetry Academy.

Several factors influenced this decision. This school already had several reading interventions in place, including tutors and Title I reading. Both of these interventions
involved pulling the students out of the classroom, so I decided that any new intervention had to be quick and involve minimal pull out from class.

Since other researchers worried that repeated readings may seem like a punishment or boring for older readers, poetry was ideal because of its comparatively short text, fun subject matter, and its easy match with the strategy of repeated readings (Homan et al., 1993; Moyer, 1982; Rasinski, 2000). Mastery of a short poem would cause students to feel confidence and success early in the program, similar to the success that other researchers found in the use of short texts in conjunction with fluency development (Rasinski, Padak, Linek, & Sturtevant, 1994).

The next factor examined was staffing. Like many schools across the nation, CES faces budget constraints. The tutors, Title I teacher, and I, the literacy specialist, already had overextended schedules and were unable to find time for any extra help around the school. When I voiced this staffing concern to the principal, he suggested speaking with the OhioReads coordinator. The OhioReads coordinator was happy to give the names and numbers of five community members who had time to give. She also volunteered herself for the program, excited to participate in something new.

Specifics of the Program

Components of repeated reading, assisted reading, listening-while-reading, and modeling were all equally important factors in the Poetry Academy process. These components were combined to combat the boredom often associated with repeated reading as a single intervention (Moyer, 1982), to take advantage of the ease of implementation and success of listening-while-reading (Lionetti & Cole, 2004; Rasinski,
1990), to take advantage of the one-on-one nature of assisted reading (Hoskisson, & Krohm, 1974; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003), and to provide modeling of good reading (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002).

Each community volunteer attended a two-hour training where I went over the basics of repeated reading, reading-while-listening, and assisted reading. I then talked about the program: each volunteer would be assigned six students identified as disfluent by a curriculum-based measurement. They would meet with each student once a week for about 10 minutes. During this 10 minute session, the volunteer would introduce to the student a new poem, chosen by me, the literacy specialist, based upon my knowledge of the student’s current reading level. The volunteer would begin by reading the poem aloud to the student (modeling). They would then invite the student to read the poem with them simultaneously (listening-while-reading and assisted reading). They would then invite the student to read the poem aloud by themselves (repeated reading), providing praise. At the end of the session, the volunteer and student would discuss what the poem meant to the student, dissect any unknown words, and sometimes just chat about events in the student’s life.

The student would then take the poem home and read it aloud to as many people as possible, garnering signatures from listeners to prove that they had read it to them. The following week, the next session would start with the student reading the poem one more time aloud to the volunteer to demonstrate that he or she had mastered it. The volunteer would then introduce another poem, and the cycle would start over again.
A few incentives were in place in the Poetry Academy program. I had issued each student a folder in which to keep his or her accumulating poetry and to protect the poems from the ravages of their backpacks. Students often needed reminders to take these home and bring them back for their Poetry Academy sessions, so the volunteers began giving stickers and small pieces of candy to the students who remembered. The other incentive offered to the students was the promise of a Poetry Café to take place at the end of the school year, provided that they participated in the Poetry Academy to the best of their capabilities.

Statement of the Research Questions

To evaluate the efficacy of the program, the Poetry Academy was looked at in terms of the following questions:

1. Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on student’s fluency and comprehension scores, as shown through the use of a curriculum-based measurement given before and after the implementation of the program, measuring:
   (a) words correct per minute (WCPM);
   (b) word recognition; and
   (c) score on a retelling?

2. Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on students’ attitude towards reading, as measured both before and after the implementation of the program by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS)?
3. What observations or changes have students, parents, teachers and volunteers observed in the students towards reading, if any, during the implementation of the program?

4. What have students, parents, teachers, and volunteers observed as advantages or disadvantages of the program?

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, fluency is defined as the number of words read correctly per minute, the percentage of words read correctly in a minute, and a rating on a retelling (Eckert, Ardoin, Daisey, & Scarola, 2000; Rasinski & Padak, 2001). Repeated readings are defined as the multiple readings of the same text (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979; Vacca et al., 1995). Community volunteers are considered those assisting at a school without pay (Wasik, 1997). Curriculum-based measurement is defined as an assessment tool used to monitor student progress, using curriculum materials (Stecker, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Attitude toward reading can be broken into three components: evaluation of the situation, feelings towards the situation, and action towards the situation (Mathewson, 2004); this was measured by the ERAS and interviews conducted with the participants. Retelling is defined as a reader’s ability to interact with, interpret, and draw conclusions from a text they have recently read (Nebraska Department of Education, 1999). Finally, change in this study is defined as the difference between pretest and posttest results on the words correct per minute, percentage of word recognition, score on a retelling, score on the ERAS, and differences observed by students, teachers, parents, tutors, and others.
Assumptions

It was assumed that in this project, the control and treatment groups remained independent throughout the duration of the program, meaning that the two groups did not interact to the extent that the control group began to imitate or participate in the Poetry Academy.

Limitations

A few limitations existed with this study. I, the researcher in this study, am the literacy specialist at CES and creator of the Poetry Academy strategy. Bias towards the strategy may have existed when questioning participants about the strategy. Participants may have been reluctant to share their honest opinions about the strategy. However, this drawback became a strength when it is considered that I have an insider’s perspective on both the workings of CES and the strategy. Although I cannot fully separate myself from the strategy, I was able to make changes to it as suggestions are made by volunteers, parents, teachers, and students. My intimate familiarity with the strategy can then be considered a strength, especially when considering the qualitative aspects of the study. Also, to help alleviate any bias, inter-rater reliability was checked to 90%.

Although mixed methods studies are not new, in some research contexts they are still considered risky (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). However, by using mixed methods I was able to establish the strength of the strategy quantitatively, to satisfy a federal need for scientifically-based research, and qualitatively, to satisfy the practitioner need for narrative data.
Within the study itself existed limitations. A quasi-experimental approach to the quantitative aspects of the study means that results cannot be generalized to any population outside of the research population. Other studies, using a true experimental design, would need to be conducted for the results to be truly generalized to other populations.

A ceiling effect may exist for both groups in terms of improvement in their words correct per minute scores. Although there is theoretically no limit in the amount a student can raise their score, a practical ceiling effect may have caused students to hit their maximum score either with or without the treatment of the Poetry Academy.

The selection of the students for the treatment and control groups was also a limitation. Students were purposefully selected for a group depending on their words correct per minute score on the September curriculum-based measurement. Selection of students for interventions such as the Poetry Academy is often determined by a score like a curriculum-based measurement. By purposefully choosing students for groups, the authentic setting of the school was validated.

Significance of the Study

It may seem to some that the area of repeated readings has been exhausted in terms of research. Indeed, several studies have been conducted that prove the efficacy of repeated reading (see, for example, Eckert et al., 2000; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Jenkins & Fuchs, 2003; Keehn, 2003; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001). However, the method of repeated readings combined with assisted reading, poetry, and community volunteers has yet to be investigated. The program of the Poetry Academy
combines these strategies and people in an innovative way. If the program is proven effective at raising the WCPM, word recognition, retell score, or attitude of a struggling student (or a powerful combination of any of these), then similar programs could be instituted with other students.

The literature has also raised questions that are being addressed by this study. Kuhn and Stahl (2003) asked that fluency instruction be looked at in terms of raising word recognition and comprehension. In the data gathered on the students in this study, both word recognition and comprehension, via a retelling score, are measured both pre and post fluency intervention. Kuhn and Stahl also called for more studies using a baseline and a control. In the fluency studies they looked at, they pointed to the lack of true experimental and quasi-experimental design. For that reason, this study implemented a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest design.

Summary

In this chapter, the background of the study has been introduced; an overview of the research problem has been provided; the research questions were stated; operational terms were defined; and assumptions, limitations and the significance of the study were stated. The following chapter presents a review of the pertinent literature to this study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the research done in the fields of fluency, community volunteers as literacy intervention, student attitudes toward reading, and retelling. In mixed methods research, the type of literature review conducted depends on the type of research being done: sequential, concurrent, or transformative (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Taddlie, 2003). As this is a sequential mixed methods study, or a quantitative method in which a hypothesis is being tested, followed by exploratory qualitative methods, the review of the literature follows a more traditional quantitative outline, where the literature is the basis for “advancing research questions or hypotheses” (Creswell, 2003, p. 33).

Fluency

Fluency is often deemed the wicked stepchild of literacy instruction; the difficulties that it presents are alternatively ignored and ogled. It is often talked about as the “most neglected” reading skill (Allington, 1983; Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Keehn, 2003; Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001).

*Defining and Measuring Fluency*

Reading with expression, comprehension, appropriate phrasing, and at an appropriate speed is reading fluently according to Rasinski and Padak (2001). As readers
ourselves, it is not difficult to identify good reading: the words rolling off the reader’s tongue with ease, the observance of the punctuation, and the prosody in the reader’s voice as he or she makes a text come to life. Automaticity, or the ability students have to read text without having to struggle with decoding, is another word often associated with fluency (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Vacca et al., 1995). It makes sense that the less time that readers spend figuring out the words, the more time readers can spend figuring out the meaning of the text or, as Kuhn and Stahl (2003) stated, “Fluency is a prerequisite if learners are to succeed at the primary purpose of reading, the construction of meaning from text” (p. 4).

But how can you measure expression, phrasing, and meaning in reading? For the most part, researchers choose to ignore these aspects of fluency and focus on speed (see, for example, Eckert et al., 2000; Jenkins & Fuchs, 2003; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Speed is generally measured as number of words correct per minute (WCPM). Students read for one minute on a passage at their designated grade level. The researcher marks where the student finishes and counts the number of words read correctly in that minute, subtracting any omissions, substitutions, mispronunciations, or words the researcher had to pronounce for the student (Eckert et al., 2000; Rasinski & Padak, 2001). The rate of students is then compared to national norms to see whether students fall above or below their grade level in terms of words read correctly per minute (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992; Tindal, Hasbrouck, & Jones, 2005). A part of the informal reading inventory (IRI) often includes this fluency test, so administering a full IRI can yield the WCPM (Homan et al., 1993).
Comprehension, as it relates to fluency, is tallied by researchers through a retelling (Keehn, 2003). Within this process, students recall the text they have read by retelling the story in their own words. Keehn graded the retellings through the number of story elements the student retold.

Other measures of fluency include having students read a text at their instructional level and rating it against a set of standards (Rasinski & Padak, 2001). Using a rubric, students are designated a score of one, two, three, or four, depending on how well they read the text (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995). Full measures of both silent, fluent reading and comprehension are taken through the administration of standardized tests like the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Students are required to silently read short texts and answer related questions (Jenkins & Fuchs, 2003). However, because ample time is supplied by the test companies to ensure that most, if not all students, can finish, this measure of fluency is not considered as accurate in measuring word rate as the IRI or the WCPM (Jenkins & Fuchs).

**Fluency and Intervention**

*Repeated Readings*

Several interventions can be used to affect fluency. Repeated reading is a strategy that is often used as a basis for fluency intervention (Homan et al., 1993; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979; Therrien, 2004). Repeated readings is defined as having a child read a short passage more than once with differing amounts of support (Chafouleas, Martens, Dobson, Weinstein, & Gardner, 2004; Kuhn & Stahl, 2002; Rasinski & Padak, 2001; Samuels, 1979; Vacca et al., 1995).
Samuels (1979) is considered the creator of the repeated reading strategy. He likened repeated reading to the practice that athletes put into basic skills to develop the speed and smoothness needed for their chosen activity. Just as a basketball player will participate in free throw, three-point, and lay-up drills every day to hone shooting ability, a reader can reread a text to hone reading ability. Samuels gave a few guidelines for this practice: He advocated for short passages to build confidence in the reader and he encouraged the use of parents to assist in reading.

Samuels (1979) also identified three levels of reading that corresponded to fluency: non-accurate, accurate, and automatic. In the non-accurate stage, students have difficulty recognizing words. In the accurate stage, students read slowly and haltingly, without expression, and often with poor comprehension. The final stage is when fluency is automatic and the reader is able to read smoothly, with expression, and with comprehension of the text being read.

Kuhn and Stahl (2003) conducted a landmark meta-analysis of 58 fluency studies. They looked at three types of studies: those that looked at repeated reading, assisted reading, and classroom intervention. Thirty-three studies looked specifically at repeated reading as a fluency intervention. Fifteen used a control group and 18 did not. However, Kuhn and Stahl had difficulty reconciling the results of the different studies because of the different types of control groups used. Some control groups were established as a true control group without treatment, whereas others expected that the control group would read the equivalent amount of text as the intervention group. Because of this, significance was generally only found in studies where the control group was without treatment.
Similarly, a significant gain in comprehension was also generally found in studies where fluency also improved.

Hoffman and Isaacs (1991) discussed fluency and its components in depth. The researchers looked at feedback, the failing cycle of round-robin reading, and reading groups to create a recitation lesson where the teacher is the central figure in the reading lesson. Results suggest that gains in reading rate when using this method were significant.

Blum and Koskinen (1991) also looked at the successful methods of boosting reading rate. They suggested building expertise by increasing knowledge of the repeated reading method, building content knowledge, providing for varying ability levels, and integrating repeated reading throughout the curriculum by varying its purposes, materials, and its instructional setting.

In a study conducted by Homan et al. (1993), comparing the effect of repeated readings on fluency and retelling ability, students were randomly assigned to two treatments. In group one, students were exposed to repeated readings of passages, whereas students placed in group two were given assisted nonrepetitive oral reading strategies. All students were pretested by being taped during an oral reading to determine WCPM, errors made, and a retelling, which was subsequently rated on a retelling rubric. In the three variables tested, the findings suggest that there is no difference between the two groups when receiving either repeated reading intervention or assisted nonrepetitive oral reading strategies; both treatment groups showed improvement. The type of instruction presented fell secondary to the importance of time spent reading.
Allinder, Dunse, Brunken, and Obermiller (2001) investigated the use of feedback on repeated readings. In this study, students were assigned to two random groups where various types of repeated reading were used in conjunction with two types of feedback. In group one, students received repeated reading intervention and generic feedback (e.g., “good job” or “nice”) on their reading. In group two, students received repeated reading intervention and specific strategic feedback (e.g., “next time use more expression in your voice” or “pay closer attention to punctuation”) regarding their reading. Both groups of students improved on the standardized test score used as a pre- and posttest, but the students receiving specific feedback showed greater gains on the pretest-posttest measure of curriculum-based cloze procedures. A limitation to this study exists in that oral reading fluency was not measured directly; it was indirectly measured by a cloze procedure, where students fill in blanks of a paragraph using context clues, and standardized tests.

Chafouleas et al. (2004) also focused on feedback in conjunction with repeated reading. This study compared variations of repeated reading against each other: repeated reading, repeated reading with performance feedback, and repeated reading with performance reading and a contingent reward. The findings of this study, as measured on a curriculum-based assessment, suggested that repeated reading by itself leads to the greatest increase in fluency. Findings also suggested that students who are reading at high accuracy but low fluency need repeated reading only, but students with low fluency and high error rate may need feedback or a reward to encourage their progress.

In a meta-analysis of fluency and comprehension gains as a result of repeated readings, Therrien (2004) found that repeated readings can be effective, if they are
utilized in the correct way. Findings suggest that tutoring by an adult, modeling, corrective feedback, the number of times a passage is read, comprehension and charting, in conjunction with repeated readings, all had a positive effect on the fluency of students.

Repeated reading has also been looked at in terms of its effect on both learning disabled (LD) and nondisabled readers (ND; Sindelar, Monda, & O’Shea, 1990). In this study, 25 LD and 25 ND students were compared on WCPM, error rate per minute, and retelling both before and after repeated readings of either instructional or mastery level texts. The findings suggest that the effects of repeated reading are comparable for both LD and ND students. Both groups made significant gains in WCPM and error rate when tested before and after different numbers of reading and on different levels of text.

Readers’ Theatre

A subset of repeated readings is the popular strategy referred to as Readers’ Theatre. Readers’ Theatre involves the performance of a script that requires very little preparation for the teacher; students generally stand in front of their audience in their everyday clothes and read a prepared script (Rasinski & Padak, 2001; Vacca et al., 1995).

Griffith and Rasinski (2004) conducted a longitudinal study of Griffith’s classroom as she compared her students’ scores on an IRI before she implemented Readers’ Theatre and after. The teacher in this study used both prepared scripts and had students create their own, all the while encouraging repeated readings as students read and re-read scripts in order to perform for each other, younger students, and family. Not only did the researchers find that students’ word rate was affected through the use of Readers’ Theatre, they also found that student attitudes in her classroom towards reading
improved. When comparing four years of results of her traditional reading program to four years of her “fluency-enhanced” reading program, it was also discovered that students made gains throughout the year and that 93% of students termed “at-risk” were leaving fourth grade reading above grade level, as compared to only 22% of “at-risk” students reading on or above grade level when exposed to her traditional reading program.

Keehn (2003) also found that Readers’ Theatre positively affected her students’ fluency. In this study, one group’s students and teachers received explicit fluency and oral coaching, along with the implementation of a Readers’ Theatre classroom program, and another had teachers merely implementing and monitoring a Readers’ Theatre program without explicit fluency and oral coaching. Findings suggest that both groups made gains in fluency, regardless of the group they were in.

Assisted Reading

Assisted reading is defined as a tutor and tutee reading the same material simultaneously, or chorally (Hoskisson & Krohm, 1974; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). In their analysis of fluency studies, Kuhn and Stahl looked at 15 studies that used assisted reading as an intervention. Seven of these studies used a control and eight did not. Of these studies, 13 found that the gains made by the treatment group were greater than that of the comparison group.

Murad and Topping (2000) studied paired reading with students and parents in Brazil. In this study, parents volunteered to read with their child on a daily basis after receiving training in paired-reading practices. Forty-eight first graders were pre- and
posttested on an instrument similar to an IRI, and findings suggest that students in the intervention group made gains in fluency and comprehension that were significant in comparison to the control group. Qualitative data collected showed that 70% of parents considered their child to be a better reader because of the paired reading, and students said that they enjoyed reading more after the intervention.

Listening-While-Reading

Listening-while-reading (LWR) allows students to read or listen to a passage prior to instruction (Lionetti & Cole, 2004; Rasinski, 1990). They are supported in their approach to a new text which allows for confidence and success. One study in the literature examined the effects of repeated reading and LWR on reading fluency, whereas another, sure of the success of LWR, looked at the effects of differing rates of LWR on fluency.

In 1990, Rasinski compared the effects of repeated reading and LWR on reading fluency. Using 20 subjects, the researcher used a pretest/posttest design in two cycles to allow for each student to experience both methods. The findings from this study suggest that repeated reading and LWR have similar effects on fluency; they both boost fluency rate. The researcher suggested that the time inconvenience that repeated reading often presents might be eliminated by the use of LWR instead.

Lionetti and Cole (2004) were convinced of the efficacy of LWR and decided to focus their study on the effects of two rates of listening while reading on oral reading fluency and comprehension. The researchers proposed that a student would best build fluency when practicing LWR with a proficient reader who read slowly during the
process. They were surprised to find that a faster reading rate by the proficient reader led to a greater rise in fluency rate in the learner. A limitation of this study was only four students participated.

Whole Program Interventions

After considering the results of previous studies, groups of researchers created their own fluency interventions meant to be used as whole program interventions, rather than steps in intervention, as the previous studies have been (Hasbrouck et al., 1999; Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001).

The “Read Naturally” (RN) program combines three methods of fluency intervention into one package: modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring. Researchers suggested that this combination of interventions produces growth in both week-to-week advances and year-to-year growth. In one study conducted using the RN program, students received RN intervention for an average of 32 weeks. Their average gain in oral reading exceeded the “typical” goal for reading performance improvement of 1.5 WCPM/week and the gain of third grade students (1.60 wcpm/week) exceeded the “ambitious” goal, as defined previously by researchers (Hasbrouck et al., 1999).

Wolf and Katzir-Cohen (2001) also designed a comprehensive fluency program based on previous studies called RAVE-O. Like “Read Naturally,” RAVE-O also had three goals: to improve accuracy and automaticity, to improve fluency, and to transform attitudes in students towards reading. Preliminary analyses of a study done on both second and third graders suggest that RAVE-O may affect reading rate and comprehension in disabled readers.
Summary

This section has defined fluency and its relationship with comprehension. A review was conducted of the literature pertaining to repeated readings, Readers’ Theatre, assisted reading, listening-while-reading, and program intervention. Fluency was one of the main components studied in the Poetry Academy; the use of community volunteers, the upcoming section, was another.

Community Volunteers as Literacy Intervention

Parent and community volunteers in schools have been given many jobs. O’Connor (2001) conducted in-depth interviews with community volunteers to find out how they viewed their place in the school. Parents described themselves as “fillers: nurses, cafeteria workers, field trip supervisors, and bulletin board makers. One parent said that she did “the dirty work,” the things not even the principal would do like clean up trash, assist sick students, and make phone calls home.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1991) called for a more active role for community members in the school by assigning them to literacy-related jobs, like reading tutoring. Similarly, Sanacore (1997) advocated for the support of educators by using parent and community volunteers for literacy-related jobs:

They can read to students, listen to them read, listen to their retellings after silent reading, ask challenging questions on their reading, coach their efforts, share and monitor reading and writing, develop instructional materials, administer interest and attitude inventories, organize a class newspaper, assist with bulletin boards
and classroom displays that encourage reading and writing, and help out on field trips. (p. 226)

It was my hope with the Poetry Academy to move community volunteers away from the former jobs, the bulletin boards and field trips, and towards the latter jobs, the reading and listening to reading, the retellings, and the coaching.

Volunteer tutoring was listed as a hot topic in 1998 in *The Reading Teacher* (Cassidy & Wenrich, 1998/1999). With the call for tutors made clear by then President Clinton, schools all over the country were creating volunteer tutoring programs to help students in kindergarten through third grade reach proficiency in reading (Burns, Senesac, & Symington, 2004; Cassidy & Wenrich, 1998/1999; McDaniel, 2002; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Neuman, 1995; Wasik, 1998a, 1998b). The guidelines for these programs were unclear; each school had a different idea of what a tutor was supposed to do and how they were to be guided. Not many of these programs evaluated themselves empirically and today, with a new call from the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), many are defunct. However, the survivors have become role models for the best use of parent and community volunteers as literacy intervention for struggling readers.

Tutoring programs can have many faces; tutors can be paid or unpaid, trained or untrained, and professionals or volunteers. For the purpose of this review, only studies that looked at the efficacy of trained volunteer or parent tutoring programs were evaluated. The studies are first framed by guidelines developed by Wasik (1998a, 1998b) and then reviewed in more depth according to their research methodology.
Guiding Framework

The work by Wasik (1998a, 1998b) has become an important starting point for creators of good tutoring programs (Burns et al., 2004; Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Murad & Topping, 2000; Powell-Smith, Shinn, Stoner, & Good, 2000). From a review of accomplished tutoring practices and programs, Wasik created a list of eight guidelines essential in creating a successful volunteer tutoring program:

1. A certified reading specialist needs to supervise tutors.
2. Tutors need ongoing training and feedback.
3. Tutoring sessions need to be structured and contain basic elements.
4. Tutoring needs to be intensive and consistent.
5. Quality materials are needed to facilitate the tutoring model.
6. Assessment of students needs to be ongoing.
7. Schools need to find ways to ensure that tutors will attend regularly.
8. Tutoring needs to coordinate with classroom instruction.

It is interesting to note in this review which tutoring programs and practices adhered to Wasik’s guidelines, either knowingly or unknowingly. Those that found significant positive effects in their students through the use of tutoring as reading intervention had all characteristics of Wasik’s eight essential components. It is also interesting to note that of the programs summarized within this review, the only component that a few were unable to provide evidence for was the support of a certified reading specialist (Juel, 1996; Neuman, 1995; Powell-Smith et al., 2000). Table 1 presents Wasik’s eight components of
Table 1

Alignment of Reviewed Tutoring Programs to Wasik’s Guidelines

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Guidelines</th>
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<tr>
<td>Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Charlottesville volunteer tutorial (aka Book Buddies; Invernizzi, Juel, &amp; Rosemary, 1996/1997; Invernizzi, Rosemary, Juel, &amp; Richards, 1997; Meier &amp; Invernizzi, 2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s literature vs. Basal Readers tutoring (Powell-Smith et al., 2000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-athlete tutoring program (Juel, 1996)</td>
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<td>HOSTS (Burns et al., 2004)</td>
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<td>Howard Street Tutoring Program (Morris, Shaw, &amp; Perney, 1990)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Together (Neuman, 1995)</td>
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<td>Brazilian Parent tutoring (Murad &amp; Topping, 2000)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intergenerational Reading Tutoring Program (McDaniel, 2002)</td>
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successful tutoring programs and the characteristics possessed by each of the tutoring programs in this review.
Quantitative Studies

Meta-Analysis

Two meta-analyses of the effectiveness of tutoring were conducted (Cohen & Kulik, 1982; Elbaum et al., 2000). The first was conducted in 1982 and looked at the positive effects of tutoring on academic performance and attitude. Sixty-five studies were combined in this meta-analysis. Tutoring was broadly defined: tutors were not only volunteers, but also could have been peers and teachers. These disparities were not differentiated but were instead shown as a whole to increase achievement, attitude, and self-concept of the tutee (Cohen & Kulik, 1982).

The second meta-analysis was more specific. This report looked at 29 studies from 1975-1998 concerning elementary students who were in the lowest 20-30% in reading achievement in their school. The tutors were a mix of teachers, volunteers, paraprofessionals, pre-service teachers, and peers, but this time their effectiveness, as measured on score on a standardized reading test, was differentiated; teachers were the most effective tutors but volunteers were found to be the second most effective, followed by peers, paraprofessionals, and pre-service teachers (Elbaum et al., 2000).

Pretest-Posttest

The remaining quantitative studies looked at various aspects of tutoring programs through the use of pretest-posttest measures (Burns et al., 2004; Invernizzi et al., 1997; Juel, 1996; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Morris et al., 1990; Powell-Smith et al., 2000).

One study set itself apart by looking at the type of materials used in a home-based tutoring program. Thirty-six pairs of students and parents were trained in tutoring
practices using either the student’s basal reader or children’s literature. The study found that both types of tutoring were effective although neither type of material was found to produce better results than the other (Powell-Smith et al., 2000).

Book Buddies, or the Charlottesville Parent Tutorial, is a volunteer tutoring program that was examined in three separate studies (Invernizzi et al., 1996/1997; Invernizzi et al., 1997; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001). Book Buddies involved rereading, word study, writing, and the introduction of a new book in twice-weekly sessions. The first study, conducted in Virginia in 1997, began as an evaluation of the program and evolved into a look at the effect of more or fewer tutoring sessions. The efficacy of the program was evaluated through pre- and posttests on word recognition and oral fluency rate, as well as a posttest on the reading accuracy of Little Bear (Minarik, 1978), a seminal piece of children’s literature identified by Invernizzi. This first study found that the higher the number of tutoring sessions, the greater the change in reading achievement (Invernizzi et al., 1997).

The second study of the Book Buddies program was conducted outside of New York City in the Bronx. First graders were referred to the program by their teacher and as a result of an oral reading fluency assessment. The 55 lowest students were chosen and received tutoring. Their results were compared with a control group, and their gains in oral reading fluency were found to be significant (Meier & Invernizzi, 2001).

Juel’s study in 1996 also looked at a tutoring program with first graders. Her program differed from Book Buddies in that instead of using community or parent volunteers, the students were matched with student-athletes for twice-weekly tutoring
sessions. Changes in attitude toward reading and reading achievement were analyzed for both the tutors and the tutees. The changes in word recognition for the tutees were found to be significant but the change in attitude toward reading was not found to be significant (Juel, 1996).

The final two quantitative studies reviewed used versions of the informal reading inventory (IRI) to pre- and posttest students on the effectiveness of the tutoring program (Burns et al., 2004; Morris et al., 1990). The first study looked at the effectiveness of the HOSTS program. The purpose of HOSTS, or Helping One Student to Succeed, was to match at-risk students with volunteers to help with reading achievement. This program was created not only to answer the America Reads Act but to fulfill the call for adult volunteers made by NCLB. Students in grades kindergarten and sixth grade were tested both before and after the intervention and the results were compared with a control group through the use of an ANCOVA. The results from this study showed that volunteer tutoring significantly enhanced children’s oral reading fluency and word recognition (Burns et al., 2004).

Another study evaluated an after-school tutoring program for second and third grade students identified by teachers as in need of extra reading help. This program, known as the Howard Street Tutoring Program, is often pointed to as an exemplary model for tutoring programs because of its success. Howard Street simplified the tutoring process by narrowing the age levels with which it worked, therefore shortening the training needed for its volunteers. It used tutors from “various walks of life: undergraduate liberal arts majors from local universities, master’s students in education
looking for informal practicum experiences, suburban mothers whose children were away at college, retirees looking for meaningful volunteer work, and so forth” (Morris et al., 1990, p. 136). Lessons were structured to make the best use of time, and all lessons were under the supervision of a certified reading specialist (Morris et al.). Research done on this program suggests progress in participating students; however, the control group against which the treatment group was measured was shown to be statistically unequal.

**Conclusion**

Overall, quantitatively, it is evident that volunteer tutoring programs have been successful. Through pre- and posttests of oral fluency and word recognition, tutoring programs have demonstrated their effectiveness.

**Qualitative Studies**

The two qualitative studies of tutoring programs stemmed from the AmericaReads program. One is a case study of a successful tutoring program at an inner-city school, whereas the other is a look at how a community tutoring program brought a poverty-stricken community in touch with a school (McDaniel, 2002; Neuman, 1995).

McDaniel (2002) conducted a case study of a successful implementation of the AmericaReads program in 2002 called Intergenerational Reading Tutoring Program. Through observations, informal interviews, and formal interviews with the site coordinator, she found that the success of the program stemmed from the top; the more time and energy invested by the site coordinator, the more positive the response of the rest of the participants to the program. Volunteers were made to feel like part of the school program rather than intruders on instruction. The program was advertised
throughout the school and community with reports on progress. Indeed, the tutoring became a cornerstone to not only the tutee’s success, but to the school’s success as a whole (McDaniel).

Reading Together is a community-supported parent tutoring program. This program advocated for the tutoring of kindergartners and first graders who lacked literacy skills that teachers expected them to primarily gain at home, like word play, curiosity towards print, and early writing experiences. This program was developed to encourage participation by many of the less-educated members of the community, especially student relatives lacking literacy skills themselves. The researcher found that these community members had trouble forging relationships with the school and needed to be welcomed and encouraged to take part in their child’s learning. Through structured interviews, observations, and informal interviews, the researcher reported that a structured tutoring program made community volunteers feel important in the school and their students’ life (Neuman, 1995).

These two qualitative studies of volunteer tutoring programs demonstrated the effectiveness of the program using information gained from the school. A prevalent theme throughout both studies is how the tutoring program changes the tutor and the community involved. However, the voice of the tutee was lacking, an absence the present study hopes to fill.

Mixed Methods Studies

Only one mixed method study exists in the literature featuring a parent tutoring reading intervention program. This study was conducted in Brazil and it featured 24
parent-student pairs who committed to paired reading five minutes a day, five days a week, for eight weeks. Paired reading was chosen because as a tutoring exercise, paired reading naturally complements the existing curriculum without interfering or overshadowing it. The tutoring took place at home with a natural parent, rather than an assigned volunteer. The parents, or tutors, were trained in paired reading practices through observation and drill. Qualitative data were gathered through observations of the pairs of students and parents in their homes, and they were interviewed on their thoughts on the tutoring sessions. The quantitative measures of tutee achievement were fluency and comprehension, measured on an instrument similar to an IRI, and attitude, which was measured on Likert-scale type questions. This combination of data provided a picture of both the thoughts of the tutees and tutors on the process, as well as student achievement, provided by statistical data which recorded the improvements the tutees made. Results suggest that students made improvements in both reading skills and attitude toward reading (Murad & Topping, 2000).

**Rationale**

The final study reviewed provides a model for the current study of the Poetry Academy. Both qualitative story data and quantitative statistical data are being sought to provide a picture of the program to fully evaluate it for future and widespread use. The overall review of other tutoring programs brings to light the importance of Wasik’s eight essential components for creating a successful tutoring program, like the Poetry Academy (Wasik, 1998a, 1998b). As noted earlier, the voice of the tutee is conspicuously absent from the presentation of findings of other tutoring programs and from Wasik’s analysis of
solid tutoring programs. That voice has been included in the present study so that all involved parties are represented.

Assessment of Attitude Toward Reading

This review of the literature looks at the effect of the assessment of attitude toward reading. As stated by Mizokawa and Hansen-Krening (2000): “If the act of reading is an act of drudgery—no matter how facile the reader might be—then reading is not fulfilling in the way we educators hope it is” (p. 73). By understanding the relationship between attitude and reading we are able to reach our ultimate goal as educators: creating lifelong readers. This review looks chronologically at various assessments of reading attitude, beginning in the 1970s.

1970s

Reading and attitude began to be studied in the 1970s as researchers found correlations between students’ attitudes toward reading and achievement (Roettger, Szymczuk, & Millard, 1979). It was stated that “the development of positive attitudes toward reading is important as an educational objective and as an evaluative measure of the effectiveness of reading instruction” (Roettger et al., p. 138). To this end, Roettger et al. set out to alter an existing, validated instrument that measured student attitude toward reading for secondary students in order to make it more accessible for elementary students and, while doing so, investigate the relationship between attitude and achievement. Findings suggest a positive relationship between student attitude toward reading and scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in both comprehension and vocabulary. In terms of the altered survey, findings suggest that this instrument could
help assess student attitude toward reading and change in student attitude toward reading following intervention.

1980s

Using a different instrument, Alexander and Engin (1986) described five dimensions of reading that were taken from the Survey of Reading Attitudes. They suggested this multidimensional framework of reading attitude to reflect the various dimensions of attitude toward reading that they found when working with early primary-age students. Similar to the study described above, the researcher altered an existing attitude survey, the Survey of Reading Attitudes, because it seemed to be more appropriate for use with students in third grade and below. The factors found for grade three, the grade looked at in the present study, found students relating most to expressed reading difficulty, reading enjoyment, reading as direct reinforcement, comics, and alternative learning modes.

Librarians are also looking for ways to assess reading attitude (Kerby, 1986). The author talked about her use of various attitude assessment instruments, including open-ended questioning, yes/no response, paired assessment techniques, and Likert-scale type questions. She suggested using this assessment to help both librarians and teachers encourage both individuals and whole classes enjoy reading in more specific ways.

Taking a different perspective on student attitude toward reading, Parker and Paradis (1986) examined student attitude toward reading in grades one through six, noting differences between gender and grade level. Findings suggest that attitudes toward reading remain steady and positive through grade three. Between grades four and five,
students begin showing preferences for nonclassroom reading (e.g., comics and library books). In addition, Parker and Paradis suggested that the overall attitude for girls in grades one through six was more positive toward reading than boys, although both sexes showed an overall positive attitude toward reading.

1990s

In the beginning of the decade, McKenna and Kear (1990) answered a call to bring about an emphasis on reading attitude. They cited earlier research in reading that emphasized comprehension but felt that this new importance on reading proficiency “ignored the important role played by children’s attitudes in the process of becoming literate” (McKenna & Kear, p. 626). They developed an instrument that assisted teachers in assessing attitude quickly, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). Using the comic character Garfield, the survey allowed students to circle the illustration of Garfield that corresponded to the way they felt about the test item. For example, when students are asked how they feel about reading a book on rainy Saturday, they circle a really happy Garfield, a kind-of-happy Garfield, a not-so-happy Garfield, or a mad Garfield. The survey items corresponded to either academic reading or recreational reading. After piloting the instrument, it was tested for reliability and validity with over 18,000 students. The researchers suggested that the instrument be used to evaluate a whole class attitude toward reading or to identify students as either academic or recreational readers (or both or neither) and use that information to help develop the student in the area lacking. Because of the popularity of this instrument, it has been the source of study for other researchers (Kazelskis, Thames, & Reeves, 2004; Kazelskis, Thames, Reeves, et al.,
In a completely different look at attitude toward reading, Smith (1990) followed 84 individuals from childhood to adulthood, some for 40 years, to ascertain how attitude toward reading changes over a lifetime. Participant attitude toward reading was tested in 1st, 6th, 9th, and 12th grades, 5 years after high school graduation, and 21 or 26 years after high school graduation on instruments that included a questionnaire on reading attitude, habits, and perceptions. Results suggest that early reading measurements were poor predictors of adult attitude toward reading whereas early adult measures accounted for only a third of adult attitude toward reading. Other interesting findings were that attitude toward reading remains moderately positive throughout school years and that adults with the most education remained the most positive toward reading into adulthood.

Building on both the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and the long-term look at attitude toward reading (Smith, 1990), Kush and Watkins (1996) looked at the stability of children’s attitudes toward reading from grades one through four, using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey as instrumentation. Findings mirrored those of Smith for elementary age students: Student attitudes toward reading remain stable and positive through grade three. However, Kush and Watkins suggested reading attitude drops in both recreational and academic reading in grade four. Findings also mirrored those of Parker and Paradis (1986) that girls generally remain more positive and stable in their attitudes toward reading than boys, especially in recreational reading.
Current Research

Research using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey continued into the 21st century with a study done by Lazarus and Callahan (2000). This study compared reading attitudes of learning disabled students with those of nondisabled students, using data collected by McKenna and Kear (1990) as the control group comparison. Findings suggest that students who receive reading instruction in resource rooms show reading attitudes that are the same or above at-risk or average nondisabled readers. Findings also suggest learning disabled students have more stable attitudes towards reading than non-learning disabled across grades one through five.

Again building on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) and disabled readers (Lazarus & Callahan, 2000), Sanacore (2002) made a case for using attitude surveys to assess and plan literacy instruction. Sanacore pointed to the example of a struggling reader being continuously sent out of the room to work in workbooks and other copied materials. Will this student have a positive attitude toward reading if he or she is constantly labeled as having poor literacy skills and given watered down instruction? Instead, Sanacore called for rich use of literature and engagement with text for all students.

The literature reviewed up until this point has all been done in the United States. An interesting look at student attitudes toward reading was conducted in Britain (Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004). The researchers looked at students’ attitudes across a five-year period to gain student perception of a major government literacy initiative. The comparisons were made between 1998 and 2003; the literacy initiative, known as the
National Literacy Strategy, was implemented soon after the student attitude survey was taken in 1998. Their research was motivated by a study that showed that the National Literacy Strategy had advanced students’ literacy learning but had diminished their attitudes toward reading in comparison to other countries. Some of Sainsbury and Schagen’s findings were consistent with those here in the United States: Younger students are generally more positive about reading than older students, and female attitudes toward reading tend to be more positive than male attitudes. Findings significant to the U.K. suggest that student attitudes toward reading did diminish between the two administrations of the attitude surveys, casting a negative light on the implementation on the National Literacy Strategy.

Retelling

The term retelling was originally developed for use during miscue analysis to evaluate student’s comprehension of a text after reading (Goodman & Burke, 1972). Goodman (1982) expanded on this definition:

Retellings after reading provide another opportunity for the reader to continue to construct the text. They extend and enhance the reader’s comprehending and comprehension processes while they provide evidence for and insights into understanding these two processes for teachers and researchers. (p. 301)

In 2004, Moss clarified the definition of retellings to help separate retellings from summaries:

Retellings are oral or written postreading recalls during which children relate what they remember from reading or listening to a particular text. Conversely, a
summary represents a short, to-the-point distillation of the main ideas of the text. Retellings provide a holistic representation of student understanding rather than fragmented information provided by answering comprehension questions. (p. 711) Studies with retelling as a focus do not abound; instead, this review focuses on research that used retellings as a factor in the study, similar to the current study.

A study in an urban setting used undergraduate students to help boost retelling skills and attitude toward reading. Baseline data were collected that showed that elements necessary for a complete retelling, such as plot, characters, setting, and solution, were missing from the retellings. Using children’s literature, the undergraduate students emphasized these elements during reading instruction with a K-8 population. A posttest showed that student ability to retell stories increased significantly, as measured on a quantitative scoring guide and qualitative data appraising the depth of the retelling (Gipe, 1993).

Comprehension of expository texts was the focus of a study done in Northeast Ohio (Moss, 1993). Similar to the previous study, undergraduate, pre-service teachers collected data. Scores on retellings for high ability and average ability students show that high ability students were successful in retelling the story they heard whereas approximately half of the low ability students could not retell the story. Low-ability student retelling generally did not include as many details or inferences beyond the text. All retellings were scored against the Irwin and Mitchell holistic scale, also used in the previous study (Moss).
The type of text presented was also the subject of a study that looked at student retellings after either listening to a story, looking only at pictures that told a story, or a combination of listening to a story while looking at pictures. The study suggests that students in kindergarten were more likely to recall more content in their retelling in the combined condition of listening and pictures whereas students in second grade were more likely to recall more content in their retelling either from the combined condition or by listening to a story alone. The condition where students looked only at pictures scored the lowest for both grades (Schneider & Dube, 2005).

Retelling was the focus of a study done on four students experiencing repeated reading using both basal texts and children’s literature. Students read and were read various texts in different groupings, including whole group, small group, and with partners. Results suggest that the students improved significantly in accuracy, fluency, and ability to retell a story, as measured quantitatively following Morrow’s procedures where the elements are split into eight units and the student receives points based on how many units they are able to mention in their retelling (Turpie & Paratore, 1994).

A final study in which retelling was a practice used for improvement was conducted to challenge the use of explicit phonics instruction in the No Child Left Behind Act. The researchers looked at the effect of two government approved programs, Open Court and Direct Instruction, versus Guided Reading in a metropolitan area. Effectiveness was looked at by conducting miscue analysis and comparing retellings of students participating in the different programs and by comparing phonics knowledge on the Woodcock Johnson non-word test. The study suggests that the two government
approved programs did not demonstrate statistically significantly better results on any of the subtests when compared to the students participating in the Guided Reading program (Wilson, Martens, Arya, & Altwerger, 2004).

Although retelling is considered an important skill by many, and used as a factor to measure improvement in research, it has not been intensely researched. The current study adds to the literature about retelling since it is a factor which can be measured on a pretest and posttest with an intervention.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature pertaining to fluency, community volunteers as literacy intervention, assessment of attitude toward reading, and retelling. Together, they provide a historical background guiding the present study by giving various perspectives on the research already present in these fields. Elements of all of these can be found in the Poetry Academy: fluency, parent volunteers, assessment of attitude, and retellings.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The creation of the Poetry Academy was not driven by my own research interests. Instead, a problem presented itself and a solution was sought. Fortuitously, I had already collected data that resulted in the idea of an evaluation of the Poetry Academy and became the baseline for the present study. In this chapter, the guiding methodological framework for the research that took place is explained, along with a description of the research methods used to collect data both quantitatively and qualitatively.

In the fall of 2004, the principal at CES asked me to do a curriculum-based measurement of the third grade. He chose the third grade because those students would be involved in two rounds of achievement testing, and he wanted another measure of student progress to see which students might need extra intervention. Curriculum-based measurements are performed to find out the reading rate and word recognition of a student (Pink & Leibert, 1986; Rasinski, 2000; Stahl & Kuhn, 2003). It was originally proposed by LaBerge and Samuels in 1974 that automaticity in reading leads to an ease in comprehension of text.

I decided to add a retelling to my curriculum-based measurement. After students read in a normal manner on a passage at their grade level, I asked them to retell the story to me. I rated them on a rubric based on the number of events they were able to recall.
(Padak & Rasinski, 2005). I felt that with the combination of their words read correctly per minute (WCPM), their percentage of words read correctly, and their retelling score, I would have a rounded picture of the students’ reading abilities. I was able to compare the WCPM score to national norms to see where our students fell in comparison to their age-mates (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992; Tindal et al., 2005).

When looking at the data from the fluency assessment performed in September, I found that almost half of all the students assessed (n = 86) were significantly below (20% or more) their grade level in WCPM (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 1992).

My own concerns as an advocate for sound literacy instruction surfaced here (Creswell, 2003). As an advocate, I saw a problem that needed to be fixed, and I was set on fixing it. I knew that if I merely reported my findings, it was probable that the 36 students that I had identified as significantly below the national norm would be put into a special pull-out group for intervention. Studies have shown that these groups often receive lessened engagement with text and watering down of reading instruction (Allington, 2002; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 2004).

I decided to hand my findings to the principal with an intervention of my own ready to be put in place. This is when the Poetry Academy was born. Through my work as a graduate assistant for Nancy Padak and Tim Rasinski, I had read and heard about their research on a program called Fast Start (Padak & Rasinski, 2005). In this program, preschool and primary students read poetry with their parents using a strategy called repeated readings. In this strategy, a piece of text is read and reread to help build fluency,
confidence, and comprehension in students (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979). I hypothesized that a similar program would work well with the third graders at CES.

**Explanation of the Poetry Academy**

When I was brainstorming ways to assist the struggling readers at CES, I was concurrently studying about Reading Recovery in a graduate class. A basic Reading Recovery lesson has a trained teacher introduce a new text to a student by reading it to them. They invite the student to read with them, and then have the student read the text aloud to them (Pikulski, 1994). It seemed to me that a volunteer could do something similar. Even though they lacked the in-depth training of the Reading Recovery trained teachers, they could still transfer their enthusiasm and knowledge of texts to their students.

The training of the six volunteers was a simple process. In a one-hour session, I explained about the principles of Reading Recovery and how we would modify it to make the sessions with the students brief. Modeling, listening-while-reading, and repeated reading strategies were demonstrated and discussed so that the volunteers felt comfortable doing them on their own. We then talked about the working with words chart that I learned from a colleague. If there was time left in the sessions, they would have students choose a word or words of which they were not sure and find antonyms and create sentences for the words. The volunteers were told to spend between 5 and 10 minutes with each student. Each volunteer had specified the amount of time they were willing to give to this project and an hour, leaving 10 minutes for each student, was sufficient to meet the time needs of all volunteers.
Each volunteer received the names of six students that had been identified by the curriculum-based measurement as below level. It was up to them to schedule their time with their students with the assistance of the teacher.

A wire basket in the mailroom became the Poetry Academy basket. In the basket were folders for each of the six volunteers containing a log sheet to fill out detailing their weekly sessions and the poems to distribute to the students. I refilled the folders weekly with these log sheets and poems in order to continually read the log sheets, as this was the only communication I had with some of the volunteers.

I turned to poetry for this intervention because its brief nature was ideal for the short sessions with the volunteers. Perfect (2005) pointed out how poetry’s format “is especially suited to struggling or reluctant readers, and enhances reading motivation” (p. 17).

To select the poetry used, I turned to the crude, rude, and funny. I wanted students to enjoy their time with their volunteer. I noticed that in my own time in the classroom, humorous text drew them in and held their attention. A plethora of humorous poetry abounds and I made good use of Shel Silverstein, Ken Nesbitt, and others.

Each week, I selected two poems to assign and distribute to the students in the Poetry Academy. I selected a shorter, simpler poem for the students with the lowest words correct per minute and selected a more difficult poem for the more advanced readers. This was not done in a formal way. I looked mostly at length and word difficulty to assess the difficulty of the poem and assign them accordingly. I asked the volunteers to let me know when the poems selected seemed too easy or hard. Occasionally I selected
an easier poem for a student who was really struggling, and sometimes I assigned the same poem to all students, such as over winter break when I chose a seasonal poem, “The ABCs of Christmas” (O’Briant, 1997).

The name for the intervention came to me as I was reading the fifth book in the Harry Potter series. Hogwarts Academy, the school featured in the Harry Potter books, sounds dignified, and I wanted the students who were placed in the Poetry Academy to feel proud of what they were doing. Any student can just read poetry with a volunteer—only apprentices got to be in the Poetry Academy.

This cycle continued for 11 weeks. I devoted an hour each week to collecting and reading the volunteer logs in order to stay on top of any changes they noticed in their students’ reading and selecting poems for the following week. At the end of the 11 weeks, a Poetry Café took place. The apprentices’ parents were invited to take part in a poetry celebration where students selected their favorite poem from the year and performed it in front of the group. We enjoyed pizza, cake, and poetry as each student proudly read his or her poem at an outside pavilion at CES. At the end of the celebration, the apprentices received a certificate commemorating their apprenticeship signed by their volunteer and me.

**Research Takes Shape**

I was pulled from two ends of the spectrum while creating my research design. The initial research on the Poetry Academy came in the form of statistical data taken from the fluency scores of the students. These scores, taken three times during the 2004-2005 school year, represent a snap-shot of a student’s reading fluency that can be
measured quantitatively. This measurement, along with two other statistical tests, represents the postpositivist paradigm that influences my research on the Poetry Academy. Postpositivists believe that there is one reality that can generally be shown through data collected in controlled, guided ways (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Tashakkori & Teddule, 2003). However, in contrast to positivists, who believe that there is only one truth, postpositivists believe that an absolute truth can never be found (Phillips & Burbules, 2000).

These postpositivist beliefs satisfy the need for data that proves that a program is working. They also fit the needs laid out in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2000) for scientifically-based research by providing data collected by validated instruments that can accurately show growth. However, statistical data alone do not satisfy the practitioners who look beyond data and toward the measure of a whole student. As a reading specialist, I know that a score on a curriculum-based fluency measure is a small snapshot of a child’s reading abilities. I also know through the fluency literature that the repeated reading strategy used in the Poetry Academy works (e.g., Kuhn & Stahl, 2002; Rasinski, 2000; Samuels, 1979). I needed to hear from those that experienced the program to truly discover if it succeeded at changing how a student might feel or act towards reading.

The constructivist paradigm can satisfy these needs. In this paradigm, the researcher is encouraged to look at multiple views to gain an understanding of a situation (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Tashakkori & Teddule, 2003). Constructivism made sense here because I was at odds with the objectivity that is required in the
postpositivist paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddule). As a postpositivist researcher, I was to
remain objective throughout data collection and analysis (Tashakkori & Teddule).
However, as the creator of the program I was researching and as a participant observer
throughout the implementation process of the Poetry Academy strategy, my involvement
did not lend itself to objectivity. As a constructivist, “the interaction between the
researcher and the participants is felt to be essential as they struggle together to make
their values explicit and create the knowledge that will be the results of the study”
(Tashakkori & Teddule, p. 141). I needed to gain the perspective of the multiple
stakeholders in the Poetry Academy in order to create an evaluation of the program that
has a rounded picture of both narrative and numerical data.

It became clear that I was conducting more than just a simple research study; I
desired to gain a comprehensive picture of an entire program through the use of mixed
methods research. Program evaluation is defined as the systematic approach to
determining the quality of a program and how the program can be improved (Posauac &
Carey, 1997; Sanders, 2000), and mixed methods research is a recent trend in program
evaluation (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997). Evaluators began advocating for the
use of mixed methods within program evaluation to create an assessment that shows both
the strengths and weaknesses. One method alone gives only one side of the program and
could easily be shared in a positive or negative light, depending on the agenda of the
evaluator (Worthen et al.). By combining the two methods, we are able “to recognize
important strengths and knowledge” in a program (Fandell, 1997, p. 152).
According to Worthen et al. (1997), six different approaches to program evaluation can frame a study: objective-oriented, management-oriented, consumer-oriented, expertise-oriented, adversary-oriented, and participant-oriented. For the purpose of evaluating the Poetry Academy, the participant-oriented approach to program evaluation made the most sense. In this approach, the stakeholders are central in determining the values, criteria, needs, and data for evaluation. Stakeholders are defined as the individuals or groups who have a direct interest in and may be affected by the program being evaluated (Worthen et al.). The vested stakeholders in the Poetry Academy were the students, their teachers, their parents, the community volunteers, and me, the reading specialist/researcher. When it became apparent in January of 2005 that we were on to something with the 36 students who were involved in the Poetry Academy, I met with these stakeholders to determine the values, criteria, needs, and data to use to evaluate the program. What we created is as follows.

**Values**

The goal of the Poetry Academy is to not only increase fluency, as measured on a curriculum-based measurement by WCPM, word recognition, and a retelling score, but to impact students’ attitudes and motivations through reading, as measured on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990), both before and after the intervention.
**Criteria**

Changes in fluency would be measured in comparison to the students not receiving the Poetry Academy intervention (the control group). Fluency scores would also be compared with national fluency norms.

**Needs**

More than just statistical numbers must be used to evaluate this program. The voices of students, parents, and teachers must be heard in order to judge whether this program is a success.

**Data**

Data would be collected numerically (fluency scores, attitude scale scores, changes on achievement tests) and narratively (interviews, volunteer logs, focus groups, e-mail).

By bringing stakeholders into the evaluation process, I was able to create a study whose results would be tangible not just to me as a researcher, but to the individuals who experience and helped run the Poetry Academy. This was important to me and important to the school and community I served.

Other key elements in a participant-oriented approach to program evaluation are its dependence on inductive reasoning, use of multiple types of data, the lack of a formal plan, and the recording of multiple realities (Worthen et al., 1997). The reliance on inductive reasoning makes sense in evaluating the Poetry Academy because of the use of qualitative data. To merely evaluate the program based on the statistical data collected, a hypothesis would be tested and there would be acceptance or rejection of that hypothesis.
However, the statistical data led to a deeper look into the process of the Poetry Academy through the eyes of its stakeholders through qualitative methods like interviewing, participant observation, logs, and focus groups. These means of “grass-roots observation and discovery” made creating a research hypothesis for the document analysis, interviews, and focus groups possible and probable.

The multiplicity of data needed for the participant-oriented approach is easily tenable in the research of the Poetry Academy. The use of mixed-methods research easily satisfies the need for multiple sources of data, both planned and unplanned.

The collection of statistical data was systematic and rigorous in order to meet the demands of a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest experiment. The narrative data collected were mostly planned: the focus group with the teachers involved, the e-mails with the volunteers, the analysis of the volunteer logs, and interviews with parents and students. However, certain chance conversations and observations by others added to the richness of the data. These encounters were documented through research memos.

The final element of recording multiple realities in evaluating the program again was satisfied through the collection of narrative data. The picture painted through e-mails, interviews, focus groups, and logs all gave varied perspectives on the program that helped me judge the quality and success of the Poetry Academy.

There are both strengths and weaknesses to the participant-oriented approach. The strength of this approach is in the activism that it propels in its stakeholders (Worthen et al., 1997). By giving the participants control of the evaluation, I saw a whole community come together in support. Instead of the apathy that many experience when trying to
reach parents or recruit volunteers, I found that I had an abundance of data and people from which to choose.

The weakness of this approach lies in its subjectivity (Worthen et al., 1997). However, as noted earlier, I felt I needed to invoke this subjectivity because of my own involvement as creator and main researcher of this program. In this particular research program, subjectivity that might become evident through my bias in presenting the narrative data is countered by the validated instruments used to measure student progress in fluency and attitude. “The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies” (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 15).

Mixed Methods

As stated earlier, the method of data collection was both quantitative and quantitative. There are different ways to conduct mixed methods studies: sequential explanatory, sequential exploratory, sequential transformative, concurrent triangulation, concurrent nested, and concurrent transformative (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the strategy of sequential explanatory makes the most sense. In this strategy, the collection and analysis of quantitative data takes place, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Afterwards, all data are compared and contrasted.
Data Collection

Introduction

Table 2 illustrates the methods of both quantitative and qualitative data collection and the research questions they assist in answering.

Table 2

*Research Question and Data Collection Methods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WCPM</th>
<th>Percentage Correct</th>
<th>Retelling</th>
<th>ERAS</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Document Analysis</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Question 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative

Participants

The participants in the quantitative aspects of this study were 86 third graders, divided into four classrooms at Colina Elementary School, located in a small, rural town in Northeast Ohio. The county where this school is located has 152,478 people and the median household income is $42,338. The school had 529 students and the ratio of faculty to students was 1:17. This school was 99% Caucasian and the 86 students in this study reflected this homogeneity; all students but one African American male in the control group were White. Ten percent of the students at this school were eligible for free
lunch and 6% were eligible for reduced-price lunch. The school’s total expenditure per student was $5,422, less than the Ohio average of $6,371. The school was designated an “effective” school by the Ohio State Department of Education, meaning that 75% of students in target grades (generally fourth and eighth grades, along with scores on the Ohio graduation test) had passed the examinations of proficiency in subject areas like reading, math, writing, and social studies, along with meeting criteria for graduation rates, attendance rates, and passage of students on state proficiency and achievement exams by minorities.

Of the 86 students in the study, 36 were purposively selected for the treatment group, and 50 were purposively selected for the control group. Students were selected for the treatment group from their September scores on the curriculum-based measurement. The national average for words correct per minute (WCPM) at the beginning of third grade was 79 words (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006); 36 students out of 95 were identified as 65 WCPM or below, or 20% below the national average. The remaining 50 students in the third grade became the control group as designated by their scores of 66 WCPM or above on the September curriculum-based measurement. Of the 36 students in the treatment group, 12 were girls and 24 were boys. Of the 50 students in the control group, 27 were girls and 23 were boys.

Overview

This study used a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest experimental design. This design was chosen for several reasons. First, the first fluency test conducted in September identified two separate groups, 36 disfluent readers and 50 fluent readers. An intervention
was designed for the disfluent readers, the Poetry Academy, and the 50 additional third
graders served as the control group. The intervention was only used on the disfluent
readers because “for students identified as remedial readers, assisted reading was
effective in promoting fluency and comprehension development. However, these gains
did not generalize to students who were already fluent readers” (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003, p.
434). The Poetry Academy took place during language arts instruction in the classroom.
By doing this, the Poetry Academy students were not exposed to more instruction, a time
factor which could have confounded results. Instead, both the treatment and the control
group received equal amounts of language arts instruction.

The pretest of the word count per minute, percentage of word recognition,
retelling score, and attitude towards reading took place in September of 2004, or semester
one of the 2004-2005 school year. The posttest of these same four measures took place in
May of 2005, or semester two of the 2004-2005 school year.

Instrumentation

Curriculum-Based Measurement

A curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is defined as a standard, simple, short
duration test that measures reading (Fewster & Macmillan, 2002). For oral reading, the
CBM gives a general index of reading proficiency including comprehension. The use of
the CBM was prompted by its validation through several research studies (e.g., Fewster

Certain measurements were taken both before and after the intervention to
determine if the intervention helped create changes in fluency. Fluency was measured on
a curriculum-based measurement as follows: Students were instructed to read a passage at
their grade-level placement of third grade from a commercially prepared informal reading
inventory (Burns & Roe, 1992). All students were tested by the same researcher in order
to control for differences in procedure. The researcher told students that they would be
reading a passage out loud for one minute. Students were asked to read not too fast or too
slow, but how they would normally read. Students were then informed that when they
were done reading the passage they would flip the passage over and retell the text out
loud to the researcher. The students were then given an opportunity to ask any questions.
The exact wording of the prompt read to students before testing is included in the
appendix.

This brief test gave the researcher three measurements: words correct per minute
(WCPM), percentage of word recognition, and a score from 1-4 (4 being the highest) on a
retelling of the text (see Appendix A for sample rubric). WCPM is being measured
because “reading rate cannot be ignored either as an indicator of reading fluency or, more
precisely, as evidence of extensively slow processing of text” (Rasinski, 2000, p. 147).
Rasinski went on to make a powerful argument for reading rate, painting the image of a
student frustrated during a silent reading assignment when he or she realizes that the
other classmates are finished well before him or her. This score can be compared to
national, age-level norms developed by Hasbrouck and Tindal (1992, 2006). Hasbrouck
and Tindal gave norms for the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, which is
convenient for comparing changes in WCPM at both the beginning and end of the year.
These norms were established after the testing of over 18,000 third graders (Tindal et al., 2005). These norms are listed for the third grade in Table 3.

Table 3

*Third Grade Oral Reading Fluency Norms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentile</th>
<th>Beginning WCPM</th>
<th>Middle WCPM</th>
<th>End WCPM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>78</td>
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<td>50&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>92</td>
<td>107</td>
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<td>75&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006

The percentage of accurate word recognition is the next measurement gained through the CBM. The measurement of word recognition is obtained by dividing the number of words read correctly (WCPM) by the total number of words read in a minute. This percentage can help indicate the reading level of the student (Rasinski, 1999). If the student is able to read 99-100% of the words correctly, he or she is considered to be an independent reader on that level of text. If they read 95-98% of the words correctly, that text is considered to be at their instructional level. If they read 94% or less of the words correctly, that text is considered to be at their frustration level (Howe & Shinn, 2001). Word recognition is a feature being studied because accurate word recognition is
necessary for reading comprehension (Howe & Shinn, 2001; Johns, 1993; Rasinski, 1999). The more words a student is able to decode in a text, the more meaning they are likely to derive from it. Word recognition is also an area within fluency that Kuhn and Stahl (2003) called for more research in terms of improvement.

The final measurement gained through the CBM is a rating on a retelling. After the student read the text, he or she was instructed to flip the passage over and retell the story to the clinician with as many details as possible. Students were forewarned of this retelling before they began reading so that they could keep this task in mind while reading. These retellings were rated on a rubric from 1-4, 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest (See Appendix A for the rubric used). The rubric was developed from the comprehension and inference questions included in the commercially-prepared IRI used in the CBM for its passages (Burns & Roe, 1992). If students were able to mention 4-5 of the main events, they received a 4, 3 events they received a 3, and so on. Extra points were awarded for inferences made. The students were given no prompting other than “Can you tell me any more?” or “Can you tell me what happened next?” The score on the retelling was based only on the minute of oral reading.

*Elementary Reading Attitude Survey*

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was developed and published by McKenna and Kear in *The Reading Teacher* in 1990. It was developed to help “teachers estimate attitude levels efficiently and reliably” (McKenna & Kear, 1990, p. 626). The survey measures a student’s attitude toward academic and recreational reading and the results can be compared to national norms. The validity and reliability of this instrument
have been studied and tested several times (Kazelskis, Thames, & Reeves, 2004; Kazelskis, Thames, Reeves, et al., 2004; Lazarus & Callahan, 2000; McKenna & Kear, 1990; McKenna et al., 1995).

This instrument was administered two times, once in the fall prior to the intervention and once after the intervention to see if the Poetry Academy had any impact on students’ attitude toward reading. The hypothesis was that the students who receive the intervention would experience a positive difference in attitude toward reading.

*Analysis of Statistical Data*

Semester one scores on both the curriculum-based measurement and the ERAS served as the baseline for comparison with the semester two scores of the curriculum-based measurement and the ERAS of the treatment and control groups. Change over time was examined in terms of word recognition, retelling, and attitude toward reading, first as a composite score, then broken down to academic and recreational reading. First a repeated ANOVA was used to test for main effects between the groups. If significance was found for the main effects, then the between-groups effects were analyzed. If significance was not found or was marginal, then an ANCOVA was used to compare the groups with a covariate.

ANCOVA was used to adjust the means of the dependent variable (in this case, semester two scores from the curriculum-based measurement and the ERAS) to what they would have been if all subjects scored equally on the covariate (in this case, semester one scores from the curriculum-based measurement and the ERAS). Differences between subjects on the covariate were removed so that the only differences that remain are
related to the grouping variable, the treatment and control groups. ANCOVA is commonly used in quasi-experimental designs where random assignment of subjects to groups is not available. It is a statistical matching procedure that allows researchers to control for the lack of randomization (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003).

Qualitative

Participants

The first qualitative participants were 10 students chosen for paired interviews, 5 boys and 5 girls. Random selection was used to better generalize the student findings. These participants were selected randomly by the SPSS program used to analyze the quantitative data.

The next set of qualitative participants consisted of the six community volunteers in the Poetry Academy, who were interviewed in person, by phone, or by e-mail. These volunteers consisted of four mothers with children at the school and two retired teachers. The mothers in the project were part of a group of core parents who were actively involved at the school. The two retired teachers volunteered their time in order to stay in touch with the school. One was a retired second grade teacher who had just retired the previous year. The other was a former Title I teacher who had been retired for three years.

During our first meeting, each of six volunteers filled out a sheet detailing her background, desire to work in the Poetry Academy program, and availability. These sheets were carefully combed through repeated readings to help find similarities and differences between the backgrounds and desires of the volunteers. Each volunteer is
described individually using data from her information sheet and researcher observations. Themes were coded for all volunteers and are discussed. Each volunteer was assigned a pseudonym.

Volunteer #1—Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson was the first volunteer the principal brought to my attention when I first mentioned designing a volunteer program. Mrs. Johnson is a highly visible member of the school community. She has two children at the school, one in fifth grade and one in fourth grade. Mrs. Johnson is currently the treasurer of the PTA and has served as president. She works part-time at the school as the OhioReads coordinator. In addition, she volunteers as a room mother regularly and is well-known by the staff. She became my touchstone at the school because she knew how to handle delicate situations without ruffling feathers. She is also a terrific organizer and was able to offer many suggestions to help make the Poetry Academy run more smoothly.

On her information sheet, Mrs. Johnson listed her background as a college-educated full-time mother and coordinator of the afore-mentioned OhioReads program. Her experience working with students was stated as “multiple hours reading with students in almost every classroom at this school.” Although she apologized for her lack of formal education training (“I got my degree in business”), she said that she possessed the kind of “on the job training that only being a regular classroom volunteer can get you.”

Mrs. Johnson’s interest in the Poetry Academy stemmed from her frustration with the very program she was in charge of, OhioReads. She wrote, “I was put in charge of a program with almost no guidelines—I am happy to marshal volunteers to read with
students but I nor the teachers know exactly what to do with them.” She was hoping that the Poetry Academy could be integrated with the OhioReads program so that all reading volunteers could be prepared by someone with a literacy background.

Volunteer #2—Mrs. Brown. I first met Mrs. Brown during my first year at CES as a literacy specialist. I worked weekly with her students, ate lunch with her bi-weekly, and got to know her on both a personal and professional level. My first year at CES was her last year, so it was a great surprise to me when Mrs. Johnson gave me her name as a possible volunteer. I was delighted when she decided to join our program.

On her information sheet, Mrs. Brown listed her 35 years as a first or second grade teacher as her background. Each one of those years had been served at CES. She has a both a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in education.

Mrs. Brown’s interest in working with the Poetry Academy came from “watching teachers (including me) assign parents to menial jobs.” She wrote that the OhioReads program, while worthwhile, needed structure and guidance. She also said, “Frankly, I miss the kids. A couple of hours of work with students a week would give me the contact with students that I crave.” Finally, Mrs. Brown spoke of the reading problems at CES: “Our students are great kids, but they don’t often get the enrichment they need. A little one-on-one reading time might help.”

Volunteer #3—Mrs. Marks. Like Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Marks is another one of the parents who frequently volunteers at the school. Mrs. Marks has three students at CES, one gifted third grader and fifth-grade twins. She volunteers regularly for OhioReads and as a room mother. However, Mrs. Marks’ presence also comes from the fact that one of
her twins is a special needs’ student. Her meetings with his aides and teachers require her to be at the school constantly.

On her background sheet, Mrs. Marks listed a college education and a brief career as a pharmacist. She told me later that she quit pharmacy after her sons were born in order to take care of her children full time. She listed her special needs’ son as part of her education: “Having a son like Adam has been in itself an education. I am constantly attending workshops and classes so that I can be the best advocate possible for all of my children.”

Mrs. Marks’ interest in the Poetry Academy also was prompted by her involvement in the school.

I think the school needs a program where kids are given attention to the positive things associated with reading. I watch students get pulled out for tutoring, which they think is boring, or for intervention, which is like torture to them. I want to be a part of something that says that reading is fun.

*Volunteer #4—Mrs. Riley.* Mrs. Riley was also an involved mother at CES. She has two sons at the school, one in third grade and one in fifth grade. Mrs. Riley regularly volunteers as a room mother and is active in the school PTA. Her niche at school is the monthly muffin program: She bakes muffins for all the teachers at CES once a month and so has endeared herself to the staff.

On her information sheet, Mrs. Riley listed her background as a nurse for a local doctor. She came for her Poetry Academy time in her scrubs once, and the students were awed at seeing her in a real-world context.
Mrs. Riley volunteered for the Poetry Academy to “help make my time at CES more meaningful. I am often making bulletin boards or running copies but I feel like I could do more.”

*Volunteer #5—Mrs. Davis.* Mrs. Davis is another retired school teacher from CES who returns often to volunteer. Mrs. Johnson had designated originally to work with the OhioReads program, but instead she gave her name and number to me for the Poetry Academy. “She’s wonderful,” Mrs. Johnson said at the time. “She has enough energy for about 20 of us.”

Like Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Davis had worked at CES for 35 years, first as a kindergarten, first, or second grade teacher, and later as the Title 1 reading teacher. She had retired five years earlier but remained active at the school through other types of tutoring for struggling students.

Mrs. Davis decided to try to work with the Poetry Academy because

After almost 40 years in this game, I want someone else to tell me what to do.

Although I have a large bag of tricks to pull from, it would be nice to just come into the school like any other volunteer and do what I am told.

*Volunteer #6—Mrs. O’Neil.* Mrs. O’Neil became a part of the Poetry Academy a week later than the other volunteers because she was out of town when Mrs. Johnson made the original call. Another frequent volunteer at the school, Mrs. O’Neil is currently secretary of the PTA. She regularly volunteers in her daughter’s fourth grade classroom and has an older daughter at the high school.
Mrs. O’Neil has a bachelor’s degree in education but never taught school. She had planned to teach but had a family before she could finish her student teaching. Mrs. O’Neil decided to join the cadre of volunteers for the Poetry Academy for many the same reasons that the other volunteers did: She was looking for structure:

I don’t mind just reading with students like I do with OhioReads, but I would like to feel like I was doing more. The sound of this seems like I will be more likely to see change in my students.

Themes

Background. When taken as a whole, the six volunteers struck me first as being female (obviously) and overwhelmingly involved at CES. The four mothers and two retired school teachers were so permanent at the school that even if they were not a part of the Poetry Academy, they would be there anyways, volunteering and working for the PTA.

The grouping of the volunteers took place by their relation to the school to look at their background in a different perspective. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Davis, the two retired teachers, were both life-time teachers at CES who were looking to continue their relationship with the school. Mrs. Davis volunteered other times at CES, and Mrs. Brown also volunteered with her church.

The other four volunteers were grouped together because they were all mothers of students at the school. Mrs. O’Neil, Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Marks were in the full-time mother category but their reasons for being at the school were slightly different. Mrs. Johnson was at the school for her part-time job, Mrs. O’Neil was simply a dedicated
volunteer, and Mrs. Marks originally began volunteering at the school to act as an advocate for her son. Mrs. Riley was the only volunteer who was a mother of a student at the school but worked, as well. Like Mrs. O’Neil, she was often at CES simply to volunteer.

*Reasons for joining the Poetry Academy.* As I analyzed the volunteers’ answers to the second question on their data sheet, their reasons for wanting to volunteer with the Poetry Academy were readily apparent. All of the women were already involved with the school; however, they all mentioned the need for direction and structure for their volunteer work. I think that it was the offer of training and guidance that drew them away from their normal volunteer activities and towards their work within the Poetry Academy.

The next participants in the qualitative portion of the study were the four third grade teachers: Ms. N., Mrs. F., Mrs. L., and Mrs. M. (all pseudonyms). All four women had various years of service to the school. Two were relatively new teachers, with three years of experience. Both had come to teaching as a second career. A third was a teacher of 15 years. She had just switched from grade five to grade three. The final teacher was in her 33rd year of teaching and was looking two years down the road to retirement.

The final participants in the study were the various parents, guardians, and outside observers who called, e-mailed, or sent notes in response to a request for information regarding the program.
Data Collection

Interviews

The first type of qualitative data collected were the interviews with 10 students from the intervention group. Five paired interviews (10 students) took place so that the students did not feel intimidated by the researcher or the process. A downside to paired interviews is the possibility of one student monopolizing the conversation over another or echoing another student’s responses. However, because of the students’ familiarity with the researcher, all students seemed at ease with each other and spoke without pretense. A set protocol was used to help eliminate researcher bias and to keep all five interviews as uniform as possible; however, information leads were followed if something unusual came up in the interview (See Appendix B for student interview protocol). All interviews were audio-taped (with permission), transcribed, and coded for themes.

A group interview took place with the four third-grade teachers. A set protocol was used in order to better probe the teachers for their thoughts on the Poetry Academy process. This interview was audio-taped, transcribed, and coded for themes. Again, a downside may have existed with the use of a group interview if a participant monopolized the conversation or if someone was reluctant to share honest opinions for some reason; however, these participants chose the group interview over individual interviews because they were interested in each other’s views on the subject.

Individual interviews, phone interviews, or e-mails were conducted with each of the six community volunteers. The volunteer data was collected in multiple ways because volunteers were interviewed in the summer, and many of them were unable to meet face-
to-face for an interview. All data collected were audio-taped, transcribed, and coded for themes.

*Parent Communication*

Parent communication during the course of the program was logged in multiple ways, as well. Toward the end of the program, a letter went out to parents asking for an open-response evaluation of the program. Parents were invited to e-mail, call, or send letters with their students, detailing their thoughts and observations of the program. In addition, parents who came to the end of the year Poetry Academy celebration, the Poetry Café, were informally questioned on their thoughts on the Poetry Academy process. All communication was audio-taped, transcribed, and coded for themes.

*Document Analysis*

Document analysis was performed on all volunteer logs. These logs asked volunteers to keep notes on the progress of the students with very little direction from me, the director of the program. These were coded for themes, both individually and as a group, and provided insights into the nature of the volunteers and the program.

*Participant Observation*

The final qualitative data collection came through my role as a participant observer of the entire Poetry Academy process, from inception, to implementation, to evaluation. J. Johnson, Avenarius, and Weatherford (2006) described participant observers as a window and a hand in the research process. Not only do they describe what is going on but they are able to participate and affect change. I had many chance encounters with the volunteers, students, teachers, administration, and others during the
year that the Poetry Academy was implemented. I documented these encounters in research memos and believe they provided great insight into the program (Maxwell, 2005). These served as a guide to all other qualitative data collected to help evaluate the Poetry Academy.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were transcribed and coded as described above. Emergent themes were checked through inter-rater reliability at an accuracy of 90%. The emerging themes from the various qualitative data collection types, interviews, document analysis, observations, and artifacts, were then triangulated for commonalities or contrasts using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

These themes were compared to the quantitative results, possibly further explaining phenomena found in the quantitative data or adding depth to the picture painted through the statistical analysis. Triangulation, using the data found through the CBMs, ERAS, and qualitative themes, occurred in order to validate all findings.

**Limitations**

Limitations do exist in the design of this study. First, the quantitative portion of this study used a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest design. Because participants were not randomly chosen, the results can only be generalized to the research population. To generalize the study to outside populations, a true experimental design would have to be used.

Within the use of a curriculum-based measurement exist limitations. The time spent with each student was brief and only allowed for a snap shot of student
performance. Student performance could have been affected by something as simple as a poor night’s sleep or as complex as a difficult home situation.

The researcher’s subjectivity may be pointed to as a limitation to the study. Perhaps when interviewing participants, my bias toward the program came through. An attempt to control this was made through the use of a protocol with the students and the random selection of students for interview. Triangulation of qualitative results, and again quantitative and qualitative results helped to control this limitation.

Another limitation of this study was the division of participants into treatment and control groups. They were purposively divided into groups based on their scores on the initial CBM. This limitation was controlled through the use of a statistical ANCOVA to equalize the groups for comparison.

The final limitation is that of the maturation of both the treatment and control groups. The fluency norms found by Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) were taken without the implementation of intervention; instead, they measured the growth of fluency through normal classroom instruction (see Table 3). Students are expected to naturally progress by 36 words per minute from the semester one to the semester two of third grade. This research was conducted to show growth beyond the natural maturation in fluency.

Summary

This chapter has described the program being evaluated, the methods being used in evaluation, and the setting, participants, and data analysis used. Through the use of mixed methodology, a clear picture was provided of the impact of the Poetry Academy
on the students involved, by looking at both scores on assessments and surveys, and narrative data provided by stakeholders in the process.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study was undertaken to discern whether an intervention program called the Poetry Academy that used community volunteers had an effect on student literacy skills and reading attitudes. Change was measured through quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including pretests and posttests of a curriculum-based measurement looking at words correct per minute, word recognition, and comprehension via a retelling, a survey quantitatively measuring student attitudes toward both recreational and academic reading, and interviews and anecdotal data collection from stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and volunteers.

First, quantitative data analysis is discussed. The results of the curriculum-based measurement is analyzed first, followed by the results of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990). The second section discusses the emerging themes stemming from the qualitative data collection.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Introduction

The quantitative data collection took place first following the tenets of sequential, explanatory mixed methods data analysis (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).
Data Collection

Data were collected in two methods for analysis. First, student fluency, word recognition, and comprehension via a score on a retelling were measured by curriculum-based measurements (CBM) before and after the implementation of the program. Through analysis, the scores obtained on CBM answered research question #1: Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on students’ fluency and comprehension scores, as shown through the use of a curriculum-based measurement given before and after the implementation of the program, measuring:

a) words correct per minute (WCPM);

b) word recognition; and

c) score on a retelling.

The second data collection method was through the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS; McKenna & Kear, 1990). Through analysis, the scores obtained on the ERAS answered research question #2: Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on students’ attitudes towards reading, as measured both before and after the implementation of the program by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey?

Curriculum-Based Measurement

Both inferential and descriptive statistics were used to describe the data collected through the curriculum-based measurement.

Participants. Eighty-one students ranging in ages from eight to nine years old were measured in the pre- and posttest. Thirty-six were in the treatment group and 44 were in the control group. The treatment group was selected from the results of the
pretest that determined that these students were significantly below (20 words or more) their peers in terms of words correct per minute. Because of this purposeful sampling, two different types of statistics were used for analysis. First, main effects were explored through the use of a repeated measures ANOVA. If significance was found, the between-groups statistics were analyzed for significance. If significance was not found or was marginal, an ANCOVA was used to statistically control for group differences, using pretest scores as a covariate.

*Descriptive statistics-pretest control group.* Using the third grade Form A passage titled, “Crandall Cricket,” taken from *Informal Reading Inventory* (Burns & Roe, 1992), measures were taken for words correct per minute, word recognition, designated as independent (99-100% correct), instructional (95-98%), or frustration (94% correct or below; Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006), and a score of 1-4 on a retell (4 being excellent, 3 being good, 2 being okay, 1 being needs work). Frequencies for the control group in these three areas are given in Table 4.

For words correct per minute, the mean score for the control group was 87.7 words correct per minute. The range of scores was between 50 and 133 words correct per minute. To better illustrate the scores earned for the fall percentage of words read correctly, Table 5 shows the designation given to the control group students.

Thirty students (66.7%) in the control group were reading at an independent level in the fall, 11 (24.4%) were designated instructional, and only 3 (6.7%) were labeled as in frustration. To better illustrate the scores earned for the retell of the story, Table 6 shows the score by label for the control group.
Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Curriculum-Based Measurement Pre-Test - Control Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Semester One words Correct per minute</th>
<th>Semester One Percentage correct</th>
<th>Semester One Retell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Valid 44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>87.7045</td>
<td>1.3864</td>
<td>3.0455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>85.000</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>91.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>20.27896</td>
<td>.61817</td>
<td>.80564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>411.236</td>
<td>.382</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>83.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

*Designation (Independent, Instructional, or Frustration) for Percentage of Words Read Correctly*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Independent 30</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional 11</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration 3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 44</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System 1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*Retell Score (Excellent, Good, Okay, Needs Work)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retell Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need Work (1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay (2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good (3)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent (4)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirteen students out of 44 (28.9%) earned an excellent rating on their retell, 22 students (48.9%) earned a good rating, 7 (15.6%) earned an okay rating, and 2 students (4.4%) earned a needs work rating.

*Descriptive statistics—pretest, treatment group.* Thirty-six students served as the treatment group for the pretest of the curriculum-based measurement. They read the same passage and were scored on the same measures, words correct per minute, word recognition, and a score on a retell. Table 7 shows the frequencies for the treatment group on these three measures.

For words correct per minute, the mean score for the treatment group was 41.83 words correct per minute. The range of scores was between 18 and 68 words correct per minute. To better illustrate the scores earned for the semester one percentage of words
Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Curriculum-Based Measurement Pre-Test - Treatment Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Semester One words Correct per minute</th>
<th>Semester One Percentage correct</th>
<th>Semester One Retell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>41.8333</td>
<td>2.4167</td>
<td>2.4444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median</strong></td>
<td>41.5000</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode</strong></td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Std. Deviation</strong></td>
<td>15.40964</td>
<td>.84092</td>
<td>.908514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variance</strong></td>
<td>237.457</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimum</strong></td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum</strong></td>
<td>68.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

read correctly, Table 8 shows the designation earned by the treatment group students. Eight (22.2%) in the treatment group were reading at an independent level in the fall, 5 (13.9%) were designated instructional, and 23 (63.9%) were labeled as in frustration.

To better illustrate the scores earned for the retell of the story, Table 9 shows the score by label for the treatment group. Three students out of 36 (8.3%) earned an excellent rating on their retell, 17 students (47.2%) earned a good rating, 9 (25%) earned an okay rating, and 7 students (19.4%) earned a needs work rating.
Table 8

*Designation (Independent, Instructional, or Frustration) for Percentage of Words Read Correctly*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

*Retell Score (Excellent, Good, Okay, Needs Work)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Work (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay (2)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good (3)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent (4)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Posttest*

To first look for significance in change over time in the three areas assessed by the curriculum-based measurement, a repeated measure ANOVA was used to test for main effects. A two-factor model was used for each analysis, with time between the
pretest and posttest measures examined as one main effect and the interaction between
time and group as another main effect. If significance was found through these main
effects, the between-group effects were then analyzed for significance.

If significance was not found or was marginal in the test for main effects, analysis
of variance with a covariate (ANCOVA) was then used to analyze pre- and posttest data
on the curriculum-based measurement. The dependent variable was the scores on the
semester two CBM. The fixed variable was the participation of the subject in the Poetry
Academy. The covariate was the semester one scores on the CBM. An ANCOVA was
used to control for group differences. Because the groups were purposely sampled based
on their baseline scores on the pretest, the ANCOVA helped to statistically control for
these differences, allowing for significance to be measured on the independent variable.
In both the repeated measure ANOVA and ANCOVA, significance was examined at an
alpha level of .05.

Words correct per minute. In semester one, the mean score for the treatment
group on words correct per minute was 41.83 WCPM compared to the mean score of the
control group, 87.7 WCPM. In semester two, the mean score for the treatment group was
86.69 WCPM, a gain of 45.06 words. In the semester two, the mean score for the control
group was 125.02 WCPM, a gain of 37.32. The treatment group gained 7.74 more
WCPM than the control group. These data are summarized in Table 10.

The word correct per minute score of the curriculum-based measurement was
analyzed in an analysis of variance with time of measurement (pretest vs. posttest) as a
between-subjects factor. The main effect of time of measurement was significant \((F = 470.127, p < .05)\). The interaction between time and the Poetry Academy was also significant \((F = 4.053, p < .05)\).

Table 11 presents the results of analysis considering the effect of the Poetry Academy on words correct per minute of subjects in this study. Results suggest that there is a significant difference between the treatment and control group when the analysis is run at an alpha level of .05.

**Table 11**  
*Analysis of Variance for Words Correct Per Minute for Treatment and Control Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68848.62</td>
<td>105.622</td>
<td>.0000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Between-Group Error</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>651.838</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05
Word recognition. Table 12 compares the gains in word recognition by treatment and control group. For the treatment group in semester one, the number of students designated as independent at the third grade level in word recognition was 7. In semester two, 21 students had demonstrated an independent level on a third grade passage. In semester one, 9 students were designated as instructional. In semester two, 10 students were instructional. Finally, in semester one, 17 students in the control group were labeled in frustration whereas in semester two, only 5 fell into this category.

Table 12

Comparison of Word Recognition Gains by Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Semester One</th>
<th>Semester Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the control group, the number of students labeled as independent fell from 30 to 26. The number of students labeled as instructional climbed from 11 to 15. Finally, the number of students labeled as in frustration in the control group remained steady at 3.
The word recognition score of the curriculum-based measurement was analyzed in an analysis of variance with time of measurement (pretest vs. posttest) as a between-subjects factor. The main effect of time was significant ($F = 18.031, p < .05$). The interaction of time and the Poetry Academy was also found to be significant ($F = 28.115, p < .05$).

Table 13 presents the results of analysis considering the effect of the Poetry Academy on words recognition per minute of subjects in this study. Results suggest that there is a significant difference between the treatment and control group when the analysis is run at an alpha level of .05.

Table 13

*Analysis of Variance for Word Recognition for Treatment and Control Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.044</td>
<td>16.050</td>
<td>.0000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Between-Group Error</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

*Retelling.* Table 14 summarizes the gains made in comprehension via a retelling for both the treatment and control groups. For the treatment group, the “needs work” label was given to seven students in semester one and zero in semester two. Nine students earned “okay” labels in semester one compared to one in semester two. Seventeen students were labeled as “good” in semester one compared with nine in semester two.
Finally, three students earned an “excellent” rating in the semester one, compared to 26 in semester two.

For the control group, two were labeled as “needs work” on their retellings in the semester one compared to zero in semester two. Seven were labeled as “okay” in the semester one compared with two in semester two. Twenty-two were labeled as “good” in semester one, compared to 15 in semester two. Finally, 13 were labeled as “excellent” in semester one compared to 26 in semester two.

The retelling score of the curriculum-based measurement was analyzed in an analysis of variance with time of measurement (pretest vs. posttest) as a between-subjects
factor. The main effect of time was significant \( (F = 75.152, p < .05) \). The interaction of time and the Poetry Academy was also found to be significant \( (F = 10.431, p < .05) \).

Table 15 presents the results of analysis considering the effect of the Poetry Academy on retellings of subjects in this study. Results suggest that there is a marginally significant difference between the treatment and control group when the analysis is run at an alpha level of .05.

### Table 15

**Analysis of Variance for Retelling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.235</td>
<td>3.765</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Between-Group Error</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

The results for the curriculum-based measurement suggest that the Poetry Academy group did make significant gains in their words correct per minute and percentage of word recognition and marginally significant gains in their retelling scores when compared to the control group.

**Elementary Reading Attitude Survey**

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was developed by McKenna and Kear (1990) to assess attitude towards recreational and academic reading in elementary school students. It was used in this study to assess change in students both before and after the
implementation of the Poetry Academy and compare these scores between the treatment and control group.

Participants. Seventy-seven students took both the pretest and posttest of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Two Poetry Academy students were missing for the posttest administration of the ERAS, bringing the number of treatment students to 34, and one control group student was absent for the posttest administration of the ERAS, bringing the number of students in the control group to 43.

Table 16 gives the descriptive data for the pretest data by group for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Poetry Academy students averaged a score of 59.29 out of 80 possible points. Control group students averaged a score of 60.35 out of a possible 80 points.

Table 16

Descriptive Data for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey by Group - Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>59.29</td>
<td>12.535</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>60.35</td>
<td>11.52</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 gives the descriptive data for the posttest data by group for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Poetry Academy students scored an average of 62.87 points out of a possible 80 points, whereas students serving in the control group averaged 59.33 points.
Table 17

Descriptive Data for the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey by Group-Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>62.87</td>
<td>11.32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>59.33</td>
<td>13.47</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ERAS score was analyzed in an analysis of variance with time of measurement (pretest vs. posttest) as a between-subjects factor. The main effect of time was not significant ($F = .759, p > .05$). The interaction of time and the Poetry Academy was also not found to be significant ($F = .902, p > .05$).

Since there was not significance found for the main effects using the repeated measures ANOVA, ANCOVA was used next. Table 18 presents the results of the analysis considering the effects of the Poetry Academy on the scores of the ERAS.

Table 18

Analysis of Covariance for Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75.327</td>
<td>.582</td>
<td>.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Between-Group Error</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>129.343</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p > .05$
Results suggest that significant differences in scores were not observed across the groups, even after taking into consideration the effects of the covariate.

*Elementary Reading Attitude Survey by component.* The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey can be broken up into two components, academic reading and recreational reading. To continue the analysis of the effect of the Poetry Academy on student attitude toward reading, ANCOVAs were performed on each component to test for significance.

The academic reading score of the ERAS was analyzed in an analysis of variance with time of measurement (pretest vs. posttest) as a between-subjects factor. The main effect of time was significant ($F = 17.202, p < .05$). The interaction of time and the Poetry Academy was found to be marginally significant ($F = 3.909, p = .053$).

Since the interaction between time and the Poetry Academy was only marginally significant in the repeated measures ANOVA, ANCOVA was used to check for significance. Table 19 presents the results of the analysis considering the effects of the Poetry Academy on the academic reading scores on the ERAS. Results suggest that significant differences in scores were observed across the groups.

The recreational reading score of the ERAS was analyzed in an analysis of variance with time of measurement (pretest vs. posttest) as a between-subjects factor. The main effect of time was not significant ($F = .901, p > .05$). The interaction of time and the Poetry Academy was also not found to be significant ($F = 2.072, p > .05$).
Table 19

*Analysis of Variance for Academic Reading Scores of the ERAS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>178.615</td>
<td>4.291</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Between Group Error</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>41.626</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05*

Table 20 presents the results of the analysis considering the effects of the Poetry Academy on the recreational reading scores of the ERAS. Results suggest that significant differences in scores were not observed, even after taking into consideration the effects of the covariate.

Table 20

*Analysis of Covariance for Recreational Reading Scores of the ERAS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry Academy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61.315</td>
<td>1.818</td>
<td>.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Within Group Error</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33.720</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > .05*

Conclusion. Students in the Poetry Academy intervention group did make small gains in points on the ERAS, therefore demonstrating improvements in attitude toward both academic and recreational reading, and an improvement in attitude toward reading,
in general. However, the only statistic proven to be statistically significant was that of the increase in attitude toward academic reading for the treatment group.

Conclusion—Quantitative Analysis

The data analysis as a whole suggests that the gains the treatment group made on the curriculum-based measurement and ERAS were greater than the gains of the control group in various degrees. The gains were statistically significant in WCPM, word recognition, and academic reading, indicating that the Poetry Academy assisted in these areas for the treatment group. A marginal significance was found between groups for the retelling scores, as well.

The next section discusses the qualitative data analysis. The voices of the various stakeholders in the Poetry Academy are heard in discussions about the advantages and changes needed to the program, and about changes observed in students in attitude to corroborate the findings on the ERAS and in reading skill to corroborate findings on the curriculum-based assessment.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Introduction

The qualitative data collection took place to satisfy the tenets of program evaluation. The program was first evaluated quantitatively to show changes in student skills and attitudes. The qualitative evaluations allow stakeholders to voice their opinions on the program. The third research question sought stakeholders’ perceptions of changes in students and the fourth question asked stakeholders to talk over the advantages and
disadvantages of the program. Voices of the teachers, volunteers, students, parents, and other related stakeholders are heard.

Voices of the Teachers

In keeping with the spirit of program evaluation, the four teachers were given the choice of format for their debriefing of the Poetry Academy process. From individual interviews, e-mails, survey, and group interviews, the teachers chose to speak about the Poetry Academy as a group. As mentioned in Chapter 2, although group interviews can hinder the honesty or voice of some, these teachers felt that since they already did so much as a group, it made sense for them to talk together and build off and learn from each other’s comments.

The group interview took place after the Poetry Academy was over. However, in the intervening seven months, memos and conversations between the teachers and the researcher were documented in the researcher’s log. These data were coded along with the interview data to add to the breadth and depth of the information.

No set interview protocol was used in this group interview. Using the method of open-ended interviewing, it was decided to let questions follow naturally (Rapley, 2001). A set beginning question was used: “What were some of the perceived benefits that you saw with your students due to their participation in the Poetry Academy?” It was also determined that I would ask about changes in attitude toward reading and what changes the teachers felt needed to be made in the Poetry Academy for the following years. Rather than determine an order for teachers to answer questions, teachers were allowed to answer as they saw fit.
Using the method of grounded theory, constant comparison and analysis were used to divulge emergent themes from the teacher interview and any comments by or memos written by the teachers over the course of the program (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The following were the major themes that resulted from the interviews and contact with the teachers.

Benefits

When discussing the topic of perceived benefits of the program, a few topics stood out. These were one-on-one attention, the little amount of time it took to make a difference with the students, and parent involvement.

One-on-one attention. One-on-one attention was mentioned 7 times throughout the course of the interview and 21 times over the course of the year in the researcher’s log. When asked about the perceived benefits of the program, Ms. N. immediately stated the use of one-on-one attention: “Some of my students really enjoyed the personal attention, the one-on-one, because I think sometimes no one really reads with them at home.” A conversation documented in January with this same teacher echoed this sentiment: “My kids are so eager to have someone to listen to them read that when it is Poetry Academy time, they have their folders out and are watching the clock. I wonder if they are like that at home.”

Mrs. F. spoke about a need for one-on-one attention: “There are so many kids in that class that needed the one-on-one attention. I think it was important to them. They loved it.” Mrs. F. was referring to Ms. N.’s class, which had a large number of struggling students and the greatest number of students in the Poetry Academy.
Mrs. F. referred to one-on-one attention again when talking about how to restructure the program for future years. She thought that the poem could be introduced to all the students and then each could have a one-on-one time with the volunteer a couple of times a month. The other teachers supported this idea, imagining what good could be done if each child received this kind of attention.

Time. The topic of time was mentioned 8 times over the course of the interview and 16 times over the course of the year in the researcher’s log from conversations with the teachers. It was mainly brought up in relation to how the small amount of time that the volunteers spent with each student made such a difference. Mrs. F. exemplified this feeling expressed over and over again by the teachers when she said,

This is proof of what just a few minutes of reading with your kid can do and I know that Mrs. O’Neil had mentioned to me because I said, I asked her was it going well, are you seeing improvement, and she said, “This has just proven to me what just five minutes of reading with your kid can do.”

In a conversation documented in December, Mrs. L. spoke about how her students returned to the room smiling and lit up. “It’s amazing to me how that 10 minutes makes their day.”

When the Poetry Academy was first proposed to the teachers and they were told how much time the volunteers would be spending with each student, they remained positive but expressed doubts. In November, when the Poetry Academy was taking off, Mrs. M. remarked, “I think it’s great that they will get at least that amount of time but I wish it was more. It will be interesting to see if that five minutes can really help.” In
January, after seeing the winter fluency scores, she stopped in my office and said, “Remember when we talked about the time with the volunteers? It must be working.”

*Parent involvement.* The parent involvement that occurred outside of the volunteers who worked in the Poetry Academy was mentioned three times during the interview and seven times over the course of the year in the researcher’s log. When the question was posed about the benefits of the Poetry Academy, Mrs. M. immediately answered, “I think the parent involvement. You know, it didn’t happen with every child, but the parents who really got behind it made a difference.” Mrs. F. echoed this feeling when talking about a particular child, “Haley, you know she gets help from other areas, too, her parents are so supportive.”

A lack of parent involvement was mentioned five times during the interview. These statements usually referred to how students without home support benefited from the program: “I think sometimes no one really reads with them at home.” This lack of parent involvement is discussed further under a different theme when changes needing to be made to the Poetry Academy are analyzed.

During the program, two notes were sent from teachers asking for a copy of the volunteer’s Poetry Academy directions to give to parents who were curious about the Poetry Academy process. Ms. N.’s note expressed her surprise about hearing from a particular parent: “I’ve never even seen this parent and she is asking for this.” After Open House night and parent conferences, more comments were made by teachers about the Poetry Academy. “I had two parents mention the Poetry Academy to me,” said Mrs. M. “[Mom’s name] said how much she was enjoying the poems, herself.” After a parent
conference, one parent remarked to a teacher that it added on to an already full homework agenda: “[Parents’ names] said that the Poetry Academy on top of their independent reading was too much.”

Changes in Attitude

A set point for discussion about during the teacher interview was the topic of attitude toward reading. Since attitude was measured quantitatively by the ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990), asking the teachers about it provides a qualitative counterpoint. Changes in attitude were discussed in terms of specific students. Six students were mentioned by the teachers as having improvements in attitude toward reading and of these six students, three were mentioned by the teacher to the researcher over the duration of the program and documented in the researcher log.

*Madison.* Mrs. N. mentioned Madison, a rambunctious student who often found it difficult to stay in her seat. She remarked how Madison loved the “reading aloud. She really, really took to it.” At the beginning of the program, Madison’s teacher reported that she would pretend not to have her folder in her desk to avoid going to read with her volunteer. Over the course of the program, she warmed not only to her volunteer, but to the reading aloud, as well.

*Alex.* Mrs. M. mentioned Alex, a shy student who rarely opened his mouth during class unless prompted. Prior to being chosen for the Poetry Academy, the Intervention Assistance Team met to review Alex’s progress in school and talk over ways we could use to help bolster his academics and self-esteem. When I mentioned that Alex would most likely be chosen for the program, both the teacher and mother expressed doubts.
“He hardly reads with me,” said his mother. “I’m just not sure if he would be comfortable working with someone he doesn’t know,” added Mrs. M. In the interview, Mrs. M. remarked on how Alex grew to become “a little actor now,” referring to the Readers’ Theatre her class was currently practicing. She pointed him out as an example of a student who blossomed because of the Poetry Academy.

Haley. Haley was previously mentioned when talking about parent involvement. Her parents were constantly visiting the school, asking for ways to help boost both her academic achievement and attitude toward school. As I was compiling the data to choose the students for the Poetry Academy, a note arrived in my mailbox from her teacher, Mrs. F.: “I am sure she will qualify anyways, but your poetry thing would probably be good for Haley.” Sure enough, Haley qualified and was mentioned in the end of the year interview by her teacher, “I think her attitude has improved greatly from the beginning of the year.”

Students outside the Poetry Academy. An interesting point brought up by the teachers was the reaction of students who were not selected to be a part of the Poetry Academy. In many schools, intervention is viewed as a shameful or embarrassing activity; for the Poetry Academy, teachers reported jealous behavior. Mrs. L. remarked,

It was funny, too, the kids who didn’t get to go [to the Poetry Academy] in my room, they were jealous. They would say, “Well, how come I don’t get to go read in the hallway.” I think they craved the attention, also.

Mrs. M. replied by saying how at first, students questioned why only some students got to go:
My kids were like that at first, but I think they got used to it. They did kind of ask about it and I said that we all learn different ways, you know, so some need to go and some don’t. But at first they were a little bit jealous.

*Teacher Suggestions*

To combat the jealousy experienced by some students, as well as fix other areas, the teachers made several suggestions about how to amend the program for future use.

*Expansion.* Expanding the program to accommodate all learners was suggested several times during the interview. It was first brought up when talking about one-on-one attention. Mrs. F. suggested that the poems be introduced whole class and then the students could rotate through the volunteer. Mrs. L. built upon this idea by saying, “I know it would be impossible weekly but I think that if all of them could read with the volunteer once a month or twice a month, it would really be beneficial to all of them.”

Expansion was also discussed in terms of gifted and fluent readers. Mrs. M. stated, “Even the good readers. A lot of them don’t get read to or read with, either.” All the teachers mentioned fluent readers who could use the assistance of the Poetry Academy either because of shyness, quiet reading, reading too fast, or reading without expression. Mrs. M. observed,

Even for the gifted kids. They don’t seem to know what fluency is either. They think it’s just reading fast and I have these kids up here doing Readers’ Theatre and they are rushing and we can’t understand what they are saying. Because they are trying to read so fast.
Selection of students. If the program could not be expanded to accommodate all students, suggestions were made on how to select students differently. Mrs. M. began this discussion by saying how she requested that one of her students, Dillon, be placed in the Poetry Academy. A note was sent to this effect in November when the students chosen for the Poetry Academy were announced. Mrs. M. had part of the gifted block of students and did not have many students selected for the program. Her note suggested that Dillon be added. In a conversation a few days later, she related that Dillon was desperate for attention and that maybe this meeting with a volunteer once a week would help alleviate his need.

During the interview, Mrs. M. reiterated this point talking about students that she had that should not have been in the Poetry Academy because of their already supportive home lives and acceptable fluency scores.

He [Dillon] has gotten better with the help of the volunteer but a couple of them, not being in it; I think maybe I should have picked. I mean Carly, I don’t think she should have been in it as much as maybe __________.

We went on to discuss how both fluency scores and teacher recommendations should play a part in selecting students for the program. Mrs. M said, “Maybe the teacher over scores some times. Because sometimes you know the kids more than their test.”

Parent communication. Suggestions for interaction with the parents was brought up 10 times during the interview. Mrs. N. suggested sending notes home to help emphasize how much that five minutes of reading with an adult helps:
If there could be some home message about how important this could be—maybe write some little enthusiastic notes home on the poem. Tell them how important this is or how much they are enjoying it and how much the volunteers enjoy it. Mrs. F. continued this point: “So you know maybe even just a letter, you know, giving the statistics you have.”

When a brief discussion ensued over using the Poetry Academy for parent education, I mentioned that the principal and head volunteer had discussed beginning the following school year with a few meetings for parents, including one for the parents of the Poetry Academy students. To complement this idea, Mrs. L. suggested possibly having a table at Open House to let parents chat with me about the Poetry Academy so I could offer information to any interested parents.

**Other Suggestions**

*Scheduling* A few other suggestions were made by teachers that were not discussed in depth during the interview but received more attention during the program and were documented in the researcher’s log. Ms. N. advised that the scheduling of the volunteers be done more carefully: “I would just say that scheduling should be different. With a couple missing their gym and maybe if teachers could have more input, like this would be a good time for me, a good time for pullout.” This topic came up 12 times according to the researcher’s log. Scheduling 6 volunteers, 4 teachers, and 36 students was a logistical problem that required a lot of tweaking. Notes from special teachers (music, art, gym, and library) were sent about students being held to read with their volunteer rather than be on time to their special class. Teachers would send advance notes
warning a volunteer about a test. Finally, a conversation with Mrs. F. in December resulted in her changing her silent reading time to accommodate the students so they would not miss language arts instruction.

*Special education population.* Special education students at Colina Elementary School spend the majority of their time in a resource room. Because of this, all of these students except one who was placed in special education later were not assessed for inclusion in the Poetry Academy. It was decided by the special education teacher that they received enough assessment and pull-out. In February, after hearing more about the program, the teacher decided the following year that the special education students should be the first assessed and selected for the Poetry Academy, based on results from the winter fluency curriculum-based measurement.

The special education population was brought up during the interview by Mrs. F., who had many of these students in her classroom and thought that she would have the special education block of students again the following year. “I definitely need you next year. If I have the special ed kids again,” said Mrs. F.

*Summary*

The interviews with the teachers suggest a positive reaction to the Poetry Academy when looking at benefits and changes in attitudes in specific students. Suggestions were made that will be valuable when reorganizing the program for other schools and students. Important points made by the teachers were the value of one-on-one attention for struggling readers and how only 5-10 minutes could make such a difference for the apprentices.
Voices of the Volunteers

Like the teachers, I offered the volunteers options for their exit interview. They were allowed to choose from a group interview or individual interviews in person, by e-mail, or by phone. Not only is this in the spirit of program evaluation, but I also wanted to accommodate their busy schedules. A group interview was nearly impossible so the volunteers opted for individual interviews. Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. O’Neil, and Mrs. Marks opted for in-person, individual interviews, whereas Mrs. Riley and Mrs. Davis chose to speak to me by phone. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Similar to the teachers, the narrative of the volunteer interviews was deepened with dialogue from the researcher journal kept during the Poetry Academy. Memos and conversations with the volunteers were documented and were used in conjunction with the information.

Each interview is first discussed in narrative form. Following is a triangulation of the major themes that emerged from all six interviews. Again, similar to the teacher interviews, no set protocol was used. Instead, a beginning question was asked, “What were some of the perceived benefits you saw in your students because of the Poetry Academy?” The topics of change in attitude and suggestions for future use were also introduced during each interview.

Volunteer #1—Mrs. Johnson

Noted in the researcher journal from the beginning was how seriously Mrs. Johnson took the whole process. Since she was paid to administer the OhioReads program, she felt that this volunteer experience could be a learning experience vital to
help expand the program at the school. A week did not go by without a note or visit from her, asking a question about tutoring techniques or offering suggestions to improve the Poetry Academy program.

When asked about the benefits of the program, Mrs. Johnson came up with three clear answers: enthusiasm of the students, confidence in reading, and improvement in expression. “It was amazing to watch how each week, certain students would raise their chin a little higher, sit a little straighter, and read more and more like it was an activity they enjoyed.” She pointed to Kasey to illustrate this point:

This was a child who was made fun of by her classmates, who received no help at home, and who was being tested constantly by the psychologist for special education services. Coming with me became a relief from all of her realities. Here she had help, protection from ridicule and you could tell, each week, that the poems amused her.

The poetry, itself, was a topic that Mrs. Johnson brought up twice.

Each week, the kids were so excited to read the new poem. I think the fact that they were never asked, “Well, what do you think this poem means?” really made a difference because in school they analyze poems to death and with us, they just got to read and enjoy them.

The types of poems seemed to be important too: “I think you hit the nail on the head with the poems. They were about things the kids could understand: homework, friends, holidays. They were always funny and almost always, they could read them with confidence.”
Mrs. Johnson came to talk with me in December about the poems I was choosing for the students because Kasey, the student mentioned earlier, was having a difficult time. If she was presented with a poem that was too long, she would give up without even attempting to read it. On Mrs. Johnson’s suggestions, shorter, easier poems were chosen, and Kasey began to try a little harder in their sessions and began to relax and enjoy herself.

The topic of changes to Poetry Academy was brought up 9 times during the interview and 12 over the course of the year. As both an employee and an involved parent at CES, Mrs. Johnson had far more access to parents, teachers, and administrators and would often come to me with ideas. During the interview, we talked about selection of students. Having two gifted children herself, she felt that it was a shame that her students did not get a chance to take part in something like this.

I sometimes feel that they almost get punished for being smart. Yes, they get to go to the gifted room once a week for enrichment and they love that, but they would love just to read poetry for fun, too. Maybe we could offer an optional lunch or recess session for students not selected, for those who just want to do it for fun.

Mrs. Johnson also spoke about the duration of the program, both during the interview and over the course of the year. The program was started in November and ended in May, with a brief break in February for Ohio Achievement Test preparation. She would have liked to see it begin immediately in September and end the last week of school. “Think of how the time would have added up. I usually met with my kids 10 minutes each week so by the end of the year, they would have gotten 310 minutes of one-
on-one instruction.” In March, after the break for proficiency test preparation, a conversation was logged in the researcher journal. She spoke about how she felt like she had to almost start back at the beginning with her students: “I swear, in three weeks of not meeting, they have forgotten to bring their poems, how to read with inflection, even how to pause for periods.” She suggested no breaks for the following year.

In closing the interview, Mrs. Johnson stated

I think this is what this school needed. The volunteers were trained, but not inundated with instructions so they could make it their own. The kids were given instruction, but not overwhelmed. I hope this something that is repeated at this school for a long time.

Volunteer #2—Mrs. Brown

Being a former teacher, Mrs. Brown was completely self-sufficient during the Poetry Academy. Two notes were received from her and logged in the researcher’s journal, one in December suggesting a student be tested for glasses and once in May thanking me for allowing her to participate in the program.

When asked about the benefits of the program, she responded immediately, “The one-on-one attention. I would have killed to have something as regular as this when I was teaching.” When asked to elaborate, she thought a few seconds before responding:

I suppose this is my fault, but I never knew exactly what to ask parents to do. I always had one or two regular volunteers and I used them like I would think most teachers used them—copies, cutting things out, you know. If I had a set program
like this to get them into, I would have been using those extra hands in a much more meaningful way.

Another benefit Mrs. Brown brought up was the improvement in word attack skills:

At the beginning, the students would need to hear me read the poem several times before they were confident enough to read with me or by themselves. As we moved into Spring, I noticed that they would immediately want to read with me, working their way through hard words with different approaches: sounding them out or breaking them into chunks. We would work on these skills and I think it really paid off.

Changes in attitude was another topic that was discussed. Mrs. Brown referenced it in regards to a particular student: “I think Carly just bloomed with the poetry. I had her last year and she wouldn’t open her mouth to say boo to a ghost, and with the repeated reading, I noticed that her confidence grew in leaps and bounds.” She also talked about students’ reactions to the program, in general: “I noticed at first that kids were not sure what to make of it. But really by December, they were always so excited to see us. That didn’t happen that much even when I was teaching.”

Expansion was Mrs. Brown’s main issue when changes for the program were discussed. “I think this needs to be at every grade level, with every student, if possible.” She then laughed and added on:

Okay, that’s impossible. I’ve been doing this for so long and I think even I was impressed with how much five minutes could do. I think if we could tell parents...
what was accomplished with this and how little time it took, we might be able to
convince more parents to not only read to and with their kids, but maybe come in
and help other kids that need it.

Volunteer #3—Mrs. Marks

Mrs. Marks came to the interview with notes in hand. She had asked ahead of
time what I might ask and came prepared. When asked about the benefits of the program,
she read off a couple of things from her notes: “Let’s see improved accuracy for sure, and
they definitely became more curious about the poems, you know, what they were about.”
In fact, Mrs. Marks brought the issue of the poems up three different times during her
interview and was logged once as having stopped in the office to talk about a particular
poem I had assigned. One of the poems was called, “My parents are making me crazy,”
by Ken Nesbitt (Nesbitt, 2005), and Mrs. Marks received an angry note from a parent
who felt that the poem was completely inappropriate. Mrs. Marks and I privately laughed
over this because we felt the poem was funny, but we still wrote an apologetic note back
explaining that the poem was chosen for its “kid” humor and not intended to inspire “bad
feelings in kids towards parents” (parent’s wording).

Mrs. Marks felt the poems

made the program. Each week, the kids were so excited to hear and read the new
poem. I remember what you told us at the beginning during training, that you
chose short, funny poems that kids could relate to, and I could totally see that
each week. They treated receiving that poem like receiving a present.
An interesting topic that Mrs. Marks brought up was the name of the program. She has two fifth grade boys and they heard about the program through the grapevine.

“You know Ronnie, he asked me about this. He said the name reminded him of *Harry Potter*, like Hogwarts Academy. In his words, calling it an academy instead of club made it sound ‘cooler.’” Mrs. Marks also cited changes in attitude in terms of changes in confidence.

The kids might have just been shy at first, but it was like they were coming out of their shells. Especially when I began taping them. They thought it was so cool to hear how they improved. I would play them tapes from weeks ago and then the one they just recorded, and they would say, “Oh I read with more expression now,” or “I sound smoother.” I started doing it with my kids so they could hear themselves, too.

To help improve the program for future students, Mrs. Marks also suggested expanding it to accommodate more students. Like Mrs. Johnson, she has two gifted and one special education student, including one in the 3rd grade, and felt they were missing out because of their differing abilities.

Jackie didn’t get to be a part of this because she reads well, but I know she would like this attention, too. I would love to see ever kid get a chance to be singled out for something special like this on a regular basis.

Another suggestion that she made was to set up a special nook for the volunteers. They were often left to fend for a space to work with the students on their own. “It would be so neat to have even a closet somewhere with two chairs, good lighting, books of
poetry and stacks of all the poems they have read. Then we could have read in peace.”

The volunteers would mostly be found in the hallway, perched on child-sized chairs uncomfortably, trying to hold the attention of struggling reader who found concentrating difficult at the best of times.

*Volunteer #4—Mrs. Riley*

When asked about the benefits of the program, Mrs. Riley first talked student reading: “I think each week, each month, I could hear changes in the way students read. Punctuation was used. Expression became second-nature.” Then, she mentioned benefits she saw from the program as a whole,

I think this might have been the first time that kids saw reading as something cool. And poetry. They never saw poetry as cool. But each week they were so excited and curious about the new poem and all of sudden they would discuss other poems they found.

Mrs. Riley had mentioned the “cool factor” of the poetry in a conversation documented in the researcher’s log in January. Like the other volunteers, she had given the students a holiday poem to read and practice over vacation and she stopped in to let me know that five of her six students had not only remembered to bring the poem back, but had practiced it. She said, “I don’t think my kids would ever remember to read something like this over break and my apprentices acted like it was no big deal. I think the poetry makes it seem cool to them.”

Mrs. Riley talked about attitude in relation to a specific student, Blake:
At first, Blake was my tough kid. He was always too tired, too hungry, watching
the clock. But when you gave us, “My parents are making me crazy,” he thought
that was hilarious. He wanted to read that again and again. We would end each
session with that poem, regardless of the one that was assigned.

She went on to say, “You know, Blake’s dad called me because our sons know each
other. And he thanked me for doing this. He said Blake was reading more at home.”

When Mrs. Riley was questioned about changes to the program, she also
mentioned the need for a specific space to work: “I hated searching for a quiet spot each
week. When I had them alone in the counselor’s office, they worked so hard. But when I
was parked in the hallway, it was tough to get them to concentrate.” Another change she
suggested also had to do with selection of students:

Josh [her son] would see me every Friday taking kids out and would get so
jealous watching them come back all smiling and happy. I wish he could have
done this. Maybe we can get more volunteers for next year.

Volunteer #5—Mrs. Davis

Similar to Mrs. Marks, Mrs. Davis had contacted me before the phone interview
and asked what subjects we might be talking about so she could think about them ahead
of time. Perhaps for this reason, her interview was shorter by almost four minutes when
compared to the other volunteers.

Mrs. Davis rattled off a list of benefits that she saw because of the Poetry
Academy: “Improved words correct per minute, excellent accuracy, some increases in
comprehension, and definitely a new interest in poetry.” When asked to discuss the interest in poetry in more depth, she responded,

I think poetry just looks easier because it is shorter. From my 35 years of teaching I can tell you that putting a long story in front of a kid immediately triggers some sort of a fight or flight response. But poetry isn’t intimidating. There’s a rhythm, a beat.

A question about attitude also provoked another list of changes: “Excitement for their sessions, reluctance to return to class, reading with confidence because they know we are there to support them.”

Mrs. Davis had a few suggestions for the Poetry Academy:

I would really like to see the training be a bit more intense. I didn’t need that, and Mrs. Brown obviously didn’t, but I bet those other moms who never taught school might like to see a demonstration of what you mean.

She went on to reference her former career in teaching, “I think this was great. I liked that it didn’t take up much of my time and it didn’t take kids away from instruction.”

Volunteer #6—Mrs. O’Neil

As mentioned earlier, Mrs. O’Neil was often at school volunteering in her daughter’s fourth grade classroom. Because of this, her interview is augmented with anecdotes from the researcher’s log.

Mrs. O’Neil was quick to point out the benefits of the Poetry Academy from the beginning. After the volunteer training in October, she stayed after to chat. “ Couldn’t you have come up with this seven years earlier?” she joked. Her eldest daughter was in junior
She recounted years of volunteering, mostly being stuck in the office next to the copy machine. She pressed my hand and expressed her enthusiasm for the program, “This will be so exciting.”

When asked during the interview about the benefits, she said,

I loved being that special someone for these kids at school. A lot of times I think these kids would have been the kids who hated school, hated their teacher, but by giving them only five minutes a week, I was giving them a whole new outlook about school.

Other benefits she mentioned were the bond she forged with a few of her students and the “gift of poetry” she was giving them. Over the course of the year Mrs. O’Neil would often mention Katelyn. “Katelyn’s parents just had a baby,” she said back in February, “so she thinks it might be bad to bother them to listen to her read. Is it okay if she comes into you?” Once she said, “I think Katelyn feels left out at home. Would it be okay if I bring her a treat?”

Mrs. O’Neil mentioned attitude changes that stretched beyond the classroom. I would see my kids in the hall and they would be like, “Mrs. O’Neil. Hi. Come meet my friend,” or even just come and give me a hug. These were the same kids who would be slouched and silent before.

She mentioned the jealousy the other kids felt, too,

My apprentices would totally show off in the hall. I would walk off after saying hi and the other would be like, “Who was that?” or they would ask me, “Can I come read with you?” I hated saying no.
Mrs. O’Neil was the only volunteer who mentioned the Poetry Café in her suggestions for the Poetry Academy,

I think next time we should do two Poetry Cafés to keep the kids motivated. There was definitely a spring slouch that maybe could have been avoided if they had already experienced a Poetry Café and knew how fun it was.

She also talked about including other students, “My Abby probably doesn’t need this, but I know she would love it. Wouldn’t it be cool if we had oodles of volunteers and all the kids were involved?”

Themes

Expansion. Similar to the teachers, the volunteers definitely felt that expanding the Poetry Academy to include as many students as possible was important. Five out of the six volunteers mentioned this either during the year as documented in the researcher’s log or during their interviews. It is interesting to note that all of the mothers with children either in gifted or special education, especially, felt that exceptional children would benefit from this.

Poetry. All six volunteers mentioned poetry selections. The poems were described as “cool,” “a gift,” “a present,” and visually appealing.

Space. Two volunteers mentioned the problem of not having a set space to work.

Document Analysis of Volunteer Log Sheets

As part of their weekly duties, the volunteers kept a log sheet briefly detailing how each session with each student went. The volunteers had very little training about these log sheets; in fact, they were implemented at the suggestion of Mrs. Johnson. She
had used a similar log for her OhioReads volunteers and found them useful for teachers in reporting progress. The volunteers were instructed to write down any interesting information about their students so a simple log was designed. Each sheet had the volunteer’s name, a space for them to write in the date, and a table with their students’ names and an area for them to jot notes. Each week, these logs were examined to check that poems assigned to each student were not too difficult or too easy or to see if anyone needed new folders or stickers. These logs gave information about the “apprentices” that would never have learned otherwise: who had glasses but was reluctant to use them, who was having family problems, and who was making progress and who was not. These logs became almost like a window into the students’ lives. The information varied from volunteer to volunteer; some volunteers simply listed if the student had brought back their Poetry Academy folder whereas others wrote paragraphs and ran out of space.

Below each log is detailed by volunteer. A report on themes throughout the log use follows. Although the Poetry Academy ran for 12 weeks, a few volunteers had less because of weeks missed.

Volunteer #1–Mrs. Johnson

Mrs. Johnson’s logs progressed from the first week to the last week. During the first week, she simply wrote “did well” next to each student’s name and had a word a student did not understand from the poem beside her name. At the bottom of the log, she suggested that she get stickers to help encourage the students to bring their folders back. This became a pattern with Mrs. Johnson. She was full of helpful suggestions and would often include them on her log sheets.
In the third week of her logs, Mrs. Johnson began to go into more detail about how her students read. She continued to report that students “did well” but she also reported that one student “read slow, stopping/pausing at punctuation.” This increase in detail continued during the following weeks as she began to report illness (“bad case of the sniffles”) and words by which they were confused.

During the fifth week of the Poetry Academy, students began to get very forgetful about taking their Poetry Academy folders home to read and get signatures. Mrs. Johnson made note of that for me and continued to report on student progress.

After winter break, Mrs. Johnson returned to “did well” beside student names but also reported on techniques that helped a particular student: “Adds words—we slowed down and he did better.” She also had made a note to herself to take a student first the following week. I later found out that students clamored to go first to meet with her and she began to have to rotate the students each week so everyone got a chance to go first.

The following week, Mrs. Johnson began rewarding her students with treats. Students that brought in their old poem with signatures got a big “Treat” beside their name while those who forgot got “No treat.” This became the norm for Mrs. Johnson during the rest of the weeks.

Volunteer #2—Mrs. Brown

Like the former teacher she is, Mrs. Brown’s notes were concise and insightful. Her notes stayed consistent over the 12-week period focusing on three things: if a student had their folder (“no folder”), if a student had signatures on their poems (“She wrote all names. Asked her to have an adult write most of them”) and “needs new folder” or
“doesn’t know where folder is. Can we get a new one?”), and how well they read the poem (“great job” or “A little tough going”).

During the fourth week, Mrs. Brown began to really take note of student expression while reading. She wrote comments like, “Doesn’t read with much expression but read smoothly” and “reading really fast.”

After winter break, a note about one student led to a change in procedures for him. One student had consistently not had signatures on his poem and she had sent a note home asking that this particular student be allowed to read his poem more than once to whomever he could. She received quite a note back. This mother wrote back that she was a single mom and the only person who could listen to her student read. She added that listening to the same poem 30 times might drive her crazy. That student was pulled aside later that day and told he could come to the office and read to me, the school counselor, or the school psychologist anytime during the week.

Volunteer #3—Mrs. Marks

From the beginning, Mrs. Marks literally covered her log sheets with her neat, pencil writing. Perhaps her special education background prompted this: Special education regulations support parents, teachers, and aides documenting everything with their special needs’ students. Mrs. Marks definitely took that attitude to heart when it came to her logs.

At first, Mrs. Marks described how the student acted with her. One student she described as “really quiet at first, read barely audible.” Another student she described as “nervous at first, read better later.” She wrote down what they connected the poem to and
then also told me about other things they talked about: “showed me his pocket watch.”

Then, she always had nuggets about the students’ lives: “Older students may tease reading attempts,” and “older brother and him do Mad Libs each night together.”

The detail in her logs continued even when she introduced a new element into her sessions. Unprompted, Mrs. Marks decided it would be fun to tape the students reading from week to week so they could hear themselves improving. On top of everything else she was already writing about, she began to write about how fast they read the poem and by doing this, began writing about how fluently the student was reading. She had her own “aha” moment.

*Volunteer #4—Mrs. Riley*

Of all the volunteers, the least contacts were made with Mrs. Riley and Mrs. Davis because they worked the Poetry Academy during times when I did not work at the school. Mrs. Riley’s logs were more typical of what was expected from the volunteers although like the others, she increased in detail during the course of the Poetry Academy.

Mrs. Riley began with simply reporting how the student did (“good job”). She began to add something similar to Mrs. Johnson about rotating the students because she found herself spending more time with the first couple of students and having to rush through the students that remained. These notes to remind herself about who to pick up first continued throughout the rest of the 12 weeks.

Mrs. Riley’s notes differed from the others’ in that she provided the status of all of her students together. She always wrote a comment like “They did great today” or “This poem seemed a little hard” at the top.
Volunteer #5—Mrs. Davis

Like Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Davis’ logs were consistent during the 12 weeks. Her former teacher self shone through her comments, as well. Similar to Mrs. Marks, Mrs. Davis liked to report on the status of the child. Comments like, “Enthusiastic as always” and “Seemed to enjoy our session” peppered her normal comments like “did well” and “very cooperative.”

Mrs. Davis had one student who had a stutter and in the fourth week, she began to report that she thought that it might be improving. Each week after that, she commented on his reading in relation to his stutter: “doesn’t stutter as much when he reads the poem” or “by third time reading the poem the stutter smoothes out.” She also knew when he had not practiced his poem from the week before: “didn’t take his folder home—stuttering was more evident.” This was information that she was able to share with his parents, teacher, and speech therapist.

Volunteer #6—Mrs. O’Neil

Like Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Riley, Mrs. O’Neil’s logs increased in detail over the program, but she mentioned a few things consistently. She always listed the words with which a student had difficulty, and she always reported either “no problem” with a student’s reading or put down a specific reading concern (“extra time on comprehension”). As the weeks progressed, Mrs. O’Neil began to record who forgot their folder or who was obviously not reading at home.

One incident with one of Mrs. O’Neil’s students was documented in January in the researcher’s log and the volunteer’s log. She recorded on her log that “Tommy had a
note from his mom. Check your mailbox and call me when you get a chance.” The note stated that Tommy had failed to bring his Poetry Academy folder home for the past couple of weeks and any signatures that Mrs. O’Neil was getting were faked. She reported that she knew this because Tommy admitted it to her one night at dinner when she asked why he was not reading poems anymore. Mrs. O’Neil and I pulled Tommy out into the hall to talk about the incident and found out that the reason Tommy was not taking his folder home was because his mom made him read them to his stepfather, and his stepfather mimicked his slight lisp. Mrs. O’Neil and I gave each other horrified looks over Tommy’s head and assured him that he did not need to read his poems at home if he did not want to. Like Mrs. Brown’s student, Tommy was invited to come read his poems to the personnel in my office so that he could still practice his poetry.

Themes

Business tasks. All of the volunteers kept track of whether students were getting signatures (thus practicing their poems) and taking their folders home.

General reading statements. All volunteers had a specific way of reporting how a student was doing with the reading of the poems, whether it was “doing well” or “great job” or “nice.”

Personality. Three of the volunteers regularly mentioned the well-being of the students.

Special cases. As the weeks continued, it became apparent that each volunteer had found a special case to which they devoted themselves. Mrs. Johnson had Kasey who had just qualified for the special education program and needed extra scaffolding. Mrs.
Brown had “Andrew” who had the stressed single mother. Mrs. Marks had Katelyn whose mom and stepfather had just had a new baby. Mrs. Riley had Ben who has multiple phobias, but can be “wildly entertaining” (her words). Mrs. Davis had Zach who has the stutter. Finally, Mrs. O’Neil has Tommy. It was interesting how the information on these special cases was just a little more detailed.

Voices of the Students

Ten students were interviewed for the program evaluation of the Poetry Academy. These students were chosen at random by the SPSS program in order to assist in the experimental approach to this study (Creswell, 2003). Four boys and six girls were pulled from the system: Dylan, Alyssa, Kate, Katelyn, Michelle, Travis, Haley, Zach, Jessie, and Nikki. To keep the students comfortable, I interviewed two at a time. Although this could be considered a compromise to research integrity since the students could get ideas from each other, echo answers, or be too intimidated to speak in front of the other student, it seemed that this alternative was better than interviewing the students alone (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Interviewing students younger than 8 alone can lead to a one-sided conversation where the researcher talks and the child listens (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Plus, a more informal, open atmosphere can lead to more interesting information (Rapley, 2001).

A set protocol was used in the student interviews. Again, young students can be hard to draw out and since there were to be five separate interviews, it was desirable to have answers to the same questions to compare and contrast (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
The protocol for the student interviews can be viewed in Appendix B and consisted of six questions:

1. Did you enjoy the Poetry Academy? Why or why not?
2. Who was your volunteer? What did you think of her?
3. What was your favorite part of the Poetry Academy?
4. What could be done to make the Poetry Academy better?
5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the Poetry Academy?
6. If you could be in the Poetry Academy next year, would you?

To analyze this data, all answers were compiled by question. Each question yielded several answers. The repetition of answers by the students served as the emerging themes for the student interviews. These themes eventually were merged with the teacher, volunteer, and parent data.

Table 21 details the student compilation of data by question. The numbers behind answers indicate the number of times this response was given. To discuss the emerging themes from the student data, each question is discussed individually to include actual student quotes and anecdotes from the researcher’s log, where available.

Did you enjoy the Poetry Academy? Why or why not? Students were positive towards the Poetry Academy in a variety of ways. Of all the answers, “I love poetry,” was stated by three separate students. The humor in the poetry was mentioned twice, along with how much fun the activity was, how it helped with reading, and how they liked the candy. Travis combined two of these answers when he responded to the question by saying, “Yeah, it helped with my reading and I liked the candy.” Nikki
Table 21

*Student Answers by Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Student Answers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you enjoy the Poetry Academy? Why or why not?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I love poetry. (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry is funny. (2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I had a teacher I liked reading to.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I liked my volunteer.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>She taught me to read good.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It was fun. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You got to read poems.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helped with my reading. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like candy. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I got cake.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helped me not be embarrassed to read in front of everybody.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helped me understand more words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you think of your volunteer?</td>
<td>She was funny. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I liked the words chart.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She used funny voices.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>She would make a big deal about all of my signatures.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She was really nice. (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She gave us candy. (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She let us pick our poems.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I liked her because she gave us candy AND stickers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>She taught my dad.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>She made poetry interesting.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I like working with her.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I know all her kids. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She helped me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was your favorite part of the Poetry Academy?</td>
<td>Poems were read to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like poetry. (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I liked it when they taught me to read poetry well.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry’s my favorite now.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The poems were cool and fun.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I liked the suckers.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading the poems. (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The poems were funny and long.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We got to eat pizza at the end. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The poems were funny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helps with your reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helped with the stuttering.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 21 (continued)

*Student Answers by Question*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Student Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What needs to be done to the Poetry Academy to make it better?</td>
<td>More exciting poems.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More longer poems.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More poems about dogs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Show more excitement when reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Games at the pizza party (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chocolate cake with Dale Earnhardt on it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A bouncing room at the party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Floats at the pizza party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A fire truck at the pizza party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything else about the Poetry Academy?</td>
<td>I can read poems good now because of my volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helps with fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helps you read better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It helps you figure out words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funnier poems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My volunteer helped me a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was cool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I liked it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More poems next time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Every time I go I get a new poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like how my family supports me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like how I got my own folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I liked the stickers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you could be in the Poetry Academy next year, would you?</td>
<td>Yes. (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

seconded this sentiment about helping with reading: “Yes, I enjoyed being in it because it helped me read better and not be embarrassed to read in front of everybody.” Both Nikki and Travis were at the Poetry Café in May. Considered to be shy students by both their volunteers and teachers, it was amazing to watch both of them march to the front of the group and read poems aloud to the assembled parents, students, and teachers.
What did you think of your volunteer? When talking about their volunteers, the students highlighted the fact that their volunteers were nice \((n = 4)\), funny \((n = 2)\), gave out candy \((n = 2)\), and that they knew their volunteers’ children \((n = 2)\). The students knowing their volunteers’ children was never thought about when putting the Poetry Academy together but came up three times over the course of the year and logged in the researcher’s journal. Mrs. Johnson stopped in once to mention that Nikki had been over at their house for a slumber party and mentioned the Poetry Academy.

She had brought her poem. She thought it was the perfect opportunity to get a whole bunch of signatures. She announced to the group that she was going to read out loud and everyone listened. Then everyone signed it and took turns reading it.

I had a Poetry Academy going in my living room.

Mrs. Marks also mentioned the fact that her daughter, Jackie, knew Alyssa, a student who mentioned that she knew her volunteer’s children. In a conversation at the beginning of the program in November, she said, “Do you think it will be weird? Me working with my daughter’s friends?” I offered to switch her to a different group of students, but she stuck it out.

What was your favorite part of being in the Poetry Academy? Repeated answers in this category included the statement “I like poetry” \((n = 4)\), “Reading the poems” \((n = 3)\), and “We got to eat pizza at the end.” However, an interesting answer came from Zach, the student who said, “Yes, it helped with the stuttering, too, so try it at home.” Zach’s stuttering issues were brought up four times over the course of the year; once by his volunteer in her log, once by his mom in an Intervention Assistance Team meeting to
discuss Zach’s progress in school, once by his teacher during her Poetry Academy interview, and once by Zach himself. Zach would occasionally stop in the office where the counselor, psychologist, and I worked to read to us and get signatures. He would work his way around the office. In February, after a round of reading, he said to the psychologist, “Sounds pretty good, doesn’t it?” When she responded yes, he said, “I think poetry is curing my stutter.” He walked out smiling, and his smiles matched ours.

Students’ proclivity towards poetry was remarked upon not only in the interview but throughout the year. As the literacy coach for the school, I would often model lessons in classrooms. Students in the Poetry Academy would clamor for a poem to be a part of my activity. In December, February, and March, students asked me if I would bring a poem to class for everyone to read. When I asked one student, Louis, why he wanted me to do this in March, he said, “I want to show everyone how good I’m getting.”

What needs to be done to the Poetry Academy to make it better? The answers to question four were mostly a variety of ideas for the Poetry Café that included adding games ($n = 2$), a chocolate cake, floats, a bouncing room, and a fire truck. Most of these ideas came from the fact that the town where the school is located had just celebrated its bicentennial and a fair complete with cake, floats, a bouncing room, and fire truck had been there.

The other answers referred to the poems asking for longer, funnier poems, and with dogs as the subject. One entry about the poetry itself was made from the students in the researcher’s journal. In April, towards the end of the program, Madison stopped me in
the hall to tell me that she needed more difficult poems. “Mrs. W., I think I’ve moved up in reading. Can I have some harder poems?” I promised to look into it for her.

Anything else about the Poetry Academy? Question five let students inform the researcher about further ideas they had about the Poetry Academy. Similar to question four, these answers were random in nature, with no repeats.

Nikki is the student who mentioned family support. She said, “I like the Poetry Academy because every time I go in there, I get a new poem, I bring it home, and I like how my family supports me on everything I do.” In August, at the county fair, I saw Nikki with her brother, sister, and father. They came over to say hello and her little sister pulled me down to her level and asked, “Will Nikki get more poems this year? I liked when she read them to me.” This is the final entry in the researcher’s log.

If you could be in the Poetry Academy next year, would you? All 10 students who were interviewed answered in some form of yes when asked if they would take part in the Poetry Academy next year. No student appeared to hesitate when giving this answer.

Emerging Themes

Poetry. The poetry itself was mentioned 27 times during the five different interviews. Students talked about the humor in the poems, their lengths, how they enjoyed reading them to their volunteer, or enjoyed having them read aloud to them.

Improved reading skills. Change in reading skills was mentioned 17 times during the five different interviews. One student, Alyssa, even used the word fluency when talking about how her skills have improved: “It helps with fluency. It helps you read
better, it helps you figure out words, and it helps that Mrs. Marks was here because she helped me get better. She helped me a lot.”

*Rewards.* The rewards and incentives given throughout the program were mentioned 10 times during the interviews. From the Poetry Café with pizza and cake, to the candy and stickers given weekly, students looked at these rewards as a good reason to be a part of the Poetry Academy.

*The volunteers.* Outside of the specific question about the volunteers, the students talked about their person nine times. The volunteers were described as “nice,” “helpful,” and “funny.” As Dylan said, “I can read good, read good, read good poems now. All because of Mrs. O’Neil.”

*Voices of the Parents and Others*

For the purpose of this study, the parents were informally questioned at the Poetry Academy. However, over the course of the year, parent interaction was documented in the researcher log during Intervention Assistance Team meetings to discuss student progress, notes sent to teachers, volunteers or me, and chance meetings during the year.

The parents became just part of the voices that were important to hear about the program. Although the program ran from November to May, encounters with school personnel like the librarian, principal, teachers from other grades, babysitters, and other family members added depth to the qualitative data. Data from these voices were again coded for emerging themes. The parent and other voices were coded together.
Emerging Themes

Poetry. Poetry was mentioned throughout the course of the program on 22 separate occasions. The first mention was in November, three weeks after the program began. The librarian stopped me in the hallway and asked, “What are you doing with the third graders that all they’re asking me for is poetry now?” She reported that at least nine students had asked her for poetry books since the program started, and she was even thinking of ordering more books. For the rest of the year, once a month, the librarian would update me on how many poetry books were requested. In December, four poetry books were checked out by third graders in the Poetry Academy; in January, five books; in February, two books; in March, three books; in April, six books; and in May, one book. In September and October, prior to the Poetry Academy commencing, only one poetry book was checked out by any third grader, and not a student in the Poetry Academy.

During the four Intervention Assistance Team meetings I attended regarding student progress, each parent talked about the Poetry Academy at least once. I did not bring the program up during these meetings; the parents were the ones who mentioned it. Zach’s mom said, “You know, Zach never liked reading before. But there is something about the poetry that makes it okay for him.” Haley’s mom echoed this feeling, “Haley hates books. The length, the difficulty. But poems make her feel successful in a short time. It’s nice.”

During the Poetry Café, six parents mentioned the poetry specifically. Louis’ parents spoke about the humor. “I’m not going to lie,” said Louis’ dad, “I thought the
poems were funny. I would have enjoyed them if I was his age.” Like Haley’s mom, Jessica’s mom talked about the brevity of the poems. “I liked that it was something we could do together but didn’t take a long time. The poems were short and sweet.”

One note was logged in the researcher’s journal about the poetry specifically. A note was sent by Alex’s mother. One poem used was called “My parents are making me crazy,” by Ken Nesbitt. Mrs. Fleming felt that the poem was inappropriate for students, encouraging them to be disrespectful to her parents. She had already let the principal know of her dislike of the poem and he in turn came to me requesting that the subject matter of the poems be looked at more carefully. From then on, I would ask one of the volunteers to look over the poems as a parent/guardian to check for questionable subject matter. We did not have any problems after that.

*Ease of family support.* During the student interviews, Nikki mentioned how her parents supported her during the program; and at the county fair, her little sister asked if Nikki would have more poems to read to her at home. At the Poetry Café, four parents mentioned how easy this was to fit into their home lives. “This was easy and fun to do. Instead of having to act like an expert, I got to act like an audience. I think this made Blake feel important,” Blake’s dad said. Mackenzie’s mom said something similar:

With kids in three grades, it is almost impossible to make sure that each has their homework done and gets some fun reading in, too. With the poetry, I got to hear Mackenzie read each week and it only took a couple of minutes.

Two negative instances with family support came during the course of the program. In the analysis of Mrs. O’Neil’s logs, the incident with Tommy was mentioned. He had been
faking his signatures to avoid reading to his stepfather who mimicked his lisp. Also, there
was the student whose single mom was being worn down with the repeated readings of
the poetry. Family support in difficult family situations is something that had to be
negotiated for some students.

Student skill improvement. The skills of the students were mentioned both during
the Intervention Assistance Team meetings and at the Poetry Café. At each meeting, the
psychologist would use the fluency, word recognition, and retelling scores to show
parents improvements in student reading. The Poetry Academy was referred to as an
intervention for these students in terms of fluency, word recognition, and comprehension.

At the Poetry Café, four parents came up to me to tell me about what they saw as
differences in their students. Madison’s mom shook my hand, “I have to thank you.
Madison was always so excited to read to me. That never happened before. And she read
with such expression.” Zach’s mom was equally positive: “He stood up and read in front
of group. He never would have done that before.” Zach’s progress was also mentioned by
his babysitter and grandmother. His babysitter picked him up from school each day, and
once in January she came in to ask me a few questions about how to read the poems with
him. She remarked, “I want to make sure I am doing this right, because I think it is
smoothing out his stutter. The reading the poems a bunch of times.” His grandmother said
something similar during his Intervention Assistance Team meeting, “He reads smoother
and knows most of the words. It’s like he ironing out his stutter a little bit.”
Triangulation of Qualitative Data

Through grounded theory, constant comparison of the emerging themes from the various sources of data resulted in overlapping of data and the emergence of themes that were more universal in nature. These are detailed below in Table 22.

Table 22

Overlapping Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Improvement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-on-One Attention</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poetry. The different poems used was a theme for all four groups: the volunteers, students, teachers, and parents. The humor in the poems, their length, and their appeal were mentioned again and again by the different sources stakeholders.

Expansion. Teachers, parents, and volunteers all mentioned the need to expand the program to include as many students as possible. Gifted students, special education
students, and mainstreamed populations were all mentioned as students who could benefit from the Poetry Academy.

*Student skill improvement.* Student skill improvement was also mentioned by the teachers, volunteers, parents, and students. It was mentioned in terms of specific skills like fluency and word recognition and in terms of general improvements of reading better, reading more smoothly, and reading with expression.

*Parent support.* Teachers, students, and parents mentioned the ease and benefits of the parent support in the program. Teachers liked how parents got involved, students liked reading to their parents, and parents liked how easy and fun it was to have poetry in their homes.

*Selection of students.* Only two sub-groups mentioned selection of students, but it was mentioned so adamantly that it had to be included. The teachers and volunteers talked about how bad they felt for those excluded and how all students could benefit from the Poetry Academy.

*One-on-one attention.* Again, only two sub-groups mentioned the one-on-one attention but both the teachers and the volunteers repeatedly referred to the importance of this aspect of the program.

**Summary**

This chapter has presented the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected to answer the research questions chosen to evaluate the Poetry Academy. Quantitative data were analyzed to answer the first two questions:
1. Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on student’s fluency and comprehension scores, as shown through the use of a curriculum-based measurement given before and after the implementation of the program, measuring:
   a) words correct per minute (WCPM)
   b) word recognition, and
   c) score on a retelling?

2. Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on students’ attitude towards reading, as measured both before and after the implementation of the program by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey?

   Findings from the quantitative data suggest that students in the Poetry Academy made gains greater than their control group counterparts in words correct per minute, word recognition, and marginal gains in comprehension via a retelling.

   Findings suggest that differences in attitude as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey vary slightly by group; the treatment group did make slight gains when compared to the control group in both academic and recreational reading, and on the survey as a whole. Gains in attitude toward academic reading were marginally statistically significant.

   Qualitative data were analyzed to answer the third and fourth question:

3. What observations or changes have students, parents, teachers and volunteers observed in the students towards reading, if any, during the implementation of the program?
4. What have students, parents, teachers, and volunteers observed as advantages or disadvantages of the program?

The data sources for the qualitative data were interviews done with the teachers, volunteers, students, and anecdotal data logged in the researcher’s log taken during conversations and memos with the teachers, volunteers, students, parents, and others.

Students, parents, teachers, and volunteers noticed changes in students toward reading that included attitude toward poetry, confidence towards reading, and improvement in reading skills.

Findings from the qualitative data suggest that advantages of the program included the one-on-one attention, family support, poetry, and student improvement, whereas things needing improvement were student selection and expansion of the program.

In the following chapter, the results of the study are presented to show an overall evaluation of the program using both the quantitative and qualitative data. A summary of the research is discussed, along with implications for future implementation of the program. Finally, recommendations for future research is given.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study undertook a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of a program called the Poetry Academy. The Poetry Academy was created to use community volunteers for literacy intervention with readers struggling in the areas of fluency and more specifically, words correct per minute, word recognition, and comprehension.

The design of the inquiry was based on a sequential, explanatory method. Statistical data were collected through a curriculum-based measurement and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) to show progress of the students in the Poetry Academy compared to those in the control group. A qualitative view of the program followed, with interviews with the involved teachers, volunteers, students, and parents. Together, these methods provided the numerical data often needed to demonstrate growth to a school board or state agency and the voices of those involved often needed to demonstrate efficacy to practitioners.

Data were collected from November of 2004 to May of 2005. The sources of data were the student scores both before and after the implementation of the program on the curriculum-based assessment, ERAS, and the interviews with the various stakeholders. Collection and analysis of data were guided by four research questions:
1. Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on student’s fluency and comprehension scores, as shown through the use of a curriculum-based measurement given before and after the implementation of the program, measuring:

   (a) words correct per minute (WCPM);
   (b) word recognition; and
   (c) score on a retelling?

2. Does the Poetry Academy have an effect on students’ attitude towards reading, as measured both before and after the implementation of the program by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS)?

3. What observations or changes have students, parents, teachers and volunteers observed in the students towards reading, if any, during the implementation of the program?

4. What have students, parents, teachers, and volunteers observed as advantages or disadvantages of the program?

Findings from the analysis of data indicated that students in the Poetry Academy made significant gains in WCPM, word recognition, and attitude towards academic reading, and made marginal gains in comprehension.

In this chapter, the conclusions of the research are made, implications for teachers, administrators, and pre-service teachers are discussed, and recommendations for future research are given.
Conclusions

Findings from the data analysis supported the following conclusions for each of the research questions.

*Research Question #1*

Students in the Poetry Academy made gains greater than those in the control group on the curriculum-based measurement administered before and after the implementation of the program. Statistically significant gains of the treatment group were made in the area of WCPM and word recognition.

Using the strategies of repeated reading, listening while reading, and assisted reading, students in the treatment group were able to make gains of an average of 45.06 words per minute. When looking at the oral reading fluency norms set by Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), students at the 50th percentile made an average gain of 36 words per minute (see Table 3), similar to the average gain of 37.32 words made by the control group in this study. Repeated reading has been shown to increase words correct per minute through the use of short, simple texts (Homan et al., 1993; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979; Therrien, 2004). The use of poetry to boost words correct per minute has also been used with positive results (Rasinski & Padak, 2001).

In the area of word recognition, the treatment group also made significant gains. At the beginning of the program, 7 of the Poetry Academy students were reading at an independent level, 9 were at an instructional level, and 17 students were in frustration at a 3rd grade reading passage. At the end of the program, 21 Poetry Academy students were at an independent level, 10 were at an instructional level, and 5 were in frustration on a
3rd grade reading passage. The difference in change in word recognition accuracy is considered significant when compared to the control group at an alpha level of .05.

Word recognition was one of the calls for research made by Kuhn and Stahl (2003). In their call, they asked for a closer study of changes in word recognition using a true experimental or quasi-experimental design (Kuhn & Stahl). The feedback given to the Poetry Academy students may have assisted in their word recognition gains.

The final measurement taken with the curriculum-based measurement was a rating on a retelling. This helped appraise comprehension. Students in the treatment group did make gains in their comprehension when compared to the control group, and these gains were marginally statistically significant. An example of this change is shown through the “excellent” ratings given both prior and after the program was implemented. In semester one, during the pretest CBM, three students in the treatment group were labeled with an “excellent” rating on their retelling, compared with 13 students from the control group with an “excellent” rating on their retelling. In semester two, when the CBM was re-administered, 26 students from the treatment group scored an “excellent” rating, making them even with their control group counterparts, who also had 26 students with an “excellent” rating.

The findings of the present study mirror those of Homan et al. (1993) where both the control and treatment group made gains in terms of comprehension as scored on a retelling when repeated reading was used as an intervention with the treatment group. Similarly, the present study fits into the meta-analysis conducted by Therrien (2004),
where the method of repeated reading in conjunction with tutoring by an adult and corrective feedback can have an effect on comprehension.

The innovation in method that helped to create these changes in words correct per minute, word recognition, and retelling was the use of volunteers as literacy intervention. In Chapter 3, the need for intervention that was not watered-down or extended pull-out was addressed. Community volunteers devoted only 5-10 minutes a week per struggling reader and were able to create progress in each of the areas in each student.

Research Question #2

The ERAS can be broken down into two components, academic and recreational reading. A statistic that was seen as significant was the change in attitude towards academic reading between the semester one and semester two administration of the ERAS for the Poetry Academy students when compared to the control group.

Quantitatively measured changes in attitude toward reading have been proven in other studies (Alexander & Engin, 1986; Kush & Watkins, 1996; Lazarus & Callahan, 2000; McKenna & Kear, 1990; Roettger et al., 1979). Using either the ERAS or another calibrated instrument, these studies looked into the differences in attitudes over time. Lazarus and Callahan (2000) used the ERAS in a way that is similar to the present study; it was used to determine group differences, whereas the others tracked changes in student attitude toward reading over time. The present study adds to the literature using the ERAS by tracking change with the use of an intervention against a control group.

Significant change in attitude toward academic reading is important because historically, struggling readers tend to feel more negatively toward reading in school
(McKenna & Kear, 1990). It makes sense that when students are comfortable and feel success in a task, they are more likely to enjoy engaging in it. The Poetry Academy helped readers create that comfort and success towards academic reading.

Research Question #3

Change in the Poetry Academy students was not only observed through the CBM and ERAS, but through observations made by the students, themselves, their parents, their teachers, and the volunteers.

Students

In the post-intervention interview with the students, students mentioned changes in themselves because of the program. They talked about it helping them in various ways:

1. It helped with my reading.
2. It helped me not be embarrassed to read in front of everybody.
3. It helped me understand more words.
4. It helped with the stuttering.
5. It helps with fluency.
6. It helps you read better.
7. It helps you figure out words.

Teachers

The teachers mentioned changes in the students because of the Poetry Academy, as well. The teachers talked about both the changes in attitude they saw and the changes in skills:

1. A shy student was described as a “little actor.”
2. The “light” that students had when returning to the class after meeting with their volunteer.

*Parents and Others*

Both parents of students participating in the Poetry Academy and other faculty around the school observed changes because of the program. Their observations usually related to specific students.

1. Zach’s mom mentioned that poetry helped Zach like reading.
2. Haley’s mom talked about how the short nature of the poems helped her feel confidence quickly in reading.

*Volunteers*

The volunteers observed the changes in attitude and skills in their tutees.

1. Increased words correct per minute.
2. Reluctance to return to class.
3. Improvements in confidence.
4. Improvement in word attack skills
5. Increases in accuracy.
6. Improvement in comprehension.

These changes observed in the Poetry Academy apprentices were across the board. Every student improved. Effecting change in both skills and attitude are the goals of most volunteer programs (Burns et al., 2004; Cassidy & Wenrich, 1998/1999; McDaniel, 2002; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Neuman, 1995; Wasik, 1998a, 1998b). The current study took both a qualitative and quantitative view of these changes similar to that
done by Murad and Topping (2000). The qualitative measures helped provide this alternative look to the changes in students. Since only two of the inferential analyses were statistically significant, the interviews with the students, teachers, parents, and students gave further insight into the Poetry Academy to further evaluate its worth.

A volunteer-based program can only effect change if it is supported by those involved (McDaniel, 2002). By including the voices of those concerned, we are ensuring continued support by making changes based on suggestions they give.

Research Question #4

This final research question was added after the analysis of the qualitative data began. All of the participants had such excellent ideas to advance the program that it is important to share their opinions as part of the results.

Advantages of the program, as seen and ranked through qualitative data analysis are:

1. Increase in student skills, in terms of fluency (WCPM, word recognition, and comprehension).
2. Improvement in attitude toward reading.
3. Increased family involvement.
4. Poetry as motivation.
5. One-on-one attention.

Disadvantages, or ideas for improvement, as seen and ranked through qualitative data analysis:

1. Find a space for volunteers to work.
2. Expand program for all students – gifted and special education.

3. Increase parent communication.


5. Choose poetry topics carefully!

The stakeholders had great ideas for improving the program. By involving their voices in the evaluation of the Poetry Academy, it ensures that future use of the program will run more smoothly and benefit all involved even more.

The advantages suggested by the various stakeholders form the core of the program. The goal was to improve student skills and attitudes and this was accomplished through the use of poetry, one-on-one attention, and family involvement.

Implications

Implications for Classroom Teachers

As teachers look to utilize community volunteers to participate in literacy intervention programs, there are certain elements of the present study that should be factored into decisions.

First, it is beneficial to train volunteers in the tasks that they will be doing (Burns et al., 2004; Invernizzi et al., 1996/1997; Invernizzi et al., 1997; Juel, 1996; McDaniel, 2002; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Morris et al., 1990; Murad & Topping, 2000; Neuman, 1995; Powell-Smith et al., 2000; Wasik, 1998a, 1998b). Volunteers in this study were appreciative of the directions they were given, and it was even suggested that more training might be beneficial in the future. Volunteers also quickly adapted to the routine
that was suggested during the training. Creating simple but fun routines to repeat made the process of literacy intervention a pleasure for the volunteers and their students.

When using community volunteers, it is recommended that a reading specialist be used as a contact for both the volunteers and the teacher (Burns et al., 2004; Invernizzi et al., 1996/1997; Invernizzi et al., 1997; McDaniel, 2002; Meier & Invernizzi, 2001; Morris et al., 1990; Murad & Topping, 2000; Wasik, 1998a, 1998b). Even the former classroom teachers who served as volunteers in the present study would stop in to ask questions about strategies to use with students.

As a reading specialist, I found it advantageous being a part of this program, as well. The insights offered by the volunteers helped me assist the classroom teacher with modifying or accommodating classroom work for the students. Through the reading of the weekly logs and informal chats, I got to know the struggling readers at CES even more than I would have had I just been there in a traditional reading specialist role.

It is advisable to use community volunteers for more than just copying and bulletin boards (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1991; Sanacore, 1997). The volunteers in this study were grateful to be used in a constructive manner and worked hard when given a concrete goal.

One-on-one attention is a valuable tool. The teachers and volunteers involved in the Poetry Academy process referred again and again to the worth of this aspect of the program. As Mrs. F. said, “This is proof of what just a few minutes of reading with your kid can do.” I would encourage teachers to strive to find time to meet one-on-one with students and in turn to encourage parents to read one-on-one with their children.
The Poetry Academy used poetry with positive results with students. Teachers, students, volunteers, and parents mentioned the short nature of poetry, combined with its usually humorous text, in conjunction with the improvements of the apprentices in their reading skills and attitudes towards reading. The use of poetry in the classroom could be used to help build confidence in students, as well as improve their reading skills and attitudes (Certo, 2004; Homan et al., 1993; Moyer, 1982; Perfect, 2005; Rasinski, 2000; Rasinski et al., 1994).

The voices of the various stakeholders were specifically collected for the benefit of the classroom practitioners. Whereas the statistical data will help prove the worth of the Poetry Academy, it is the interviews with the students, teachers, parents, and volunteers that will help practitioners evaluate the use of the program for their own classrooms.

Teachers implementing this program might wish to take advantage of the new depth the Poetry Academy gives into the lives of their struggling readers. Perhaps weekly reviewing the volunteer logs and informally chatting with the volunteers a couple of times a month will help bring the teacher up on the progress of their students. An example from the study is the little girl who sometimes forgot (or purposefully left at home) her glasses. The teacher did not even realize that the student was doing this until the volunteer pointed out her reluctance to wear her glasses because she did not like them! It is information like this that would be invaluable to the teacher that sometimes only another person can provide.
Finally, the principles of the Poetry Academy can fit into a classroom with ease. At its core, the Poetry Academy is dedicated to bringing humor and pleasure in reading to struggling readers. All students can benefit from fun texts and the intrinsic rewards that are gained from confident, fluent reading. The extrinsic rewards, like the stickers and the promise of a Poetry Café, can serve as motivators in the classroom to continue to propel students to fluent reading.

**Implications for Administrators**

Similar to teachers, administrators must take into consideration the various uses of community volunteers in the schools. The Poetry Academy is an example of a program that follows the guidelines set forth by Wasik to use community volunteers with positive results (Wasik, 1998a, 1998b).

The quantitative data collection of the Poetry Academy took place specifically with administrators in mind. It is usually these individuals who must show statistical data to school boards, state departments of education, and the federal agencies to receive funding. The Poetry Academy was able to demonstrate statistical significance in the areas of improvement to word recognition and attitude towards academic reading, making it a viable program to use in school districts needing to use research-based programs to continue to receive funding.

Administrators can support volunteer-based programs in various ways. Recruitment and retention of volunteers are difficult, but the principal at CES proved invaluable at referring names for use in the program, as well as leaving notes of appreciation for the volunteers. An administrator can also help solve the space issue
raised by the volunteers in the current study. A large broom closet or at times when students have special classes like music, art, or gym might help to identify empty rooms that would help alleviate this problem.

Implications for Teacher Educators

The Poetry Academy incorporated several researched methods of improving fluency: repeated reading, assisted reading, listening-while-reading, and modeling (Chard et al., 2002; Homan et al., 1993; Hoskisson, & Krohm, 1974; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Lionetti & Cole, 2004; Rasinski, 1990; Therrien, 2004). Teaching these different methods to pre-service teachers is advisable; they have been proven effective through research in improving words correct per minute, word recognition, and comprehension (Chard et al., 2002; Homan et al., 1993; Hoskisson, & Krohm, 1974; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Lionetti & Cole, 2004; Rasinski, 1990; Therrien, 2004). It was the combination of various strategies that proved so powerful in the Poetry Academy. Instructing pre-service teachers how to combine various strategies for big payoffs would prove beneficial.

Pre-service teachers should also be made aware of how to build and use community volunteer programs effectively. Volunteers express dissatisfaction when assigned to menial tasks (Sanacore, 1997) but express positive reactions to involvement in a structured, monitored program (Wasik 1998a, 1998b). This study showed how training, routine, and feedback can create a positive volunteer workforce.

Finally, the present study has brought to light the importance of hearing the voices of those involved in a program. Traditionally, parent volunteer programs are evaluated from the perspective of the teacher and through the progress of the student (Burns et al.,
This study broadened its focus to include the students, their parents, the volunteers, and the teachers. This comprehensive view of the program values all the stakeholders. Teachers will be able to make a more informed decision of which program, curriculum, or strategy to include if the research they read values the voices of all those who are impacted.

Future Research

To continue the research begun in this study, the first step would be to set up the Poetry Academy again with a true experimental design. As stated in Chapter 1, a limitation to a quasi-experimental design is the fact that the results can only be applied to the population in the research study, at that time. A true-experimental design would allow the results to be generalized to a broader population. This could be accomplished by randomly sampling for an experimental and control group rather than setting up groups based on scores.

The Poetry Academy was created and examined on a rural population. It would be beneficial to use with both an urban and suburban population to see if this use of community volunteers would provide the same boost to struggling readers.

For communities where volunteers are not prevalent, the use of cross-age peer tutors might work well in the Poetry Academy. Using middle school or high school students, the Poetry Academy could still be implemented. It would be interesting to see whether the program would remain effective with a change in the tutors.
Finally, the Poetry Academy was tested using 3rd graders. However, the universal appeal of poetry and the use of community volunteers make it ideal to expand to both younger and older students.

Summary

In August of 2005, I was walking with my husband at the county fair when I had heard a child’s voice yelling, “Mrs. W.! Mrs. W!” I turned to see Nikki standing with her sister, brother, and father. Nikki explained that she showed her goats here at the fair and invited me to come see them. As we walked and chatted, Nikki’s little sister kept looking up at me, waiting for a break in the conversation. When there was a pause she piped up, “Will Nikki have more poems to read to me this year?” I met the eyes of Nikki’s father over her head and he explained, “I told her that you were the lady in charge of the Poetry Academy. She loved getting read to by her big sister every week.”

This final entry in the researcher log illustrates the depth of data collected to evaluate a program that undertook the challenge of providing an interesting and innovative intervention for struggling readers. Using community volunteers, poetry, and family together helped to improve fluency and attitudes toward reading in the Poetry Academy students.

The goal when creating this program was to not follow in the footsteps of traditional literacy intervention. Traditionally, literacy intervention is typified by watered-down instruction and segmenting of text that results in a lack of comprehension and interest (Allington, 2002). Instead, the Poetry Academy sought to enrich student lives with personal attention and engaging text, while retaining a research-based premise.
Haley, a student mentioned by both teacher, volunteer, and parents for improvement in both skills and attitude, made a definitive statement about the Poetry Academy during her interview.

Mrs. W., it didn’t seem like school. I knew the whole time I was reading and learning, but it felt like spending time with a friend. If all school was like this, I wouldn’t be so bored. I would like to read more.

Haley read weekly with Mrs. O’Neil, who made this statement: “This has just proven to me what just five minutes of reading with your kid can do.”
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

RETELLING RUBRIC
## Retelling Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Retells text with detailed statement of the main idea, accompanied by 4 or more supporting details. Uses actual language from text to retell and relates text to another text or own life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Retells text with statement of the main idea, accompanied by 3 supporting details. Uses actual language from text to retell OR relates text to another text or own life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Retells text with 2 details, one of which may be the main idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recalls only 1 idea or detail from idea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What are your names?

2. What did you like about the Poetry Academy?

3. What didn’t you like about the Poetry Academy?

4. What changes could be made to the Poetry Academy to make it better?

5. Is there anything else I should know about the Poetry Academy?
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REFERENCES


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