2016

Audio Books with Struggling Readers at the Elementary School Level

Alicia Hollis McGill
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Alicia McGill

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Anthony Dralle, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Subir Dass, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Cathryn White, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

Audio Books with Struggling Readers at the Elementary School Level

by

Alicia Hollis McGill

MEd, Converse College, 2001

BS, University of South Carolina, Upstate, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2016

Abstract

In a Title I school located in a southeastern state, 60% of 3rd grade students are reading below grade level. The state's new reading initiative ties grade promotion to 3rd grade students reading on grade level. At the study site, administrators identified audio books as a possibly helpful reading tool. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development theory, which holds that learners can learn new skills more readily with guided assistance, framed this study. The purpose of this quantitative, comparative design study was to explore the associations between the use of audio books and the reading levels of 3rd grade struggling readers. Research questions were used to compare the reading levels of struggling readers who use audio books with the reading levels of: (a) struggling readers reading silently, (b) at or above grade level readers who read with audio books, and (c) at or above grade level readers who read silently. Two 3rd grade classes were selected, with 25 students using audio books and 25 students reading silently, to participate in this project. Scores from the AR and from the pre- and posttest STAR assessments over a 9-week period were analyzed and compared using an independent samples t test to explore associations between the use of audio books and the comprehension and reading levels of the participants. Analysis of the results showed that the use of audiobooks was not significantly related to increased reading or comprehension levels for struggling readers. Significant improvements in reading comprehension were shown for students reading at or above grade level that read silently or used audio books. Based on the findings, a professional development project for teachers providing research-supported reading strategy instruction was developed. The findings may lead to improvements in instructional practices by encouraging the use of research-based reading strategies, which could promote positive social change by supporting greater academic success for elementary students through improved reading comprehension.

Audio Books with Struggling Readers at the Elementary School Level

by

Alicia Hollis McGill

M. Ed., Converse College, 2001

B.S., University of South Carolina, Upstate, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2016

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my children, Tia, Tymichia, and TJ for without them, I would not have pursued this endeavor. You three were and always will be my motivation. Thank you for your unwavering encouragement and support. Always remember to aim high and you can accomplish anything you set your mind to. I love you so much!

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my doctoral committee chair, Dr. Anthony Dralle, for his patience, understanding, guidance and support throughout this journey. His calm demeanor helped me to overcome many obstacles to continue to push on when the process became challenging and overwhelming. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Subir Dass and Dr, Cathryn White-Walker, for your encouraging words and support. To all of the other Walden support staff whom helped me reach this milestone in my career, thank you. Most importantly, again, I want to thank my family whose patience, words of comfort, and confidence in me helped me to realize I was on the right path and could finish this doctoral journey. Thank you to everyone who has believed in and helped me accomplish this great milestone in my educational career.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Reading is an essential skill used throughout a lifetime. Without mastery of reading in the earlier grades, reading becomes more difficult as children progress in school and life. Educators must find various tools to assist struggling readers with comprehension. I explored the potential value of using audio books as a tool for assisting struggling readers. In this section, I examine the local and national problem of students reading below grade level. I also reviewed research related to the use of audio books as a tool that may help students experience greater reading success. As the ability to read fluently is a prerequisite skill that contributes to the academic and career success of all individuals, it is important to examine the potential value in using audio books to help students achieve strong reading skills.

Problem Statement

This study addressed the problem of low comprehension among third grade students in an elementary school due in part to teachers not making use of available resources including audio books as reading instruction aids. A symptom of this problem was shown by low reading scores among 60% of the third grade students (Renaissance Learning, 2014) who were reading below grade level at the end of the 2013-2014 academic year as shown by the STAR Reading Assessment. Within the district, there has been a major focus on improving reading scores, but some teachers minimally use resources that may prove beneficial to struggling readers, such as the audio book. Educators need to use all available resources to help increase reading achievement in the classroom.

At the time of the study, administrative leaders at the site expressed interest in researching ways to improve the reading proficiency levels of students. Administrators targeted third grade students in particular, due to the significant long term consequences for communities and the nation if students are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2013). Based upon data from reading assessments completed at the school site, students in the local setting are in need of interventions that will assist with reading deficiencies. Because of the strong connection between students' levels of reading proficiency and long-term academic success, educators need to do everything possible to aid struggling readers and help them achieve grade level reading proficiency. One available resource, which could be used more in classrooms within the school, is the audio book.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The site for the proposed study was a Title I, urban elementary school in a southeastern state. It is comprised of approximately 400 students in kindergarten through Grade 5 with 76.1% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch in the school. For four consecutive years, the school had not met Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) as specified by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) due to the students' low reading proficiency (citation). As a fourth grade teacher in this district, I have noticed that the children coming to fourth grade were not reading on grade level. Lower scores on basal reading tests and other reading assignments served as additional evidence that students were reading below level. In the 2013-2014 academic year, about 60% of students

entering fourth grade at the proposed site were reading below fourth grade level according to STAR Reading Enterprise (Renaissance Learning, 2013), as measured by a 30-34 question multiple choice comprehension test which is used to gauge a student's independent reading level in the target district.

District personnel have voiced concerns about the below level reading throughout the district because reading comprehension seems to be a district-wide problem across grade levels. Table 1 shows Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) scores from the 2012-2013 academic years. The percentage of students scoring *not met* on PASS increased from the previous year's scores in Grades 3-8 with an exception of those students from grades 4 to 5. In third grade 27.0% of students scored *not met,* while 31.8% in fourth grade, 26.6% in fifth grade, 31.2% in sixth grade, 32.4% in seventh grade and 38.4% in eighth grade earned this ranking. (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013).

Table 1

2012-2013 District Wide Reading PASS Scores of Students Scoring "Not Met" by Grade Level

Grade	A	B
3	612	27.0
4	669	31.8
5	683	26.6
6	660	31.2
7	728	32.4
8	661	38.4

Note: Column A: Number of Students Tested
Column B: Percentage of Students Scoring "Not Met"

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Reading is skill children will develop at least through the end of high school and will use every day throughout their adult lives. Reading proficiency is needed in order to be a productive citizen of society. However, many children continuously struggle with basic reading skills. In the upper grades more focus is on reading to learn instead of learning to read, so those students who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade may face serious consequences (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2013; Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, 2010). Particularly in the elementary grade levels, educators should utilize all strategies necessary to assist students with reading proficiency.

Being a proficient reader by the end of third grade plays a significant role in determining future scholastic success. Across the nation, in 2013, 67% of third grade students were not reading at a proficient level (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2013). If students do not attain grade level reading skills by the end of third grade, they will not be prepared to compete academically, or when entering the job force (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2013). The authors of the Campaign for Grade Level Reading (2013) also stated, "Reading proficiency by third grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success" (para.1). As this statement indicates, when children are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade, they face future academic problems and the odds of graduation lessen. Building comprehension skills in struggling readers is a means to prepare all readers to become successful, proficient readers.

The lack of effective reading strategies and resources may contribute to students' reading difficulties in schools throughout South Carolina, the state of the local problem setting. Only 24.6% of South Carolina's students in Grades 3-8 had scores in the proficient range according to the state test, PASS, in 2013-2014 (SCDOE, 2013b). Educators must continue to search for and incorporate the most effective reading strategies and resources that will help increase the reading levels, proficiency, and attitudes toward reading of all students.

Definitions

Basic Reading- Basic reading skills include language, concentration, visual processing skills, auditory processing skills (important for developing phonemic awareness), memory and reasoning (LearningRx, 2014).

Proficient Reading- For the purpose of this study the term proficient reading will be used to refer to students who represent solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching at this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter in their grade level (Connors-Tadros, 2014).

Struggling reader- For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a reader who is falling well below grade level standards in reading, and is currently reading at least one grade level below his or her academic grade (Moreau, 2014).

Significance

It is important for students to be reading on grade level by the end of third grade because students not reading proficiently by this time are in danger of academic failure (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2013). Statewide Language Arts Assessment data from PASS is based in part on reading comprehension. Data from the PASS Test indicate that in 2013-2014, 64% of fourth grade students statewide were reading below grade level as they enter fourth grade, showing that almost two-thirds of students throughout South Carolina are not meeting this important benchmark (SCDOE (2013b).

Teachers in the early grades must make every effort to incorporate the strategies and resources needed to increase the reading levels of below level struggling readers. Morris (2011) stated that:

Many children struggle with learning to read in the 1st and 2nd grade. Once they fall behind, they have difficulty catching up with their peers. If they are one or more years behind at the end of third grade, they are seriously at risk. From fourth grade on, our education system demands grade-level reading ability. (p. 54)

In South Carolina, third grade is the first year of state testing in all subject areas including reading, math, social studies, and science (SCDOE, 2013b). Students are expected to be able to function independently on reading tasks. In fourth grade and beyond, teachers are supposed to teach children to apply the strategies that will make them better readers (SCDOE, 2013a). The state curriculum and guide materials make clear that starting in fourth grade, reading time is devoted more to helping students master content they read and less emphasis is placed on helping students learn to read. (SCDOE, 2013a) On grade level reading is vital for success in school and life, especially in a high-stakes testing society.

PASS, is the state test in South Carolina for students in Grades 3-8 used to measure reading and research skills, math, science, social studies, and writing (SCDOE, 2013b). At the end of the fourth grade school year, each student's reading ability is assessed with the PASS Test (SCDOE, 2013b). Students are required to read the test independently and understand the questions they are being asked. Skills measured on the test from the South Carolina State Standards include making inferences, drawing conclusions, identifying facts and opinions, identifying main ideas, identifying causes and effects, and understanding words in context (SCDOE, 2013a). The aforementioned skills are considered as level two and three skills on Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) of Reading. (Webb, 2005).

Webb's DOK is a comparison to Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking. Both documents measure the cognitive difficulty or complexity it takes to produce an accurate response to a question (Holmes, 2012). As described by Aungst (2014), In Webb's DOK, there are four levels of complexity. Level 1 measures simple skills such as recall and

recognition. Level 2 involves the application of skills in context. Level 3 measures reasoning skills, and Level 4 involves extending the thinking and thinking beyond the text. Since students are assessed on grade level text and questioned on all DOK levels, it is imperative that fourth grade students read and comprehend on grade level because they are responsible for demonstrating competency in all four DOK levels on PASS.

In order to provide necessary support for below level readers, teachers must make use of every effective strategy and resource available. One such resource that may be underused currently in many third grade classrooms is the audio book. Audio books may be an important resource for students who struggle with reading tasks. Effective use of audio books may have a positive impact on students' reading proficiency. While some studies suggested that audio books could have a positive impact on student reading levels (Change, 2011; Esteves & Whitten, 2011; Gunter, 2010; Whittenham, Huffman, Christensen & McAllister, 2013), there have been few studies conducted on how audio books can be used to improve the comprehension and reading levels of struggling readers in particular.

The purpose of this study is to explore the associations between the use of audio books and the reading levels of third grade struggling readers. The majority of students at the local site is reading below grade level and is in need of more effective instructional strategies and resources to help remedy the problem of low reading proficiency. Studying the impact of audio book use might be useful to the local setting because teachers will have another instructional tool to assist in the classroom with increasing reading proficiency. Because few studies have been conducted on how audio books can be used to improve the comprehension and reading levels of struggling readers, this study is

intended to address this gap in practice and determine if using audio books as an

instructional resource is beneficial in increasing the reading proficiency of third grade

readers.

Guiding/Research Question

Low reading proficiency is a problem at the local site. The majority of students in

third grade are reading below grade level as indicated by their low scores on standardized

tests. Because of the strong connection between reading proficiency in third grade

students and their likelihood of future academic success, the district has identified this

issue as a top priority issue.

On-grade level reading is important by the end of third grade for academic

success (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2013). Educators need to utilize any and all

instructional resources available to improve the reading proficiency of students, and

audio books offer the potential to serve as one of these helpful resources. This research

study explored the problem of low reading proficiency and sought to determine if audio

books can be used to improve the reading proficiency of struggling third grade readers. In

order to explore the issue of the use of audio books on struggling readers, the questions

and hypothesis that will guide the study are:

RQ1: How do the reading levels of students identified as struggling readers

compare between those who use audio books and those who read silently without

the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

$H_0 1$: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR of

students identified as struggling readers between those who use audio books and

those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

H_a1: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by Accelerated Reader of students identified as struggling readers between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

RQ2: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction?

H_02: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction.

H_a2: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by AR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction.

RQ3: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

H_03: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

H_a3: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

Review of the Literature

Struggling readers face many challenges when having to read and comprehend text on an independent level; most often, these students need assistance with word calling or comprehension (Kame'enui, Adams,& Lyon, 2015). In the classroom, assistance typically comes in the form of a teacher or more capable peer. At home, a parent, guardian, or sibling may provide reading support. Listening to a more capable reader allows the struggling reader to better understand the material even if it is on a higher reading level (Kame'enui, Adams &, Lyon). Teachers, more capable classmates, and family members are not always readily available to assist students with reading. Using Audio books is intended to help scaffold the reading comprehension of struggling readers by allowing them to hear a master reader actually read the text to them. The goal of reading while listening is that after listening and following along, the reader will be able to complete the reading independently and better comprehend the material, rather than just complete it as an assigned task (Chang, 2011). Struggling readers need support while reading, and audio books may help provide the assistance struggling readers need.

The theoretical framework that will guide the study is Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with a more capable peer" (p. 79). Learners are

thought to be able to function in the ZPD when material is within the appropriate level.

Each student's ZPD is different. It is more dependent upon the individual, independent

reading level of each child. Individuals are thought to learn best when working

collaboratively with others and it is through such collaborative efforts with more skilled

persons that learners learn and internalize new concepts and the skills needed to work

toward independence (Shabani, Khatib, Ebadi, 2010).

 Vygotsky (1978) postulated that learners can learn and accomplish more with an

experienced person than they can on their own. He further explained that the learning

zone is enhanced by the support of a more capable person. The more capable person will

guide or scaffold the learner in order to assist with completion of an activity that the

learner would not have the capability of completing independently without frustration.

Vygotsky asserted that over time, the learner takes on more responsibility for owning the

learning experience and gradually, the novice learner becomes the expert.

 Vygotsky's theory has been applied to reading instruction, and continues to

influence reading instruction decades later. When students are expected to read

independently, reading material needs to be carefully selected so that it will be within

their ZPD, or confidence reading level (Renaissance Learning, 2014). A student's ZPD

range represents the level of difficulty that is neither too hard nor too easy (Vygotsky,

1978). A book is on a child's ZPD if the child can read the book fluently and

comprehend the material independently. It is the level of reading which students can

manage without experiencing too much frustration when reading independently. A child

should be able to read a selection within his or her ZPD with minimal support

Renaissance Learning, 2014). If the text is above the child's zone of proximal development, then the student will need assistance in order to read and comprehend it

In sum, audio books are efficient and effective tools to support the struggling reader because they provide the necessary support, which allows the struggling reader to function in the ZPD. While listening to the book on tape, the learner should be reading along with the voice on the tape in order to become familiar with the words. Once the child has listened to the book on tape on several occasions, paying close attention to the inflection and emphasis on words and phrases, the child should be able to read the text independently. The listener can stop and start the audio book or recording at will. The learner experiences continuous fluent reading and eventually should be able to transition from monotonous, word-by-word reading to fluency, which aids comprehension (Thoermer & Williams, 2012). Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading. According to Thoermer & Williams, "Fluency is a bridge between a student's ability to decode words and comprehend text" (p. 442). Fluency is essential for reading comprehension. A major benefit of using audio books is to assist the reader with fluency and comprehension.

Stages of Reading

People progress through stages as they are learning to read. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, (2013) most children learn to read by age 6 or 7. Some children learn at 4 or 5 years of age. The stages of reading development can be described as emergent, early, transitional, and fluent. The stages are not characterized by ages, but by experience and level of reading success (Pacific Resources for Education Learning, 2013). This means that an individual's reading level is not classified by age but by the

stage of reading they have attained. Some adults can be emergent readers just as some 5 or 6 year olds can be fluent readers.

The Pacific Resources for Education Learning (2013) described the characteristics of emergent, early, and transitional readers. Emergent readers are those readers who can recognize letters and sounds. These readers are at the beginning level of letter-sound relationships. Early readers can make predictions about words, but rely on pictures to assist with meaning Transitional readers have strategies in place to help them understand more difficult text and the fluent reader is the confident reader who most often reads independently with ease

Regardless of where a child is along the reading spectrum, it is the teacher's responsibility to meet students where they are and help them progress. There are many strategies used to teach students to read. To learn to read the child must figure out the relationship between sounds and letters (Lyon, 2013). Comprehension is strengthened when the child does not have to spend time figuring out a word and can read fluently. No matter the stage or age of the reader, educators must utilize all necessary strategies to propel the reader forward.

The Impact of Struggling to Read

Being a skilled reader by the end of third grade is crucial. Reading is the gateway to all other knowledge (Kame'emui et al.2015) and if children do not learn to read proficiently, they will struggle with all other tasks that require reading in school and in life. According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) millions of children reach fourth grade without being able to read proficiently. The inability to read proficiently by the end of third grade has detrimental effects later in life.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010) authors stated that higher dropout rates in high school could be linked to the lack of proficient reading by the end of third grade. One of the negative consequences of more dropout rates is its impact on the nation. The Foundation authors further indicated that not being able to read proficiently decreases the nation's ability to be competitive with other nations. The authors asserted:

> If current trends hold true, 6.6 million low-income children in the birth to age 8 group are at increased risk of failing to graduate from high school on time because they won't be able to meet The National Assessment of Educational Progress's (NAEP) proficient reading level by the end of third grade. (p.3)

It is vital that children are reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

Reading Aloud

Reading is a fundamental skill needed by adults and children of all ages throughout life. Learning to read is the most important accomplishment of school-aged children (Lane & Pullen, 2015). Being able to read is a prerequisite for future success in college, the workforce, driving, cooking, and many more activities. For those who struggle with reading, tools such as the audio book, and those that deliver audio book functions such as the IPOD, IPAD (Lamb & Johnson, 2011), or other electronic devices can serve as a stepping-stone to being able to read independently.

Reading aloud to children can be beneficial. As stated by Gold and Gibson (2014) "Children can listen on a higher language level than they can read, so reading aloud makes complex ideas more accessible and exposes children to vocabulary and language patterns that are not part of everyday speech" (para 3). Books help to build a child's personal vocabulary. Struggling readers can have the same experiences as fluent readers

while listening to a more capable reader. Thoermer and Williams (2012) noted that "exposing students to rich and varied fluent models during read aloud is a beneficial strategy to support reading fluency development" (p.442). Struggling readers need to hear fluent reading on a constant basis. Thoermer and Williams recommended that struggling readers hear and understand what fluent reading sounds like because not only does reading aloud help struggling readers with fluency, it also helps with introducing them to diverse genres, authors, and titles which can increase reading motivation and lead to them reading a wider range of material. Reading aloud is a potentially valuable tool for struggling readers.

Potential Benefits of Using Audio Books in the Classroom

For many struggling readers, there is a substantial delay between when they see a word and when they say the word (Basaran, 2013). Struggling readers often do not have the essential decoding skills necessary to read words with automaticity (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006). This delay in the processing of words causes a breakdown in comprehension. From my experience as a fourth grade teacher in working with struggling readers, it is difficult for the student to recall the main idea of a passage or story when so much time is devoted to sounding out words (Observation, November 2013).

When listening to a recorded book, the reader does not have to pronounce the words in the book. The student only listens to them. The book naturally verbalizes the words so that the listener can hear them pronounced correctly. Listening to audio books also allows the listener to hear appropriate expression and phrasing, skills they may not be able to perform correctly if reading independently.

Audio books demonstrate how to read with accuracy, intonation, and pitch because a more experienced reader reads the text. Fluent reading is heard and internalized. The struggling reader hears expressive reading and is able to better understand the feelings and emotions of characters, which aids the reader's comprehension. LeVar Burton (n.d), host of the popular kid's educational television show *Reading Rainbow,* stated that:

> Audio books combine two of the most important ingredients in creating a successful lifelong reader. First, they bring to life the heart and soul of a book, they entertain, they inspire, they enrich, they link the pleasure of language and listening to the reading experience itself. Secondly, they build a reading scaffold-broadening vocabulary, stretching attention spans, flexing thinking skills, all of which serve as a strong bridge across which young readers can stride into a world-filled future, one confident step after another. (p.1)

Audio books can take the frustration out of reading when books are carefully selected and are on or slightly above a child's ZPD reading level. Students do not have to spend time struggling to figure out words, emotions, and phrasing. The words are pronounced for them thus increasing the time spent focusing on the text and increasing comprehension.

Struggling readers need to hear how fluent reading sounds. They need to hear words pronounced in order to be able to include them into their own vocabularies. Being able to hear the proper pronunciation of words is one way that audio books can help the struggling reader. Audio books allow students to listen to and comprehend books above their ZPD in terms of vocabulary, phrasing, and expression. Active listening to books on tape can provide a scaffold that leads to fluent, independent reading. Children can also be

introduced to various types of text and literature that they normally could not or would not be able to read on their own.

In Whittenham, Huffman, Christensen and McAllister's (2013) study on the effectiveness of audio book club participation on the reading skills and attitudes of struggling readers, the impact of using audio books with struggling readers was analyzed. Whittenham et al explained that the study included 21 participants in grades 4 and 5 who were reading two grade levels below grade level. Participants were interviewed at the beginning, middle, and end of the study about their reading attitudes. The student participants listened to audio books and participated in the book club from early September until May. The authors further noted that the Scores from the Arkansas Benchmark Reading Exam were used for quantitative analysis in the study. The Arkansas Benchmark Reading Exam scores were compared from the prior year and at the end of the study period to determine if the audio book club affected reading skills. Whitteham et al's analysis of the results indicated that participation in the audio book club had a positive effect on the reading skills and attitudes of struggling reader. The authors further concluded that teachers reported improvement in students' attitudes towards reading.

Chang (2011) conducted a study that investigated the effects of reading while listening to audio books on English as foreign language (EFL) learners' listening fluency and vocabulary gain. In this study, two groups were formed. Chang explained that the experimental group listened to audio books while the control group received instruction-using text that was not read to them. A pre-and posttest consisting of 40 multiple-choice questions and 40 items of dictation was given to both groups. After 26 weeks, the experimental group improved more than 100% on dictation and gained 17 marks on the

vocabulary test as compared to their initial scores (Chang). The author noted that results demonstrated that even though both groups of students showed gains in dictation and vocabulary acquisition, students in the experimental group who listened to text on tape outperformed the control group in both areas.

Assisted reading with audio books has been used as an effective instructional intervention for students with learning disabilities and with struggling readers (Esteves & Whitten, 2011). Esteves and Whitten conducted a study to compare the efficacy of assisted reading with digital audio books with Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). The study consisted of 20 upper elementary students with documented reading disabilities and Individualized Educational Plans in reading. Two groups were formed: a treatment and a control group. The treatment group consisted of participants who chose to listen to children's literature with audio books four to five times per week for 8. Instead of participating in SSR, the participants listened to digital audio books for 20 to 30 minutes a day. Esteves and Whitten reported that even though both groups showed gains, the treatment group reported greater gains in the number of words read correctly per minute when reading independently for the posttest.

Gunter (2010) conducted a study in her classroom to aid in comprehension and to discover a way to motivate her eleventh grade students to want to read what they considered boring, stale novels. She surveyed her students at the beginning of the semester to determine their interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Gunter explained that each of her three classes read one novel to gain a baseline for comparison, and that. Over the course of the study, students read three more books. The author/ researcher formed Experimental and control groups. The experimental group listened to the book via MP3

player and the other two classes read the same book. After completing each novel, Gunter

administered students a 50-question objective comprehension test. All of her classes took

the same test. Gunter reported that the study results demonstrated that the class that

listened to the novel via MP3 Player outscored the other classes that read the novels.

Saturation

While searching the Walden Databases Thoreau, ERIC, and Education Research

Complete for more information and trying to examine the influence that audio books

have for struggling readers, I began yielding the similar and redundant results. As a

result, I had to consult other sources on the Internet. While searching the Internet, I found

journals, articles, and reports. I used phrases such as *audio books and comprehension,*

audio books and benefits, use of audio books, struggling readers, characteristics of

struggling readers, reading aloud, and *oral reading*. I eventually found that no additional

research was available. At this point, I concluded that saturation had been reached and

everything available on those topics had been found.

For the purpose of this project, I studied whether adding a research-supported

strategy such as audio books would help struggling readers with comprehension.

Teachers should use research-based strategies in the classroom to assist struggling

readers with comprehension. It is important that the most effective strategies are used in

the classroom to support struggling readers on all levels. Audio books may be one of the

effective strategies.

Implications

The project investigated the associations of audio books with the comprehension levels of readers who struggle in third grade. This study used Accelerated Reader and STAR scores in order to determine if the comprehension and reading levels of struggling third grade readers would improve because of using audio books. Findings from the study demonstrated that audio books could be used as a viable resource to help struggling readers increase their comprehension.

Because of this study, since I found a positive connection between the use of audio books and improved comprehension, there could be a school or district wide initiative to increase the use of audio books as a valuable resource in all classrooms to assist struggling readers with comprehension. Professional development in schools can also be shaped to help teachers incorporate necessary strategies in the classroom that will assist struggling readers with improved comprehension.

Summary

Struggling readers need support. Proficient reading by the end of third grade is vital for future success of students. According to the Campaign for Grade Level Reading (2013, para. 1) "reading proficiency by third grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success." If students are not reading on a proficient level by the end of third grade, the odds of graduating high school become less and less.

Previous studies have indicated that audio books can be used to increase comprehension, motivation, vocabulary acquisition, and fluency. They may be used to combat the reading proficiency problem. Effective reading strategies such as audio books

are much needed and underused in many classrooms. Audio books can be used as a means to assist struggling readers to read more proficiently.

This study examined the associations of audio books with the comprehension and reading levels of struggling readers. A review of the literature relating to the benefits of audio book use with struggling readers has been presented. In Section 2, the methodology of the research will be discussed in detail. The research design, approach, and a justification for using the design will also be discussed. Information will be given on the setting, sample, limitations, scope, delimitations, and how to protect the rights of the participants. A plan for data collection and analysis will be discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

This study used a quantitative methodology. Two sources of data were collected. A comparative design was used to compare the difference in comprehension and reading levels of third grade readers who used audiobooks to those who did not use audiobooks. AR was used to measure comprehension level and STAR was used to measure the reading level. The school did not have any evaluative information concerning the use of audiobooks. Conducting this study and analyzing the data revealed more information as to the possible utility of audio books as a reading tool in the classroom.

Research Questions

Section 2 provides information about the research design, the setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, and data collection. Assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations are examined. The measures taken to ensure protection of the participants in this study are discussed. Lastly, the data findings and analysis are presented.

The research questions that guided the study are:

RQ1: How do the reading levels of students identified as struggling readers compare between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

RQ2: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction?

RQ3: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

Research Design

Justification for Using the Design

A comparative design was chosen to examine the associations of the use of audio books on the comprehension and reading levels of third grade readers. Experimental research is also "a traditional approach to conducting quantitative research" (Creswell, 2012, p. 294). A traditional quantitative research approach was appropriate because I was seeking to identify possible differences, as measured by assessment results, in the comprehension and reading levels of struggling student readers who listened to audio books and their grade-level peers who did not listen to audio books over a 9-week period.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze the association between the use of audio books and student academic achievement in reading as measured by STAR and AR. A pre- and posttest design was used to measure the comprehension and reading levels of third grade readers before and after the use of audio books. According to Creswell (2012), a pretest provides a measure in some attribute before the treatment is given and a posttest provides a measure on the same attribute after the treatment has been given. There were four groups of third graders studied: struggling readers who read with audio books; struggling readers who read silently without the aid of audio books; at or above level readers who read with audio books; and at or above level readers who read silently without the aid of audio books. A number, not a name, identified each child.

Student data in all third grade classes were analyzed after taking the STAR and

Accelerated Reader Tests in order to explore the association between the use of audio

books and students' reading and comprehension development. The students were with

their teachers during the time of data collection. The teachers were the adults in charge

over the group during the time of research.

Twenty-five students from one group listened to and read audio books while

another group of 25 students did not use the audio books during independent reading time

in school each day. Both groups read in the presence of their classroom teacher. I

reviewed archival STAR and AR data concerning students' reading levels before and

after the study to investigate the possible associations between audio book use and

student reading and comprehension levels.

Setting and Sample

An elementary school in a southeastern state provided the setting for the study.

Approximately 412 students in grades K-5 attend the school Cherokee County School

District, 2013). The racial/ethnic origin of the student body consists of 58% Caucasian

students, 36% African American, and 6% of other ethnicities (Cherokee County School

District). Report card data for the elementary school (2012-2013) indicated that it is a low

socioeconomic school with 70.1% of the total population receiving free or reduced lunch

(Cherokee County School District).

At the beginning of each school year and several occasions throughout the year,

teachers administer the STAR Reading Test to determine the reading level of each child

in the class. The reading level is the grade equivalent level that the child is reading on.

Reading comprehension is assessed through the school-wide use of the AR program. All

students throughout the building take AR tests on books they have read in order to assess their comprehension or understanding of the book.

The administrators randomly assigned students in the third grade as a sample to participate in the audiobook initiative to explore any possible association between the use of audio books and third grade students' reading and comprehension levels. A convenience sample of 50 third grade students participated in the initiative because this was the number of students enrolled in third grade in the school where the study was conducted. There were 11 Black males, 6 Black females, 20 White males, and 13 White females included in the study. Of the 50 participants in the study, half, or 25 of the students, used audiobooks, while the other half did not. Information about the sample used is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Sample by Race and Gender

Category	Number in Sample
Black Males	11
Black Females	6
White Males	20
White Females	13

Participants were chosen from each class by the administration based upon their reading level so that there was a close representation of below level readers and at or above level readers in each group. Students remained in the regular classroom during the time of the study. Therefore, some audiobook and nonaudiobook students were in the same class.

When choosing a sample to study, it is important to obtain a sufficient sample size. According to Skrivanek (2009), the power of a statistical test is the ability of the test to correctly reject a null hypothesis. The larger the sample size, the more the power increases, but the smaller the sample size, the more the power decreases (Shrivanek). A power of .8 is the desired size in a research study, which means there is at least an 80% chance of correctly rejecting the null hypothesis.

The target population chosen from this setting for the analysis was the entire third grade population. Using the entire third grade population was helpful in terms of data analysis related to the research questions. For the purpose of the study, those students with scores ranging below 3.0 were considered as struggling readers. The sample for the group of struggling readers is included in Table 3.

Table 3

Description of Sample

Category	Grade Equivalent Range	Total Sample
Struggling Reader	< 3.0	25
At or Above Level Reader	3.0 or >	25

Instrumentation and Materials

For this study, two different instruments were used to collect student data. The first instrument was STAR Reading. STAR is highly rated as a tool for reading assessment by the US Department of Education's Response to Intervention Team (Renaissance Learning, 2011, p.1). STAR is used for "screening and progress monitoring assessment and is a computer-adaptive multiple choice test which measures the general

reading achievement and comprehension for grades 1-12" (Renaissance Learning, 2011, p.1). STAR provides both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced scores and can be completed in about 10 minutes (Renaissance Learning). Items are tailored to meet a child's knowledge and skill level (Renaissance Learning). STAR can be administered as often as desired by teachers to monitor reading growth. The test is facilitated by teachers and administered on the computer.

Scores are calculated by the difficulty of the question as well as the correct answers chosen on the test (Renaissance Learning, 2011). There are various summary reports, which can be viewed by teachers after the test. Grade Equivalent (GE) Scores range from 0.0 to 12.9+ and represent how the student compares nationally against other students (Renaissance Learning). For example, if a second grade student's GE score were 3.4 this would mean the student scored about as well as a typical third grade student in the fourth month of school.

An Independent Reading Level Report (IRL) is produced by STAR and indicates the highest reading level at which a student is about 80% comfortable at reading and understanding words on that level with assistance (Renaissance Learning, 2011). For example, a third grade student with an IRL of 4.5 is capable of reading fourth grade words with an 80% accuracy or better. Scores on the STAR IRL report can range from Pre-Primer (PP) to Post- High School (PHS) (Renaissance Learning). Student reading levels differ.

STAR yields different types of scores and reports. Scaled Score reports can be used to compare student growth over time and the ZPD Renaissance Learning, 2011). Reports show a student's readability level based on STAR results. ZPD scores are written

in ranges such as 2.3-3.3, which are grade level equivalencies (Renaissance Learning).

This score provides the teacher with a range of reading grade level scores, which indicate

the span of reading levels for books a child may read to help him grow as a reader.

Reliability is the extent to which a test yields consistent results from one

administration of the test to another (Renaissance Learning, 2011, p.4). Four types of

reliability data were used for testing the reliability for STAR: (a) split-half, (b) generic,

(c) test-retest, and (d) alternate-forms reliability. Split-half and generic reliability are

estimates of internal consistency reliability and the latter two are estimates of repeat

administrations of STAR Reading tests (Renaissance Learning).

The split-half method was conducted by splitting the test in half and correlating

half of the test items. Then, the Spearman-Brown formula was used which estimates the

entire test reliability using all questions on the STAR Test (Creswell, 2012). Generic

reliability is attained from individual estimates of measurement error. Those estimates

range from 0.89 to 0.92 and vary little from grade to grade which is high for a 25-

question test.

The test-retest reliability is used to determine if the results are reliable from one

test administration to the next (Renaissance Learning, 2011). The researcher administered

the same test twice to the same group of students. The reliability score for STAR using

the test-retest method was 0.94.

Finally, STAR developers also used alternate-form reliability (Renaissance

Learning, 2011). Alternate-form reliability "involves using two instruments, both

measuring the same variables and relating the scores for the same group of individuals to

the two instruments" (Creswell, 2012, p.160). It allows the viewer to see if both sets of

scores are equivalent to each other. The correlation was 0.95 for the alternate reliability test.

According to Renaissance Learning (2009), validity is used to determine a test's usefulness. Instruments used in research should be valid in order to gain accurate results. Construct validity measures the constructs or variables in the study. In order to test for construct validity, one has to determine if the instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure Renaissance Learning).

STAR was intended to measure the reading achievement of students (Renaissance Learning, 2009). In order to test for the validity of STAR it was measured against other reading achievement tests such as the California Achievement Test (CAT), Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (Renaissance Learning). Comparison scores were received from over 10,000 students (Renaissance Learning).

Another instrument that was used to collect student data was AR. AR is a computerized progress-monitoring assessment and personalized practice tool that provides reliable and valid feedback on comprehension of books and other materials that students have read (Renaissance Learning, 2009, p. 1). AR consists of multiple choice reading comprehension tests that normally contain 5-10 questions (Renaissance Learning).

AR quizzes are developed using a multistep approach with quality checks at various points in the process (Renaissance Learning, 2009). According to Renaissance Learning) the two main goals of AR are to make sure that quiz questions are (a) key to the text, and (b) not easily guessed without having read the book (p.20). AR quizzes are

found to be valid for measuring comprehension because they are specifically tied to the information in the book and are fact based Renaissance Learning).

According to Renaissance Learning (2009), AR is proven valid in two ways. First, there was a controlled validity study in which students were allowed to take tests on books they had not read. The results indicated that AR was "effective at discriminating between instances of students having read the book and not having read the book" (Renaissance Learning, p.31). Secondly, AR is correlated with 11 state standardized tests of general reading ability (Renaissance Learning). AR tests were administered to over 82,000 students in 20 states over a 4-year period in order to determine reliability (Renaissance Learning, 2011). I will provide data from the study upon request.

Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of the study was to explore the associations between the use of audiobooks and the comprehension and reading levels of struggling third grade readers. Data was collected by the administration using two instruments: STAR Reading Assessment and Accelerated Reader Assessment. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How do the reading levels of students identified as struggling readers compare between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

RQ2: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction?

RQ3: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading

levels of those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of

audio books during reading instruction?

Research question 1 was a question designed to measure the changes in reading levels of

struggling readers who used audio books to struggling readers who do not use audio

books during reading. Archival data for this question was analyzed using STAR and AR.

STAR pretest and posttest scores were measured before and at the conclusion of the

study. AR scores were averaged at the end of the study in order to determine if there was

an association between audio book use and the students' comprehension and reading

levels. Research question 2 was a question designed to measure the changes in reading

levels of struggling readers who use audio books to at or above readers who also use

audio books. Initial data was gathered at the beginning of the study and then assessed

again at the end. Initial reading scores for each participant were recorded using STAR

during week one and again at week nine. Weeks 1-9, participants read or listened to a

book on tape and took Accelerated Reader Tests each week on the books read or listened

to within the session. The scores were recorded for each test. Research question 3 was a

question designed to measure the changes in reading levels of struggling readers who

read without audio books to at or above level readers who also read without audiobooks.

Initial grade equivalent reading scores were gathered at the onset of the study and

compared to grade equivalent scores at the end of the study. Both struggling readers and

at or above level readers read books independently without the aid of audio books and

data was collected. Each week for 9 weeks, students in the two groups took AR tests on the books read to access comprehension.

Because there was no pertinent data on the use of audio books and student comprehension and reading levels, I was granted permission by the administration to collect and analyze the data from the administration-led audio book initiative. My role was to collect and analyze the student test results for STAR and AR data during this 9-weeks period. I had no involvement with the students nor was I involved in setting up or gaining permissions to work on the study. A data release form was signed and is included in the appendix.

All third grade students were selected by the administration to be participants in the initiative. The school administrator initiated the study where one group of third grade students used audio books 3 times a week for 9 weeks, and one group did not use audio books. All participants took Accelerated Reader Tests on the books, and participated in scheduled, routine STAR Assessments in order to monitor comprehension and reading levels throughout the study. The audiobook group participated in the study during school time when other students in the school were reading independently. Students read the audiobooks in the classroom with their teacher. STAR scores were analyzed from both the audio book and non-audio book groups in order to examine the associations between audio book uses and the comprehension and reading levels of the students.

Finally, post reading scores were collected again during week 9 using STAR. Pre and posttest STAR scores were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Scores from the pre and posttest STAR assessments were analyzed and compared using an Independent Sample *t*-test to explore associations between the use of

audio books and the comprehension and reading levels of the participants. Comparing these data allowed me to determine if there was an association between the use of audio books and the comprehension and reading levels of third grade students.

In the study, the use of audio books took place at the school during independent reading time. However, all AR and STAR tests for this study were completed on the computer. The computers were used for playing online audiobooks. Students were able to choose their own books according to their independent reading level.

There were two variables used in the study. The independent variable was the reading instructional strategy used with audiobooks and the dependent variables were the comprehension and reading levels of the participants as measured by STAR and Accelerated Reader Tests in response to the reading instructional strategy used.

At the onset of the study, students took the STAR Reading Assessment to determine their initial reading levels. STAR was also administered again at the end of the study to determine students' final reading levels after the reading instructional strategies were implemented for nine weeks. I was examining if there was a statistically significant difference in the changes of STAR and Accelerated Reader scores for the struggling readers as indicated with a significance value of $p < .05$.

The dependent variables, STAR and Accelerated Reader scores, were continuous scale data. The grade equivalent score was analyzed from pre to posttest on STAR and the scale score ranging from 0-100 was analyzed for AR. As stated by Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010), categorical variables represent discretely separate groups or categories, so my independent variable (audiobooks) was categorical, specifically, a nominal scale of measurement.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

There were several assumptions made in relation to the study. The researcher assumed that students did their best when taking STAR and Accelerated Reader tests and that the scores were an accurate and valid measure of the students' comprehension and reading ability. The researcher also assumed that the students read along with the book as it was listened to on tape. Because the researcher was only collecting archival data from the study, she had no way of determining if the assumptions were accurate.

There were also several limitations of the study. The major limitation was the small sample size. There were only 50 participants in the study, which, was small compared to the population of third grade students in the district and the nation. There was also no control for other opportunities to be read, instructed in reading, or read to by others because some students may be read to in class or at home. The study and data collection took place 3 times a week over the course of 9 weeks, which was a relatively short time frame. Finally, the results may not be able to be generalized to the entire third grade population in the nation.

The study took place between March 2015 and May 2015 at an elementary school in a southeastern state. Participants were third grade students at the site. The independent variable was the use of audio books and the dependent variables were the STAR and Accelerated Reader test scores.

Protection of Participant's Rights

Walden University sets guidelines that researchers have to follow in order to protect participants from harm and ensure confidentiality. Therefore, I took several precautions to ensure the protections of the participants in the study. First, Walden's

International Review Board (IRB) and my doctoral committee approved the proposal for the study (IRB Approval Number 04-16-15-0303988). Next, because non-public student information was being used in the study, all identifying information was removed. Student names were removed, and a number was used to identify all participants. Finally, the principal at the site granted me permission to collect and analyze the data by signing a data use agreement. I did not need to obtain informed consent from parents because I was not involved in setting up the study.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of the study was to explore the associations between the use of audio books and the reading levels of struggling third grade readers. Data was collected using STAR an AR reading assessments. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the archival data received by the researcher.

Once all archived data was collected, it was analyzed using SPSS. An independent samples *t-test* was used to analyze STAR data to determine if there was a significant difference from pretest to posttest between two pairs of data, which included the reading levels of students using, and not using audiobooks. An independent samples *t*-test was used to analyze Accelerated Reader scores because Accelerated Reader assessed comprehension. No pre and posttest scores were analyzed for AR and the groups were completely independent of each other. Analyzing the test score data from STAR helped me to determine if any changes in student reading levels during the 9-week period could be associated with the use of the audio books.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions for the study were:

RQ1: How do the reading levels of students identified as struggling readers compare between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

RQ2: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction?

RQ3: How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1a: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR of students identified as struggling readers between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

Hypothesis 1b: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by AR of students identified as struggling readers between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2a: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction.

Hypothesis 2b: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by AR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3a: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

Hypothesis 3b: There is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by AR between struggling readers and those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction.

Research Question 1 and Hypothesis 1a and 1b Results for STAR and AR

I used narratives and tables to address each null hypothesis. The first research question and hypothesis 1a and 1b were designed to measure the changes in reading levels of struggling readers who used audio books (SRWAB) to struggling readers who did not use audio books (SRWOAB). At the beginning of the study, all students had to take the STAR test to gauge initial grade equivalent scores. Tables 4 and 5 show the posttest STAR scores for the SRWAB and SRWOAB groups. An independent-samples t-

test was conducted to evaluate hypothesis 1a that there is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR of students identified as struggling readers between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction. The test was not significant, $t(23) = -1.13$, $p = .27$. Struggling readers who used audio books ($M = 2.42$, $SD = .89$) on the average had a lower reading level score than struggling readers without audio books ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .84$) thus, hypothesis 1a could not be rejected.

Table 4

STAR Group Statistics for Struggling Readers with and without Audio Books

	Group Statistics				
	Groups	*N*	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-Test Using STAR	SRWAB	12	2.417	.8943	.2581
	SRWOAB	13	2.808	.8391	.2327

Table 5

STAR Independent Samples t-test Scores for Struggling Readers with and without Audio Books

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Post-Test Using STAR	Equal variances assumed	.129	.723	-1.128	23	.271	-.3910	.3466	-1.1081	.3261
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.125	22.514	.272	-.3910	.3476	-1.1109	.3288

(header row above table: **Independent Samples Test**)

Tables 6 and 7 show the AR results for the SRWAB and SRWOAB groups. An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate hypothesis 1b that there is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by AR of students identified as struggling readers between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction. The test was not significant, $t(23) = 1.86$, $p = .076$. Struggling readers who used audio books ($M = 86.53$, $SD = 12.40$) on the average had a higher reading level score than struggling readers without audio books ($M = 76.67$, $SD = 14.11$). Therefore, hypothesis 1b could not be rejected.

Table 6

AR Scores for Struggling Readers with and without Audio Books

	Group Statistics				
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AR Scores	SRWA	13	86.5262	12.39562	3.43793
	SRWOA	12	76.6658	14.10563	4.07194

Table 7

AR Independent Samples T-test Results for SRWOAB and SRWOAB

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AR Scores	Equal variances assumed	1.184	.288	1.860	23	.076	9.86032	5.30065	-1.10492	20.82556
	Equal variances not assumed			1.850	22.017	.078	9.86032	5.32917	-1.19122	20.91186

Research Question 2 and Hypothesis 2a and 2b Results for STAR and AR

Research question 2 was designed to explore the changes in reading levels of SRWAB to at or above level readers who read with audio books (AOARWAB). Tables 8 and 9 show posttest STAR scores for SRWAB and AOARWAB. An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate hypothesis 2a that there is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR between students

identified as struggling readers and at or above readers who use audio books during

reading instruction. The test was significant, $t(22) = -4.24$, $p < .001$. Struggling readers

who used audio books ($M = 2.42$, $SD = .89$) on the average had a lower reading level

score than at or above readers who used audio books ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.12$). Hypothesis

2a could be rejected.

Table 8

STAR Group Statistics for SRWAB and AOARWAB

	Group Statistics				
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post Test STAR Scores	SRWAB	12	2.417	.8943	.2327
	AOARWAB	12	4.182	1.124	.2463

Table 9

STAR Independent Samples T-test Scores for SRWAB and AOARWAB

		Independent Samples Test							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
STAR Scores	Equal variances assumed	2.387	.136	-1.727	23	.098	-6.43718	3.72681	-14.14667	1.27231
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.789	14.268	.095	-6.43718	3.59893	-14.14254	1.26818

Tables 10 and 11 show AR test data for SRWAB and AOARWAB. An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate hypothesis 2b that there is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by AR between struggling readers and at or above readers who use audio books during reading instruction. The test was not significant, $t(23) = -1.73$, $p = .098$. Struggling readers who used audio books ($M = 86.53$, $SD = 12.40$) on the average had a lower reading level score than at or above readers who used audio books ($M = 92.96$, $SD = 3.69$). Therefore, hypothesis 2b could not be rejected.

Table 10

Group Statistics for SRWAB and AOARWAB

	Group Statistics				
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AR Scores	SRWA	13	86.5262	12.39562	3.43793
	AOARWA	12	92.9633	3.68716	1.06439

Table 11

Independent Samples t-test results for SRWAB and AOARWAB

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AR Scores	Equal variances assumed	2.387	.136	-1.727	23	.098	-6.43718	3.72681	-14.14667	1.27231
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.789	14.268	.095	-6.43718	3.59893	-14.14254	1.26818

Research Question 3 and Hypothesis 3a and 3b Results for STAR and AR

Research question 3 was designed to explore the associations between struggling

readers who read without the aid of audiobooks to at or above level readers who read

without audio books. Tables 12 and 13 show the posttest STAR scores for SRWOAB and

AOARWOAB. An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate hypothesis 3a

that there is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by STAR between

students identified as struggling readers and at or above readers who read silently without

the aid of audio books during reading instruction. The test was significant, $t(24) = -5.75$,

$p < .001$. Struggling readers ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .84$) on the average had a lower reading

level score than at or above readers ($M = 4.76$, $SD = .89$) who read silently without the

aid of audio books. Thus hypothesis 3a could be rejected.

Table 12

STAR Group Statistics for SRWOAB and AOARWOAB

Group Statistics					
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-Test Using STAR	SRWOA**B**	13	2.808	.8391	.2327
	AOARWOA**B**	13	4.762	.8931	.2477

Table 13

Independent Samples t-test results for SRWOAB and AOARWOAB

		Independent Samples Test							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Post-Test Using STAR	Equal variances assumed	.044	.835	-5.749	24	.000	-1.9538	.3399	-2.6553	-1.2524
	Equal variances not assumed			-5.749	23.907	.000	-1.9538	.3399	-2.6555	-1.2522

Tables 14 and 15 show AR data for SRWOAB and AOARWOAB. An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate hypothesis 3b that there is no significant difference in the reading levels measured by AR between students identified as struggling readers and at or above readers who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction. The test was not significant, $t(23) = -1.52$, $p = .14$. Struggling readers ($M = 76.67$, $SD = 14.11$) on the average had a lower reading level score than at or above readers ($M = 83.85$, $SD = 9.29$) who read silently without the aid of audio books. Therefore, hypothesis 3b could not be rejected.

Table 14

Group Statistics for SRWOAB and AOARWOAB

	Group Statistics				
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AR Scores	SRWOAB	12	76.6658	14.10563	4.07194
	AOARWOAB	13	83.8462	9.28780	2.57597

Table 15

Independent Samples t-test results for SRWOAB and AOARWOAB

		Independent Samples Test							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
AR Scores	Equal variances assumed	2.020	.169	-1.515	23	.143	-7.18032	4.73946	-16.98464	2.62400
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.490	18.805	.153	-7.18032	4.81833	-17.27228	2.91164

Conclusion

This study examined the association of audio books on the reading and comprehension levels of struggling readers. This section began by stating the research questions that guided the study, the research design and a justification for using the design, setting and sample, instrumentation and materials used to collect data,

assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitations, protection of participants' rights, and results from the study. The administration at the study site used third grade students as participants in the study. At the beginning of the study all third grade students had to take the STAR test to gauge their initial grade equivalent reading level. Over the course of 9 weeks, participants read books and took AR comprehension tests on the books read.

At the conclusion of the study, participants took the STAR test again to determine if a significant change in reading level existed and could be associated to the use of audio books. AR scores for the 9 weeks were also analyzed to determine if a significant increase in comprehension was found and could also be associate to the use of audio books. Results showed that SRWAB and SRWOAB did not make significant improvement in their reading levels as indicated by STAR. However, AOARWAB and AOARWOAB did make significant improvements in reading levels as indicated by STAR. According to AR results, none of the 4 groups made significant improvements in their comprehension levels. So, according to STAR and AR, neither group of struggling readers showed significant differences in their reading levels but both groups of at or above level readers showed significant growth in reading levels according to STAR, but not AR.

Section 3 will detail the project that was developed as a result of the findings of the study. Due to the findings that audio books did not help struggling readers with improving their reading or comprehension levels, a 3-day professional development training session on research based reading strategies will be presented. Goals and a description of the professional development, the rationale of the professional development, a review of literature related to research based reading strategies and

professional development activities, as well as an implementation schedule and project evaluation will be presented and discussed in detail.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This study was designed to explore the associations between the use of audio books and the comprehension and reading levels of third grade students. Data from the study indicated that the use of audiobooks did not promote increases in reading or comprehension levels of struggling readers. As a result of these findings, I developed a 3-day professional development model providing third grade teachers with information about using research based best practices that can be used with assisting third grade readers when reading independently. This section will give more information about the project, its goals, and a rationale for choosing this project. The literature review will examine professional development and detail the research-based strategies, which will be presented to the teachers during the staff development.

Description and Goals

The mission of the 3-day professional development model is to apprise the principal and third grade teachers at the research site of the findings of the study. The goal of the 3-day professional development model is to help all third grade teachers throughout the district become more familiar with research based best practices that could be used in the classroom to assist readers when reading independently. The project includes opportunities for active participation, videos, and a power point presentation delivered by the researcher. The interactive component of the staff development program will allow teachers to interact with their peers while they discuss experiences they have had in the classroom with all readers and the strategies presented.

Rationale

Teachers' professional development, which is considered a part of lifelong education, is defined as processes and activities designed for teachers to further develop their students, to take their students forward, and to improve their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Yurdakul, Caker, Uslu, & Yildiz, 2014). Findings from my study indicated that audiobooks were not helpful in increasing student-reading levels. Perhaps more time was needed with the audiobooks or other reading strategies with more research based support needed to be implemented. Based on the data gained from the study, I determined that third grade teachers across the district would benefit from professional training that may be used to help implement the use of other reading strategies with more research-based support for readers when reading silently.

The purpose for choosing a workshop/training model as the project is because a workshop model will permit participants the opportunity to collaborate, ask questions, seek clarification, and see visual representations of the use of each strategy presented. According to Kindle (2013), professional development can have positive effects on teachers in specific areas such as questioning strategies and skills instruction, as well as in broader areas such as attitudes, beliefs, and practices. The workshop/ training model will also allow the teachers to be introduced to the strategies necessary to propel struggling readers forward.

In a study conducted on interactive reading in preschool classrooms, Kindle (2013) provided four professional development sessions to preschool teachers on the effective use of shared reading practices. Results demonstrated that focused professional development could help increase the quality of interactive read alouds in the preschool

classroom Kindle, 2013). Professional development trainings are necessary to instill positive change in teachers.

I believe focused professional development training will be the best way to introduce teachers to new strategies for assisting and developing their struggling readers. The majority of third graders at the participating elementary school were not reading on grade level and with the *Read to Succeed Act* (2015) being introduced in the state of South Carolina; all third grade students will need to be reading at or above grade level by the end of the year or they may be in danger of being retained (SCDOE, 2015). Reading at grade level is vital to help students have the greatest chance at future academic success and teacher professional development training is the vehicle that will be used to attain this goal.

A professional development model for training third grade teachers on the use of research-based best practices in reading was the project chosen for this study. Teachers need to be introduced and trained on the proper use of the strategies in order to use them successfully. Knowledge from the professional development model will assist teachers in finding other strategies to increase the reading levels of struggling readers in the classrooms.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to examine previous research concerning professional development for teachers on reading instruction, and to use this research to guide my project development. When conducting my search for research-based comprehension strategies, saturation was reached by searches using research portals such as Thoreau and EBSCO Host, which provide access to many databases like Education

Research Complete and SAGE. Google Scholar was also used as a resource for finding scholarly, peer reviewed articles. The following terms and combination of terms, including Boolean phrases, were used when conducting the search: *activating prior knowledge, activating prior knowledge before reading, reading strategies, reading strategies for struggling readers, comprehension strategies, comprehension strategies for struggling readers, comprehension strategies and struggling readers, questioning and comprehension, inferences and comprehension, comprehension strategies for third grade struggling readers, fluency, professional development, effective professional development, leadership and professional development, professional development and student achievement,* and *collaboration and professional development.*

Porter and Herczog (2009) claimed that in the earlier grades the reading focus is on learning to read while in the upper grades, grade 4 and beyond, the focus is on reading to learn. If the focus shifts to reading to learn before students are able to read proficiently, this is when the reading becomes difficult and many readers struggle. They lack the proper strategies to assist them with tackling text that is more difficult. When students struggle to read, educators should use a combination of reading strategies to assist the struggling reader (Porter and Herczog). If not, students will fall further and further behind as they increase in grade level and the demands of reading become more strenuous.

The purpose of this research was to determine if there was an association between audiobooks and the comprehension and reading levels of struggling third grade readers. As indicated by my study's findings, there was no significant difference in the changes of reading levels for struggling readers who read with audiobooks as compared to those who read silently. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that a wider variety of research

based strategies need to be utilized by teachers in order to increase reading comprehension for readers when reading independently.

Reading is a process that has to be explicitly taught. According to Tindall and Nisbet (2010), the essential components of a reading program should be a combination of "phonological/phonemic awareness, word study/phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension" (p.2). All of these components can be incorporated in the classroom by teachers scaffolding instruction and using a small group reading approach to present and practice various before, during, and after reading strategies to aid comprehension and fluency.

Comprehension Strategies

Understanding what one reads is a very complex process, so every effort to improve comprehension must be made (Mahdavi & Tensfeldt, 2013). According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006), "comprehending refers to the thinking readers do before, during, and after reading" (p.16). Comprehension strategies are specific procedures that allow readers to determine how well they understand what they are reading (National Reading Panel, 2000). Once the procedures are modeled by the teacher and practiced by the students, students are then able to use the strategies independent of the teacher. Because strategic reading takes place naturally inside the minds of proficient readers, there are several reading strategies struggling readers need to be taught to use in order to be successful readers. Porter and Herczog (2010) stated that effective readers have a plan for success. That plan is strategic reading. While performing my search for the most effective reading strategies for teachers to use during reading instruction, some of the same strategies kept presenting themselves in the literature.

The most common reading comprehension strategies found in the literature were: activating prior knowledge and building background, previewing, monitoring comprehension, questioning, summarizing, visualizing, and making inferences. (Reading Rockets, 2015; Teachthought, 2013). These strategies may be used with both literary and informational text. The strategies listed above should be practiced simultaneously in order for the struggling reader to make sense of and comprehend the text being read. Teachers must model the strategies in action and allow students ample time to practice using the strategies, and then release the responsibility for independent use to the readers. Students should be taught to use the strategy or strategies that work best for the type of text they are reading.

Prereading Strategies

Children come to school with different life experiences. Before allowing a student to read a text, a good practice would be to scaffold the reading (Ankrum, Genest, & Belcastro, 2014) by activating prior knowledge to determine what, if anything, students already know about the topic. Once prior knowledge is assessed, teachers can build background knowledge for students who may not have any prior information about the topic. Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2012) asserted that a person's background knowledge is developed through interactions with people, places, experiences, Internet sources, texts, and content formally taught. For example, if a child is reading a story about the beach but has never been to the beach, it may be difficult for the student to make connections to the text in order to understand it. This is where the teacher can bring in sand from the beach, seashells, read a book, or show a video about the beach. Students will now have the knowledge needed to make connections from known concepts to those to be gained

(Parr & McNaughton, 2014) in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the text. Richards and Gipe (1992) stated that if readers can connect the reading to what they already know about a topic, and then they are more than likely to make appropriate inferences when reading.

Another prereading strategy that can be used with struggling readers is previewing the text. Students have to get a sense of what they will be reading about before they begin to read. Previewing the text entails looking at the cover, title, reading the excerpt on the back or on the inside covers, or taking a picture walk (Youngs & Serafini, 2011). This particular strategy will allow the reader to make predictions about what events may occur in the book. These activities allow the reader to develop a mental representation of the text. According to Burns, Hodgson, Parker, and Fremont (2011), readers comprehend more when they can make a mental representation of what they are reading and then use those mental images to help them understand the text.

During Reading Strategies

During reading strategies are strategies employed by readers in order to interact with the text while reading. Strategies for comprehension should be taught for mastery (Ciullo, 2015) if children are expected to use them independently. Richardson (2009) stated, "Self -monitoring is the foundation for comprehension. If the student does not realize that what is being said does not make sense, he or she will likely have very poor comprehension," (p. 46). When readers monitor their comprehension, they are ensuring that the reading does make sense. If the reading does not make sense, then it is not being understood. Readers should always monitor their comprehension as they read because it is important for readers to know when their reading does not make sense. This is a vital

step in comprehension because in school-aged children, monitoring is definitely

associated and related to comprehension (Strasser & del Rio, 2014).

Strasser and del Rio (2014) conducted a study using 257 kindergarten children,

testing the effects of comprehension monitoring on their story comprehension. While

being read to, the children had to locate 12 inconsistencies within the story (Strasser and

del Rio). They were asked to listen to the story and alert the reader when they heard an

inconsistency or something that did not sound right. Results from the study stated that

comprehension monitoring made a significant contribution on the understanding of text

(Strasser and del Rio). Strategies such as questioning, inferring, visualizing, and

summarizing are beneficial to use while reading a text.

Questioning is a strategy in which readers ask themselves who, what, when,

where, why, and how questions before and silently as they read (Sencibaugh &

Sencibaugh, 2015). This strategy allows readers to remain actively engaged with the text.

In the 8-week study conducted by Sencibaugh and Sencibaugh on the efficacy of

questioning on the comprehension of middle school students, six eighth grade students

were given a pretest to determine their reading achievement levels before implementation

of the questioning strategy. They were then given explicit, systematic instruction Monday

through Friday for 50 minutes a day on a questioning strategy called Questioning the

Author or QtA (Sencibaugh and Sencibaugh). The teacher modeled the strategy and

students were given time daily to practice the strategy themselves. A posttest was given

at the end of the study to determine if significant growth of student comprehension was

evident from the beginning to the end of the study. Results from the study showed that

the QtA strategy significantly improved the reading comprehension levels of the students

when the strategy was explicitly and systematically taught. Sencibaugh and Sencibaugh concluded that comprehension improves when students are taught to self-question.

Wilson and Smetana (2011) conducted research in which they examined the effectiveness of questioning strategies on comprehension. The authors administered professional development to teachers on various questioning strategies Wilson and Smetana). Once teachers were trained, the effects of the questioning strategies were tested in a pilot study utilizing pre- and posttesting of comprehension. Data was collected on 280 sixth through 12th grade students from classrooms where teachers were implementing the questioning framework learned from the professional development sessions with the authors. Wilson and Sementa asserted that readers who constantly question as they read are independently monitoring their comprehension and are regulating their thinking to make sure what they are reading is making sense. The study was designed to determine if the questioning framework improved student comprehension beyond that of traditional instruction. Wilson and Sementa concluded that students who participated in this questioning framework improved both in comprehension and in vocabulary knowledge.

In an 8-week study conducted by Shang and Chien (2010) exploring the effectiveness of using the questioning strategy on EFL Learners' reading comprehension, 118 participants were given a pretest at first to determine their reading proficiency levels. Over the course of 8 weeks, participants were taught to use self-questioning techniques as part of regular classroom activities. Participants practiced using the strategy every other week for about one hour. At the end of the semester, a posttest was given; the authors reported that the results showed that the students significantly improved their

comprehension after being taught to use and implement the self-questioning strategy while reading.

Another strategy beneficial for struggling readers to use during reading is making inferences. The ability to make inferences is a higher level thinking strategy (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). It requires the reader to go beyond the literal meaning of the text to conjure up ideas that are not stated, but implied by the writer (Fountas & Pinnell,). Readers have to read *between the lines,* which is a necessary skill for all texts. The writer does not tell the reader everything. The reader is left to use general world knowledge (Bos, De Koning, Wassenburg, van der Schoot, Williams, & Nazir, 2016) to fill in the gaps in order to get to the true meaning of the text.

Bos et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine the effect inference making has on comprehension. One hundred forty-three third and 4th grade students were pre- and posttested for 2 weeks prior and 2 weeks after the study. Students were taught and trained on making inferences in eight 30-minute lessons over the course of 4 weeks (Bos et al.,). Half of the lessons were taught in groups while the other half was individual, computer-based lessons. Group and computer-based lesson were taught alternatively, Lessons 1, 3, 5, and 7 were group lessons and lessons 2, 4, 6, and 8 were computer-based lessons (Bos et al.,). All lessons consisted of "direct instruction, modeling, guided practice, and independent practice" (Bos et al.,). Results from the study showed that explicit teaching of inference making can assist with deepening comprehension. According to Stahl (2014), generating inferences is a unique, but strong contribution to reading comprehension and intervening early will improve the likelihood of producing thoughtful and successful readers.

A study conducted by Tompkins, Ying, and Justice (2013) examining young children's inferences during literacy activities on their comprehension abilities indicated that a child's number of inferences was directly related to their comprehension of a story. Forty-seven 4-5 year olds were assessed on 3 different inferential tasks (Tompkins et al.,). One task was telling a story by using a wordless picture book; another was a listening comprehension task from a book and then answering literal and inferential questions, and finally story comprehension. According to Tompkins et al, data from the study indicated that the more inferences students made, the better their comprehension of the story was.

Visualizing is a strategy in which readers create movies or pictures in their minds of the text. This is one way to know if comprehension is broken because if the reader can no longer see the story as a movie, then comprehension is lost. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) indicated that visualizing is a form of accessing visual information from the words on the page and using these words to make meaning and connections.

In a study conducted by Park (2012) of 23 adolescent girls in 3 different book clubs, the author discussed how the students used visualizing to see the world. Over the course of one academic school year, the book clubs met every other week to discuss student-selected texts. Each meeting took place at the school and lasted for about an hour. Texts were discussed in the book club sessions and the researcher took notes detailing conversations and strategy use by the girls. Visualizing was used by the participants to visualize characters and setting in the text (Park). These visuals led to rich conversations and allowed the researcher access into the girls' worldviews and identities. Meaningful conversations about the characters and the story ensued after the students visualized the

characters and events in the books they were reading. Results from the study demonstrated that teachers could use visualizing as a means to bridge comprehension and literacy.

After Reading Strategies

A significant strategy that can be used while students read and most importantly after they read, is summarizing. A summary is a recollection and retelling of the most important ideas in a text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Summarizing is known to be one of the most important strategies to be used after reading a text because it forces students to make meaning out of the words in the text and commit it to long term memory (Kirmizi & Akkaya, 2011).

Davis and Neitzel (2012) studied the reader-text interactions of 92 seventh and eighth graders when working together to read and make sense of print and digital articles. The participants in the study had to read a variety of print and digital sources. The researchers observed that the three strategies the students were using most often to help make meaning of the text was: summarizing, connecting, and reacting.

<div align="center">

Fluency

</div>

Fluency is an important part of reading instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). There are many definitions of fluent reading as found in literature. Fountas and Pinnell defined it as using smooth integrated operations to process meaning, language, and print. Reading Rockets (2015) defined fluency as the ability to read quickly, accurately, and with the proper expression. Malouf, Reisener, Gadke, Wimbish and Frankel (2014) explained that fluency is characterized by quick and accurate reading. Finally, Lewis-

Lancaster and Reisener (2013) described fluency as the ability to read a text quickly and accurately. So according to the literature, in a nutshell, a common definition of fluency is that a reader can read accurately (knowing and saying the correct word), quickly (automatically) and with prosody (using proper intonation and pitch) (Basaran, 2013).

When individuals are reading fluently, they are easily and smoothly processing text. The fluent reader has a toolbox of word-solving strategies to help them solve words easily, smoothly, rapidly, and accurately. The ability to solve words smoothly and accurately allows the reader to more efficiently process text and focus on the meaning (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Better comprehension follows the achievement of fluent reading (Malouf, et.al 2014). Once fluent reading has been achieved the reader is no longer struggling over decoding words and more attention can be given to the actual comprehension, meaning, and understanding of the text.

Basaran (2013) conducted a study in which 90 fourth grade students were assessed on their fluency levels as related to their comprehension of a text. The students were given four different assessments, a fill in the blank test, multiple choice test, short answer, and extended response tests. The tests were designed to measure the ability to remember information read as well as superficial and in-depth meaning. Students were asked to read orally a 409-word narrative and their readings were recorded. Results from the study indicated that fluent reading was an indicator of comprehension and that prosody was the best predictor of in-depth meaning making.

Professional Development

Professional development is ongoing training received by teachers in order to improve practice. Desimone (2011) asserted that Professional development for teachers is the key to improving schools in the U. S. PD is essential for educators to increase their content knowledge (Main, Pendergast, & Virtue, 2015) and student achievement. In a study conducted in Australia in which 3,250 teachers participated over 80 professional development programs, it was concluded that the focus of the content, active learning and follow up have a significant impact on the kind of knowledge gained and practice (Desimone, 2011; Main, et, al, 2015). Educators receive the information and skills necessary to take teaching to higher levels. Professional development also allows new and veteran teachers to learn from each other.

Leading Professional Development

In order to make professional development more efficient, there are three basic guidelines presenters can follow. First, leaders of professional development should make sure they have measurable, concrete objectives (Santoyo, 2013). The leader should have an idea of what they want participants to be able to do once they leave the session. Santoyo, stated that in order to design great PD, the presenter should "abandon abstraction in favor of action," (p. 70). Concrete, observable objectives need to be at the forefront of professional development. The example was given that an administrator or other personnel should be able to see the strategies taught in professional development evident in a teacher's classroom after PD.

Furthermore, professional development could be broken down into smaller, bite-sized (Santoyo, 2013) chunks. One objective or goal may be divided over several different sessions. Santoyo shared the following strategies for making PD more efficient:

1. Make PD routine by adding more sessions.

2. Make PD longer by adding mini sessions or half day PD.

3. Make hard choices by deciding what is most relevant and will have the greatest impact.

Using these strategies, leaders of PD can gradually lead up to the ultimate goal and make the sessions more beneficial for those involved.

A third and final strategy that can be utilized by leaders of professional development is to allow time for practice within the PD session itself. Once it is decided what teachers need to know and gain form the PD sessions, they should have ample time to practice while in front of the presenter. In this way, immediate feedback can be given and improvements made before using the concepts in the classroom with students Practice can come in many forms from creating lesson plans, revising lesson plans, role playing scenarios, using new technology, applying a strategy to be taught to students, or analyzing classroom data and using it to inform instruction. According to Santoyo (2013), the best types of practice included:

1. Repetition or the ability to practice a skill or concept over and over. The more the skill is practiced, the better teachers will get at it.

2. Opportunities for live feedback from other teachers. Working in collaborative groups is a way to incorporate feedback into PD sessions.

3. Immediate practice opportunities within the given session because teachers

   may not practice or utilize the strategy in their classrooms after PD if not

   allowed to practice in the session.

Professional Development and Student Achievement

As a result of the high level of accountability placed on schools by the federal

government, many schools are searching for ways to increase student achievement. High

quality professional development has become as essential focus for improving student

achievement is schools (Moore, Kochan, Kraska, & Reames, 2011). By continuously

improving the teachers' craft is how we can continue to increase learning in students

(Santoyo, 2013). In a study conducted at Dundee Elementary School (Rutherford,

Hillman, & Parker (2011), a high-poverty school in Mississippi, student achievement

improved due to professional development opportunities. Dundee Elementary partnered

with the Center for Excellence in Literacy Instruction (CELI). CELI collaborated with the

school principal and literacy coach to pinpoint teacher weaknesses in literacy instruction

(Rutherford, Hillman, & Parker). CELI provided monthly professional development to

the teachers that focused on literacy instruction in reading, writing, spelling, and

vocabulary. They worked with teachers on topics such as: how to plan for the literacy

block, small group instruction, literacy stations, using the basal reader more effectively,

and read alouds. Teachers were divided into two groups: kindergarten through grade 2

and grades 3-5. Instruction was tailored towards the grade level. CELI also visited the

school weekly to provide interventions to teachers who needed more support. CELI

intervened as necessary and provided on-going support to teachers. Results showed that

88% of 4th grade students scored at the proficient level on the statewide language arts

exam, which was up from just 16.2% of 4th graders scoring at the proficient level, two

years prior (Rutherford, Hillman, & Parker) . No students scored in the minimal category

and the school ranked 23 out of 401 schools in Mississippi coming up from its ranking of

160 the prior year. The authors asserted that professional development seemed to

correlate with improved student achievement.

Effective Professional Development

Due to the increased accountability of high stakes testing throughout the grades,

educators are expected to be able to improve student achievement. According to Main,

Pendergast, and Virtue (2015) teaching has been placed under the spotlight. Teachers are

held more accountable today than they were years ago. Learning for teachers is different

than for children. Effective professional development should recognize the differences in

learning styles of teachers.

Professional development can come in various forms. Activities can be presented

in workshops, conferences, college courses, or within the same school, the same grade, or

content area. It has been found to be more effective when given to teachers in the same

school, grade level, or content area (Desimone, 2011). The information becomes more

relevant to them and they are more apt to use it than if the information was presented in a

conference or seminar (Main, et, al., 2015).

Effective professional development is continuous and ongoing. There must be

enough time for teachers to learn the new strategy and implement it (Gulamhussein,

2013) in their classrooms. Teachers also need to be supported continuously (Lutrick &

Szabo, 2012) during the implementation phase of the new strategies. They cannot be

expected to be professionals at the onset of teaching the new strategies, but are encouraged and supported throughout.

Professional development for teachers should be interactive (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012) and not passive. It should engage the teachers (Gulamhussein, 2013) throughout the sessions and allow them to participate in various activities related to the learning. Passive listening does not always allow the teachers to fully engage with the learning. Opportunities for role-play, modeling, discussion, and observations in the classroom (Gulamhussein) can be used as instructional techniques during professional development sessions.

Just as teachers are expected to model new content for students, new content taught in PD needs to be modeled for teachers. Teachers can see the PD trainer as a lead in teacher expertise and not only as a provider of resources (Abilock, Harada, & Fontichiaro, 2013). For example, instead of the PD trainer solely telling about the new strategy, he could demonstrate how to employ the strategy in the classroom setting. In this way the learner visualizes the strategy and the teacher sees how the strategy can be used in the classroom.

Finally, PD should be needs based. It should not be generic (Gulamhussein, 2013) but specific to the content or weaknesses of the teachers. In a study conducted in Australia in which 3,250 teachers participated over 80 professional development programs, it was concluded that the focus of the content, active learning, and follow up have a significant impact on the kind of knowledge gained and practice (Main, et, al, 2015). One way to find out the needs of teachers is to ask open-ended questions (Gulamhussein, 2013) and give evaluations. Asking teachers of their needs may prove to

be more beneficial than assuming their needs. Evaluations can be given throughout PD sessions and at the concluding session. They can be used to assist the trainer with the directions of the next PD session so that it may be beneficial to the participants.

Professional Development in Reading

A teacher's learning never ends. Standards, curriculum, and expectations constantly change and require teachers to learn new strategies and concepts in order to keep up with the changing world of education. In order to aid struggling readers and improve student achievement in reading, teachers can benefit from the positive effects of PD on teachers in targeted areas (Kindle, 2013) such as reading. Through collaborative efforts (Devlin-Scherer & Sardone, 2013) teachers can learn from one another and improve their skills and craft in reading. Reading practices of teachers can be enhanced through structured, targeted professional development in reading.

The literature review makes clear that all readers need to be taught that reading is a strategic process and that professional development is necessary in order to improve teacher quality and student achievement. Certain metacognitive processes must occur in the brain in order for the reading to make sense. Simply reading the words on the page without using strategies to assist with comprehension will not lead to a strong understanding of the text. Strategies must be utilized before, during, and after reading. Strategies such as questioning, inferring, visualizing, and summarizing are good to use while reading a text.

Project Description

The findings of the study indicated that audio books were not beneficial in helping with increasing neither reading nor comprehension levels of struggling readers. The purpose of the 3-day professional development training will be to provide third grade teachers with guidance on the use of other research based reading strategies that can benefit struggling students while reading silently to assist with improving reading achievement. The PD trainings will allow third grade teachers to collaborate with each other to learn and apply best practices for struggling readers when reading independently. Strategies and activities will be presented for use before, during and after reading assignments. Teachers will be given the opportunity to work within a team of 3 in order to prepare a small group lesson, using the strategies, for struggling readers. At the end of each session, teachers will be instructed to apply the strategies taught during the session with a small group of struggling readers in their classroom for two weeks. During the next meeting, teachers will present the lessons and strategies they developed and used in the classroom. Time will be allotted in each professional development session for discussion, sharing ideas, and advice.

On day 1, teachers will work together to define struggling readers. They will also be given information on the Read to Succeed Act, which states that third graders not reading on grade level by the end of the year will be in danger of being retained (SCDOE, 2015). Due to the seriousness of this issue, the study and professional development plan are geared towards third grade readers. Furthermore, third grade readers were targeted because if students are not reading on grade level by third grade, they are in danger of academic failure. During the morning session, pre-reading strategies and activities will be

presented for activating prior knowledge, building background, previewing, and predicting. In the afternoon, teachers will work in groups to prepare activities for a small group of struggling readers using pre-reading strategies only. Time will be given to share the lessons, which will allow the teachers to discuss and gain ideas about how the strategies and activities can be used in the classroom. At the end of the session, there will be a brief open-ended evaluation of the session. Each teacher will be instructed to apply the strategies and activities in their classes for two weeks, and then be ready to share details of their use at the beginning of day 2 of the professional development training.

During the morning session of day 2, time will be given for session 1 review and for teachers to share the strategies and activities implemented with struggling readers in their classrooms. Then, the reading strategies and activities for self-monitoring, questioning, inferring, and visualizing will be introduced. After lunch, teachers will get the opportunity to plan a lesson for a small group of struggling readers using pre-reading and during reading strategies only. After one hour of planning, teachers will share lessons whole group. At the end of the session, a brief evaluation on the session will be completed and teachers will be instructed to create and use a small group lesson applying the strategies taught from sessions 1 and 2 in their classes.

Session 3 will be the final session. The first part of the morning will be devoted to reviewing from sessions 1 and 2. Then, teachers will share activities they've tried the previous two weeks in their classrooms. Activities for the after reading strategy of summarizing will be presented. During the latter part of the session, teachers will have the opportunity to plan an entire small group lesson for struggling readers using pre-reading, during reading, and after reading strategies. Time will be given to share lessons

whole group. At the end of the session, an evaluation of the session will be given and teachers will be instructed to plan an entire lesson for a small group of struggling readers in their classroom and e-mail it to me since we will not meet again.

Implementation

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

In order to implement this professional development, I will need access to baskets of lower level books categorized by reading level, sticky notes, and self-stick chart paper. Various light snacks will also be needed for each morning. Access to a room with ample space for movement of about 40 people, an LCD projector, and a projection screen will also be necessary. I will need support from my building administrator and media-center specialist for use of the media center as a training facility.

Even though there are days scheduled in the academic calendar for district-wide professional development, I do not want the participants to miss those important trainings. Consequently, my trainings will be scheduled on regular school days. Substitutes will need to be secured by the administration for the participants on all 3 training days. Funding for these substitutes would be secured through professional development funds provided to each school.

Potential Barriers

One potential barrier to this professional development training will be attaining the media center as a training facility. The media center has all of the materials and resources needed for the trainings, but since the training will take place during the regular school day, the media center specialist will have classes during this time. In order to

overcome this barrier, I would need to meet with her and the principal to discuss a plan for implementation and days when I may be permitted to use the library for the trainings.

Another barrier is the fact that teachers will be pulled from their students on three different days for the trainings. Since third grade is the first year students participate in state testing, the teachers need to be in the classroom as much as possible. However, the trainings are necessary because they may help to increase the achievement of struggling readers and allow them to be more successful on the test. To overcome this barrier, I will schedule PD for my district at the beginning of the school year. The PD will be scheduled every two weeks so that the teachers will only be missing one day every two weeks, with a total of three classroom days missed altogether.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The professional development trainings will take place on three separate days scheduled every two weeks for a period of six weeks. This scheduling strategy will allow time for the teachers to apply the strategies in their classrooms with a small group of struggling readers. During the sessions, teachers will have the opportunity to practice creating lessons using the strategies taught in each session. This activity will serve as a scaffold to the teachers as they plan lessons for use in their classes with their own students. After each session, teachers will be able to give feedback about the session via an evaluation.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

The role of the administration at each elementary school will be to secure experienced, highly regarded substitutes in the teachers' rooms on PD days. In addition to securing high quality substitutes for the teachers at the proposed site of the PD,

administrators will help the facilitator secure access of the media center for training

purposes and will provide the media center specialist an alternate room for her classes.

Teachers will need to make sure they are on time, that they attend and participate in all

three trainings, and that they complete outside lesson planning assignments.

Project Evaluation

Formative and summative evaluations will be utilized for the professional

development sessions. Kindle (2013) stated some factors that appear to be associated with

effective professional development include the length of the trainings, support from

personnel, opportunities for reflection from participants, the ability to discuss, choice,

and collaboration. I will ask for teachers to submit lesson plans ahead of time, and I will

follow up by observing at least one lesson implemented by each teacher in which the

teacher incorporates the strategies introduced in the PD sessions. The lesson plans will

provide evidence of the teacher knowledge of designing lessons using the strategies

introduced in the PD sessions for reading strategies taught.

Teachers will be informed of the collection of lesson plans and will be asked to submit

lesson plans in advance of the next session to allow ample time for me to review before

the next session. The lesson plans will allow me to know how much in-depth review may

be needed at the beginning of sessions two and three. Also, at the end of each session, I

will distribute a brief open-ended reflection, which will allow the participants to voice

their opinions and reflect on the trainings about what, if anything, they learned and

thought was valuable during that session. In addition to an open-ended reflection, a Likert

Scale survey will be e-mailed to each participant in which they will identify the level of

agreement or disagreement with specific statements concerning the PD sessions

Furthermore, they will have the opportunity to give me suggestions on anything I may need to change so that the sessions are as informative as possible.

The overall goal of this project was to introduce third grade teachers to the benefits of using other research based strategies that may help increase reading achievement for struggling readers. The findings from my study resulted in the creation of a three-day professional development plan on using research based strategies that can be used with struggling readers before, during, and after reading. In order to determine the effectiveness of the professional development, I will keep in contact with the teachers occasionally via email to see if they are still using the strategies and about the progress their struggling readers are making. The key stakeholders of the professional development will be the teachers and the administration in the buildings.

Implications for Social Change

Local Community

Struggling readers need extra assistance with basic reading skills. Just giving them an audiobook is not going to provide them with the support needed to become proficient readers. Teachers need to equip struggling readers with the skills necessary to become proficient readers. Struggling readers need to understand that reading is a process and that to become proficient readers they need to use reading strategies before, during, and after reading. So the social change that I seek to bring about from this project is to increase teacher use of research based strategies that support student reading comprehension-enabling students to become successful, independent readers. Educators will benefit from

the professional development trainings because they will become more knowledgeable about what research based skills required to reach and teach struggling readers.

Far Reaching

The desire for students to become successful readers goes way beyond the elementary school years. Reading is a skill that is needed throughout life. So the hope is not just for struggling readers, but all readers to be able to acquire more success in reading as they progress through school and life to become productive citizens of society. Furthermore, the implications of this project reach beyond this one elementary school. It could be a model or guide for the development of PD reading sessions for students struggling to read. Once students begin demonstrating successful reading skills, this project can be used in other school districts and classrooms as a model for educating struggling readers.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

In this section, the project, a professional development-training model for struggling readers was presented. Strategies for use before, during and after reading were discussed. The rationale for choosing a professional development-training model resulted from the findings of my research. Since audiobooks were not successful in raising the reading levels of struggling readers, more research-based strategies were needed to assist struggling readers with comprehension when reading independently. An evaluation plan as well as implications for the local community and beyond was presented. In the next section, I will present my reflections and conclusions about the project.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

This study was designed to explore the effects audio books would have on struggling readers in third grade. Study results indicated that audiobooks were not beneficial with increasing neither reading nor comprehension levels of struggling readers. These findings led me to conclude that other strategies and resources must also be used to increase the reading levels of students. The project needed to focus on educating third grade teachers on the use the most effective, before, during, and after research-based reading strategies to teach students so that they can become successful, independent readers.

Project Strengths

A key strength of the study is that the results were data driven and the information gathered led me to determine the best course of action for the project. A second strength of the project is the fact that teachers will benefit from acquiring additional research based reading strategies to assist struggling readers. The results of the study indicated that focusing on any one intervention, such as the use of audio books, might not be enough. Instead, teachers need to focus on using a wide variety of effective strategies. Teachers will have to teach struggling readers various strategies to help them process and comprehend what they are reading. A third strength of the project is that teachers will be educated on research based reading strategies to use in the classroom with struggling readers. The project will help them understand how to apply the strategies to their everyday teaching.

The structure of the3-day professional development training is also a strength because teachers will have the opportunity to interact with each other, see and use the strategies, and apply the strategies in the classroom to help struggling readers. Subsequently, the professional development sessions are interactive and will allow the participants to actively participate and interact with peers. Teachers will also have the opportunity to ask questions and receive valuable feedback about their lessons and the strategies being used in the classroom.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

After collecting and analyzing data, I concluded that a 3-day professional development training for third grade teachers on the use of research based reading strategies was the best option as a project. Although there are significant benefits for choosing this type of project, there are also some limitations.

- Some teachers may not utilize the strategies learned on a continuous basis in their classrooms after the trainings.
- Since the trainings are all day, some teachers may come late, leave early, or not attend at all. As a result, they may miss some of the ideas shared in the sessions.

The following recommendations are suggested:

- Most principals in the district require lesson plans to be turned in on a weekly basis, so they can monitor the implementation of the reading strategies shared in the professional development session are included in the plans.
- The professional development trainer could make a checklist of strategies for teachers to self-evaluate themselves as they design and implement the before,

during, and after reading strategies. Administrators could also use the checklist as they specifically look for evidence of the strategies being implemented while conducting observations and walk throughs.

- The presenter can require all participants to sign in at the beginning of the workshop and also at the end. Sign in sheets will be given to the principals at each building. The sign in sheet will allow principals to know who has received the training.

Scholarship

This project study provided me with the experience needed to be successful at extensive research and planning professional development sessions. The experience gained is far more extensive than I would have ever received in the regular classroom. Consistent research and reading, trial and error, and submission after submission, have all allowed me to be able to understand the content and apply it. Time management is also a concept I had to learn in this program. It is very easy to get sidetracked with life and neglect work. As I began this program, I had no concept of effective time management, but it was a skill I had to learn quickly. I also had to learn about scholarly writing, real research, and writing a research study.

Because of this doctoral process, I have been provided with a much deeper definition of the meaning of acquiring knowledge. I had to learn about scholarly writing, real research, and what it takes to write a research study. I had to learn to move beyond surface level reading and read deeper in order to fully understand the information. As I began this journey of preparing a project study, I felt many times like I wanted to give up. The overwhelming amount of time it was taking to locate information and research topics

for the literature review and the project itself made me feel like I was drowning. I could not keep my head above water. It was too much. Then, after numerous attempts of having my proposal approved to no avail, I was in a slump and beginning to second-guess my choice to begin this program. However, I did not give up because I knew there was a method to my madness and I am not a quitter. Even though the program did get challenging, I knew I had to keep going.

In my 14 years of serving as an educator, I thought I knew a good bit about the reading process and educating struggling readers, but through this project I found out there was still plenty more to learn. Delving into the research on how to assist struggling readers made me aware and conscious of the many strategies that I have not been trying with the struggling readers in my classroom but am now willing to try. I also found out that it is essential to discover what others know about struggling readers so that I may change my practices and be well informed.

I have learned that this process is a long and difficult one and no matter how many times I have wanted to give up, cry, and second-guess myself, I have always overcome each obstacle that has been placed in my path. Scholarship is not just being a doctoral student, researching topics, and writing papers, but it is also about overcoming obstacles, keeping faith in oneself, thinking outside of the box to accomplish to reach goals, and not letting anyone nor anything stop the process. It is also about being flexible in analyzing data and continuing with data-based decisions, even if the conclusions do not support the hypotheses or the interventions introduced to the participants. This process has taught me many valuable lessons that I would not have gained otherwise.

Project Development and Evaluation

The project began with analyzing data from STAR and AR for each student. Once all data was collected and analyzed, I came to the realization that teachers needed more strategies to assist struggling readers because the results from the study indicated that audio books were not beneficial with increasing the reading levels of struggling readers. More strategies were needed by teachers to assist struggling readers with reading achievement. Fisher, Frey, and Nelson (2012) asserted that in order to make improvements in reading instruction, teachers have to be trained effectively in reading instruction. Therefore, after collecting and analyzing data for the study it was determined that the best project genre was a series of professional development sessions. I had to dispel any biases and allow the research to guide the project so that it would be the best means of increasing knowledge about research based reading strategies to be used by struggling readers before, during, and after reading.

Formative and summative evaluations will be used in the professional development sessions. According to Kindle (2013), in order to improve the training sessions, there must be some kind of reflection from participants about the training received. As I conducted research on professional development trainings, I learned that the trainings needed to be informative and beneficial.

The creation of this project deepened my appreciation for including research based best practices in my teaching. I felt like other teachers could benefit from the knowledge I gained and with the desire to share my newfound knowledge, the implementation of the professional development workshops came to fruition. The

information may be valuable to other teachers like me, who are in need of better strategies to reach the struggling readers in our classrooms.

One thing I have learned about project development is that it is a process. The project has to develop from a need or a gap in practice. In this instance, the gap in practice was in using research-based strategies for struggling readers. From this process I have also learned that regardless of one's background there is still room for improvement and assumptions have no place in research. The data is the driving force behind everything that is done.

Leadership and Change

I believe leadership and change go hand in hand. Petranker (2010) stated that leadership is all about change and a leader who wants to transform an organization must be a master of great thinking. This project has helped me understand that change in education requires a group of people with the same goals and aspirations. My desire to educate others of my new knowledge has helped me to step into a leadership role to institute change in my school.

Leadership exists at various levels within the school setting. Successful leaders are able to identify a need and do what is necessary to fill the need. The doctoral process has enabled me to begin to see myself as a leader wanting to institute change in my school. Until now, I have not considered myself as a true leader, taking on any leadership roles, but through this process, I have learned that leadership takes on many roles. I have also learned how to identify a need, research, gather data, and use the information learned in the most productive way to institute change.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

I now see myself as a scholar because throughout this entire process I have learned that being a scholar is more than putting words on a page and writing based on beliefs. I have learned how to produce scholarly writing and to produce scholarly writing one has to be focused, driven, patient, and dedicated. When writing, I have learned that with there being so much information out there, as a scholar, I need to decipher and critique research studies to find what is necessary to fulfill my purpose at the time. This process has taught me that no matter what obstacles get in your way; you have to persevere. I have also gained the ability to understand information on a much deeper level. Being at this point in the process is validation that I have become a scholar.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

This entire process has been a major learning experience for me. It has been an experience that has allowed me to learn more about scholarly writing, planning professional development, and strategies for helping struggling readers. I cannot say that planning professional development training is something I would have had the gall to do without this experience. The drive to seek change in the way struggling readers are taught and to make the professional development and entire project beneficial, is what employed me to enhance my work until it reached a level of satisfaction to become a useful project of value to others. I have enjoyed this experience and now I know what is necessary to help struggling readers. I can be of assistance to others that seem to be struggling with helping struggling readers in their classrooms.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

The project that I developed was based on the results of data collection from my project study. After the data revealed that audio books were not beneficial as a tool to increase the reading levels of struggling readers, I realized that teachers and students needed additional research based strategies to address the gap in reading instruction for struggling readers. I learned that there was a need to find better research-based strategies for educating struggling readers in third grade.

As a project developer, I learned the basics of designing and implementing a professional development workshop that would help to increase the knowledge of teachers about research based best practices for struggling readers. I was dedicated and committed to find a way to address the need of increasing reading achievement of struggling readers at the local school site. I have designed the professional development-training model as a way to fulfill the gap in reading instruction that can be utilized to help struggling readers.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

Reading is a skill that is utilized throughout life. If a child is not reading on grade level by the end of third grade, they may be in danger of academic failure. The most important finding from this study is that teachers are in need of research based reading strategies for assisting struggling readers. This study is important because it provides teachers with several research based best practices that will enable them to help struggling readers become successful, independent readers. It is a perfect example to instigate social change at the local level and beyond because teachers will now have an

arsenal of research based strategies to assist with reading instruction for struggling readers.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

There are struggling readers in every classroom across the county. Helping struggling readers is a topic that will continually be addressed in schools. This project was developed to address the issue of below level reading. Its usefulness can be applied and the strategies utilized in any classroom that has struggling readers.

This study is important because it gives teachers and students more research based reading strategies to employ while teaching reading or being a reader. Since the study was only conducted on third grade students, future research may extend to other grade levels and a longer time frame. Another implication for research could be conducted on the usefulness of professional development as an institution of change for teachers. A final implication for future research could be on the benefits of silent reading because students have to be able to read independently and apply strategies to assist with comprehension of text at their independent reading level.

Conclusion

The elementary school where the research took place had no evaluative information on the associations of the use of audio books with struggling readers. The purpose of this study was to use the data collected to examine the association of the use of audio books on the reading achievement of struggling readers by comparing STAR and Accelerated Reader scores of third grade readers. The study was guided by Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development and the following research questions: (a) How do the reading levels of students identified as struggling readers

compare between those who use audio books and those who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction? (b) How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read with audio books during reading instruction? (c) How do the reading levels of struggling readers compare to the reading levels of those reading at or above grade level who read silently without the aid of audio books during reading instruction?

The findings of this study indicated that there was a need for more research based reading strategies for students in order to increase reading achievement. A possible social change outcome of the study may be that teachers and students will have more research based reading strategies to assist with reading difficulties.

References

Abilock, D. & Harvada, V. H. (2013). Growing schools: Effective professional development. *Teacher Librarian*, *41*(1). 8-13. Retrieved from Expanded Academic ASAP Database. (Accession No. edsgcl.349903183)

Alfaki, I.M. & Siddiek, A. G. (2013). The role of background knowledge in enhancing reading comprehension. *Word Journal of English Language*, *3*(4), 42-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v3n4p42

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2013). *Helping your child learn to read.* Retrieved from www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Helping-Your-Child.htm

Ankrum, J. W., Genest, M. T. & Belcastro, E. G. (2014). The power of verbal scaffolding: Showing beginning readers how to use reading strategies. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *42*(1), 39-47. doi: 10.1007/s10643-013-0586-5

Annie E. Casey Foundation (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. A KIDS COUNT Report from the Annie E, Casey Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). Early warning: *Why reading by the end of third grade matters.* Retrieved from http://www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecRepor t/Special%20Report%20Executive%20Summary.pdf

Basaran, M. (2013). Reading fluency as an indicator of reading comprehension. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice. 13*(4). 2287-2290. doi: 10.12738/estp.2013.4.1922

Bos, L., Dekoning, B. B., Wassenburg, S. van der Scoot, M., Williams, G., & Nazir, T. A. (2016). Training inference making skills using a situation model approach improves reading comprehension. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1-13, doi:10.10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00116.

Burns, M. K., Hodgson, J., Parker, D. C., & Fremont, K. (2011). Comparison of the effectiveness and efficiency of text previewing and pre-teaching key words and small group reading comprehension strategies and middle school students. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 50*(3), 241-252. doi:10.108019388071.2010.519097

Burton, L. (n.d.). *Why audiobooks matter.* Retrieved from http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/feature/-/101585/103-6361431-2158211

Campaign for Grade Level Reading (2013). Third Grade Reading Success Matters. Retrieved from http://gradelevelreading.net/about-us/campaign-overview

Chang, A.C-S. (2011). The effect of reading while listening to audiobooks: Listening fluency and vocabulary gains. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, *21*, 43-64. Retrieved from Education Source Database. (Accession No. 67415165)

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Boston, MA: Pearson Education

Cuillo, S. (2015). Improving access to elementary school social studies instruction: Strategies to support students with learning disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children 48*(2), 102-109. doi: 10.1177/0040059915605640

Davis, D.S. & Neitzel, C. (2012). Collaborative sense making with print and digital text

    environments. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal. 25*(4), 831-856.

    doi:10.1007/s11145-011-9302-2

Desimone, L. M. (2011). Primer on effective professional development. *The Phi Delta Kappan,*

    92(6), 68-71. doi:10.1177/003172171109200616

Devlin-Scherer, R., & Sardone, N. (2013). Collaboration as a form of professional development:

    Improving learning for faculty and students. *College Teaching*, *61*(1), 30-37.

    doi.1080/87567555.2012.714815

Esteves, K.J. & Whitten, E. (2011). Assisted reading with digital audiobooks for students with

    reading disabilities. *Reading Horizons*, *51*(1), 21-40. Retrieved from

    http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading horizons

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2012). Building and activating students' background

    knowledge: It's what they already know that counts. *Middle School Journal, 43*(3), 22-

    31. Retrieved from

    mathenrich.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/52803823/**buildingandactivating**.pdf

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Nelson, J. (2012). Literacy achievement through sustained professional

    development. *Reading Teacher, 65*(8), 551-563. doi.10.1002/TRTR.01082

Fountas , I.C. & Pinnell, G. S. (2006). *Teaching for comprehension and fluency: Thinking,*

    talking, and writing about reading, Portsmouth, NH. K-8 Heinemann Publishing,

Gold, J. & Gibson, A. (2014). Reading aloud to build comprehension. Retrieved from

    http://www.readingrockets.org/article/343

Gulamhussein, A. (2013) Teaching the Teachers: Effective Professional Development in an era of high stakes accountability. *Center for Public Education Report*. 1-4. Retrieved from http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/teachingtheteachers

Gunter, A. (2010). Auditory reading: Using advancements in technology to meet the needs of the modern teen reader. *Kentucky English Bulletin,* 59(2), 34-38. Retrieved from http://www.naspcenter.org/home_school/reading_2004.html

Holmes, V-L (2012). Depth of teacher's knowledge: Frameworks for teacher's knowledge of mathematics. *Journal of STEM Education: Innovations and Research*, (13)1, 55-71. Retrieved from Education Source Database. (Accession No. 79468714)

Kame'enui, E., Adams, M.J.,& Lyon R. (2015). The challenge of learning to read. Retrieved from www.readingrockets.org/article/challenge-learning-read.

Kindle, K.J. (2013). Interactive reading in preschool: Improving practice through professional development. *Reading Improvement, 50*(4), 175-188. Retrieved from Expanded Academic ASAP Database. (Accession No. edsgcl.355938654)

Kirmizi, S. & Akkaya, N. (2011). A qualitative study on the use of summarizing strategies in elementary education. *Journal of Education. 41*, 267-277. Retrieved from Social Sciences Citation Index. (Accession No. 000298904800023)

LearningRx. (2014). Basic reading skills. Retrieved from http://www.learningrx/com/basic-reading-skills-faq.htm

Lewis-Lancaster, A. & Reisener, C. (2013). Examining the results of a brief experimental analysis and reading fluency intervention with a middle school student. *Reading Improvement*. *50*(4), 166-174. Retrieved from Expanded Academic ASAP Database. (Accession No. edsgcl.355938653)

Lutrick, E. & Szabo, S. (2012). Instructional leader's beliefs about effective professional

 development. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, *78*(3), 6-12. Retrieved from Education Full

 Text (H.W. Wilson) Database. (Accession No. 74029558)

Lyon, G. R. (2013). How do children learn to read? Retrieved from

 http://www.readingrockets.org/article/356.

Mahdavi, J. N. & Tensfeldt, L. (2013). Untangling reading comprehension strategy instruction:

 Assisting struggling readers in primary grades, *Preventing School Failure*, *57*(2), 77-92.

 doi: 10.1080/1045988x.2012.668576

Main, K. Pendergast, D. Virtue, D. C. (2015). Core features of effective continuing professional

 development for the middle years: A tool for reflection. *Research in Middle Level*

 Education Online. 38(10). 1-18. doi.10.1080/19404476.2015.11658177

Malouf, R. C., Reisener, C. D., Gadke, D. L., Wimbush, S. W., & Frankel, A. C. (2014). The

 effect of helping early literacy with practice: Strategies in reading fluency for children

 with severe reading impairments. *Reading Improvement, 51*(2), 269-279. Retrieved from

 ERIC Database. (Accession No. EJ1034944)

Moore, S., Kochan, F., Krashka, M., & Reames, E. H. (2011). Professional development and

 student achievement in high poverty schools: Making the connection. *International*

 Studies in Education Administration, 39(2), 65-79. Retrieved from

 http://christyhiett.wiki.westga.edu/file/view/Professional+Development+and+student+ac

 hievement+in+high+poverty+schools.pdf

Morris, D. (2011). Practicum training for teachers of struggling readers. *Kappan. 92*(8), 54-57.

 doi.10.1177/003172171109200811

National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the

    scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.

    Retrieved from http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/documents/report.pdf.

Pacific Resources for Education Learning. (2013). Stages of reading development. Retrieved

    from http://www.readingrockets.org/article/51574

Park, J. Y. (2012). A different kind of reading instruction. Using visualizing to bridge reading

    comprehension and critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent an Adult Literacy. 55*(7). 629-

    640. doi: 10.1002/JAAL.00074

Parr, J. M. & McNaughton, S. (2014). Connections: The nature and occurrence of links in

    literacy teaching and learning. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, *37*(3), 141-

    150. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier Database. (Accession No. 98651415)

Petranker, J. (2010). Leading from within the whole of time. *Revision*, *30*(3), 57-62.

    doi.10.4298/REVN.30.3.4.56-62

Porter, P. and Herczog, M. (2009). Strategies for struggling readers, part I. *Social Studies*

    Review, *48*(1), 53-65. Retrieved from Education Source Database. (Accession No.

    508101337)

Porter, P. and Herczog, M. (2010). Strategies for struggling readers. A teacher resource guide.

    We the people: The citizen and the constitution. Retrieved from

    www.lawanddemocracy.org/pdffiles/wtp.lit.level2.pdf.

Reading Rockets. (2015). Fluency. Retrieved from

    http://readingrockets.org/helping/target/fluency.

Renaissance Learning. (2009). *Accelerated reader: Understanding validity and reliability.*

Retrieved from

http://www.krumisd.net/cms/lib/TX01000553/Centricity/Domain/58/Accelerated%20Rea

der/ARReliabilityValidity.pdf

Renaissance Learning. (2011). The foundation of STAR Assessments: The science of STAR.

Retrieved from http://doc.renlearn.com/KMNet/R003957507GG2170

Renaissance Learning. (2013). *Getting results with Accelerated Reader: Easily manage daily*

reading practice for students. Retrieved from

http://doc.renlearn.com/KMNet/R003975403GG965F.pdf

Renaissance Learning (2014). STAR Reading Enterprise. Retrieved from

https://hosted284.renlearn.com/45136/Public/RPM/Login/Login.aspx?srcID=t

Richards, J.C. & Gipe, J.P. (1992). Activating background knowledge: Strategies for beginners

and poor readers. (In the classroom). Retrieved from ERIC Database. (Accession No.

EJ437439) *Reading Teacher. 45*(6), 474-476.

Richardson, J. (2009). *The next steps in guided reading: Focused assessments and targeted*

lessons for helping every student become a better reader. Broadway, New York:

Scholastic Inc.

Rutherford, A. S., Hillmer, T., & Parker, A. (2011). Overcoming the education challenge of

poverty in the Mississippi Delta: A literary focused professional development program

dramatically raises student achievement in a hardscrabble Mississippi town. *Phi Delta*

Kappan, 93(3). 40-44. doi.10.1177/003172171109300310

Santoyo, P. B. (2013). Leading effective professional development: From abstraction to action. *Phi Delta Kappan, 94*(7), 70-71. Retrieved from Expanded Academic ASAP Database. (Accession No. edsgcl.327587951)

SAS (2006). DOK Chart (2006). Retrieved from http://static.pdsas.org/content/documents/M1-Slide_19_DOK_Wheel_Slide.pdf

Sencibaugh, J. & Sencibaugh, A. (2015). The effects of questioning the author on the reading comprehension of middle school students. *Reading Improvement*, *52*(3), 85-92. Retrieved from Expanded Academic ASAP Database. (Accession No. edsgcl.429498167)

Shabani, K., Khatib, M, & Ebadi, S. (2010). Vygotsky's zone of proximal development: Instructional implications and teachers' professional development . *English Language Teaching. 3*(4), 237-248. Retrieved from http://www.doaj.org/doaj?func=openurl&genre=article&issn=19164742&date=2010&volume=3&issue=4&spage=

Shrivanek, S. (2009). Power of a statistical test. Retrieved June 28, 2015 from https://www.moresteam.com/whitepapers/download/power-stat-test.pdf

South Carolina Department of Education (2013a). South Carolina State Standards. Retrieved June 13, 2013 from http://ed.sc.gov/agency/sc/Teacher-Effectiveness/Standards-and Curriculum/document

South Carolina Department of Education (2013b). Palmetto Assessment of State Standards Test Scores. Retrieved from http://ed.sc.gov/data/pass/2013/show_district_pass_scores.cfm?ID=1101

South Carolina Department of Education (2015). Read to Succeed Act. Retrieved July 31, 2015 from https://ed.sc.gov/agency/ie/School-Transformation/Read-to-Succeed/

Stahl, K. A. D. (2014). Fostering inference generation with emergent and novice readers. *Reading Teacher*, *67*(5). 384-388. Retrieved from Expanded Academic ASAP Database. (Accession No. edsgcl.356913849)

Strasser, K., & del Rio, F. (2014). The role of comprehension monitoring, theory of mind, and vocabulary depth in predicting story comprehension and recall of kindergarten children. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *49*(2), 169-187. doi.10.1002/rrq.68

Teachthought.com (2013). 25 reading strategies that work in every content area. Retrieved from http://www.teachthought.com/teaching/25-reading-strategies-that-work-in-every-content-area/.

Thoermer, A. & Williams, L. (2012). Using digital texts to promote fluent reading. *The Reading Teacher, 65(7),* 441-445. doi*/10.1002/TRTR.01065*

Tindall, E & Nisbet, D. (2010). Exploring the essential components of reading. *Journal of Adult Education. 39(1). 1-9.* Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ891080

Tompkins, V., Ying, G. Justine, L. M. (2013). Inference generation, story comprehension, and language skills in the preschool years. *Reading and Writing*, *26*(3), 403-429. doi.10.1007/s11145-012-9374-7

Vygotsky, L., S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Retrieved from ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/Vygotsky-Mind- in- Society.pdf.

Wanzek, J., Wexler, J., Vaughn, S., & Cuillo, S. (2010). Reading interventions for struggling readers in the upper elementary grades: A synthesis of 20 years of research. *Reading and Writing*, *23*, 889-912.doi.10.1007/s11145-009-9179-5

Whittenham, J., Huffman, S., Christensen, R., &McAllister, T. (2013). Use of Audiobooks in a

    School Library and Positive Effects of Struggling Readers' Participation in a Library-

    Sponsored Audiobook Club. *Research Journal of the American Academy of School*

    Librarians, 16, 1-18. Retrieved from:

    http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ1012831

Wilson, N. S. & Smetana, L. (2011). Questioning as thinking: A metacognitive framework to

    improve comprehension of expository text. *Literacy, 45*(2), 84-90. doi.10.1111/j.1741-

    4369.2011.00584.x

Youngs, S. & Serafini, F. (2011). Comprehension strategies for reading historical fiction picture

    books. *Reading Teacher. 65*(2), 115-124. doi:10.1002/TRTR.01014

Yurdakul, B., Caker, E., Uslu, O., & Yildiz, D. G. (2014). Evaluation of the professional

    development program on web based content development. *Educational Sciences: Theory*

    and Practice, 14(4), 1427-1437. Retrieved from Social Sciences Citation Index Database.

    (Accession No. 000344252600010)

Appendix A: Strategies for Helping Struggling Readers

Professional Development Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this professional development plan is to inform third grade

teachers of the benefits of using research based best practices in the classroom to assist

struggling readers. Teachers will learn practical ways to apply the strategies in their

classrooms. Time will be given for interactive discussions both whole and small group.

Goals

The goals of this professional session module are:

- To define and identify struggling readers.

- To introduce third grade teachers to research based strategies that can be used to
  increase reading achievement with struggling reader.

    - To enable the teachers to implementation all strategies in their classroom.

Learning Outcomes

During the professional development sessions, teachers will learn:

- How to identify struggling readers.

- How to help struggling readers in the classroom.

Target Audience

The target audience for the professional development sessions will be third grade teachers

across the facilitator's district.

Materials

- Handout of Strategies

- Lesson Planner Sample and Template

- Handout of Power Point Presentations

Outline of Components

The professional development sessions will consist of 3 days of training at the beginning of the school year. The trainings will take place within 2 weeks of each other. After each training session, the teachers will be instructed to apply the strategies taught in the session in their classrooms for 2 weeks with a small group of struggling readers. Time will be given at the beginning of the next session for teachers to share what was tried in the 2-week period and how it went. After the first session, teachers will be able to identify struggling readers and immediately after each session, begin to use the strategies in the classroom to help those students

Timeline and Agenda

Day 1

8:00-8:15 Sign in, introductions, and light snacks

8:15-9:15 Presentation: Why are we here? Struggling Readers.

9:15-10:15 Presentation: Prereading Strategies of Activating Prior Knowledge and Building Background

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-11:30 Presentation: Prereading Strategies of Previewing and Predicting

11:30-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:00 Work Session: Teachers create prereading lessons for a group of struggling readers based on various books

2:00-3:00 Teacher presentations of lessons

3:00-3:30 Debriefing, Discussions, Evaluations and Wrap-up

Day 2

8:00-8:15 Sign in and light snacks

8:15-8:30 Review strategies from last session

8:30-9:30 Group share-What strategies did teachers try from last session and was

it successful?

9:30-9:45 Break

9:45-11:30 Presentation: During reading strategies: self-monitoring, questioning,

inferring, and visualizing

11:30-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:00 Work Sessions: Teachers prepare prereading and during reading lessons

for a small group of struggling readers based on a book

2:00-3:00 Teacher presentations of lessons

3:00-3:30 Debrief, Discussions, Evaluations, and Wrap-Up

Day 3

8:00-8:15 Sign in and light snacks

8:15-8:30 Review from previous sessions

8:30-9:30 Group share-What strategies did teachers try from previous sessions

and was it successful?

9:30-9:45 Break

9:45-11:30 Presentation: After reading strategy of summarizing and fluency

11:30-1:00 Lunch

1:00-2:00 Work Sessions: Teachers prepare a small group lesson based on a book for struggling readers consisting of a fluency component as well as an pre-reading, during reading, and after reading strategies.

2:00-3:00 Teacher Presentations of Lessons

3:00-3:30 Debrief, Discussions, Evaluations, and Closure

Power Point Presentations

Session 1

The following slides correspond with the training session for Day 1. During Session 1, teachers will define and discuss the definition of struggling readers. They will also be introduced to the Read to Succeed Act. Activities for activating prior knowledge, building background, previewing, and predicting will be presented. Using the activities from today's session, teachers will plan and present a lesson geared towards a small group of struggling readers.

STRUGGLING READERS: HOW CAN WE CHANGE THEIR STORY?

Created By: Alicia McGill

Walden University

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the professional development trainings, teachers will know:

- How to identify struggling readers.
- How to help struggling readers in the classroom

Table discussion: Teachers discuss what, if anything, they have heard about this piece of legislation. Share whole group.

IN JUNE 2014, THE SOUTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSED ACT 284 (READ TO SUCCEED), AS A MONUMENTAL STEP TOWARD CLOSING THE STATE'S ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA. THE GOAL OF READ TO SUCCEED IS TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITH THE READING AND WRITING SKILLS THEY NEED TO BE COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY.

HTTP://ED.SC.GOV/AGENCY/IE/SCHOOL-TRANSFORMATION/READ-TO-SUCCEED/DOCUMENTS/SC_STATE_READING_PLAN_2015-06-10_FINAL.PDF

Two word strategy: Teachers choose two words that stick out to them from the slide. In the packet, write their two words and an explanation as to why they chose the words. They will share the words at their table and explain their significance. Explain that this strategy can also be used by students after reading a book.
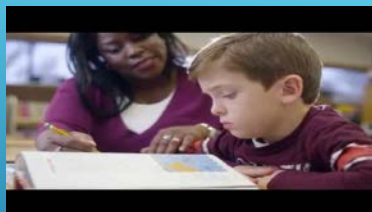
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR 3RD GRADERS?

Teachers will write the characteristics of struggling readers on a sticky note and place on the chart titled: Characteristics of Struggling Readers. Discuss responses.

Compare teacher characteristics on sticky notes to the information on this slide. Discuss the characteristics of struggling readers.

STRUGGLING READERS

How can we change their story?

✓Books on independent reading levels

✓READING STRATEGIES
  ✓BEFORE
  ✓ DURING
  ✓AFTER

PRE-READING STRATEGIES

✓Activate Prior Knowledge and Build Background

✓Preview and Predict

ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND BUILDING BACKGROUND

✓ KWL
✓ TEXT IMPRESSIONS
✓ STORY IMPRESSIONS
✓ KWL Chart
✓ Anticipation Guides
✓ Alphaboxes
✓ Picture Books
✓ Cloze Activities
✓ Pictures/Videos

Ask teachers if they have ever heard of or used any of the strategies. If they have used a strategy, have them to explain what it is and how it was used. Explain any unfamiliar strategies to the group.

WHAT STRATEGIES WERE USED TO ACTIVATE
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND BUILD
BACKGROUND? HOW COULD YOU USE
THIS IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

Tell teachers that even though this video is from a high school classroom, for them to watch and listen for the pre-reading strategies the teacher is using to activate prior knowledge and build background. After the video, turn and talk. Tell someone at your table how you can use these strategies in your classroom with something that you teach in either social studies or science in   order to help struggling readers.

Use the same procedure as with activating knowledge and building background. Ask teachers if they have ever heard of or used any of the strategies. If they have used a strategy, allow them to explain what the strategy is and how it was used. Explain each strategy except THIEVES. There is a video that demonstrates this strategy.

THIEVES video: Turn and talk: After watching the video, teachers will talk at their tables about how they may use this strategy with struggling readers.
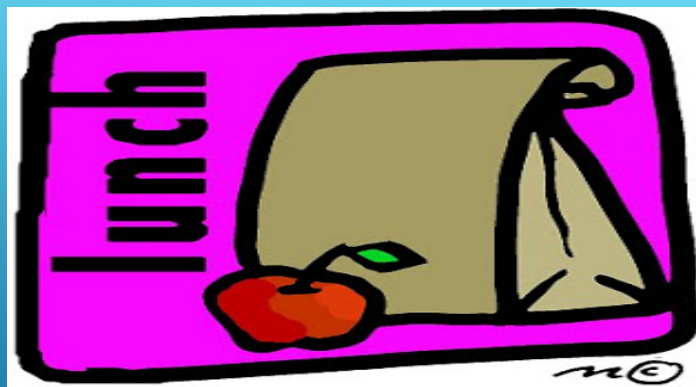
RETURN AT 1:00

LESSON PLANNING

- ✓ At your tables, break up into groups of 3. You can not be in a group with another teacher from you school.
- ✓ Think about the struggling readers in your classroom.
- ✓ Choose a book from the basket in order to prepare a pre-reading lesson for a small group of struggling readers.
- ✓ Use at least one or more of the strategies taught from the morning session.
- ✓ Decide how you are going to present the lesson to the group.

Teachers will have one hour to put together a pre-reading lesson for a book of their choice.

Teachers will present their lessons to the group.

Discuss how the day went and what new information was learned. Complete the evaluation on today's session. Teachers will try the pre-reading strategies with a small group of struggling readers for two weeks. During the next meeting, everyone will share their results.

Session 2

The following slides correspond with the training session for day 2. In session 2, teachers will have a chance to share lessons using the strategies and activities from session 1. They will also be introduced to the during reading strategies self-monitoring, questioning, inferring, and visualizing. At the end of session 2, teachers will have a chance to plan a lesson using both pre-reading and during reading strategies. The lesson will be presented to the group.

Struggling Readers: How can we change their story?

Session 2

Let's review……..

Hmmm.
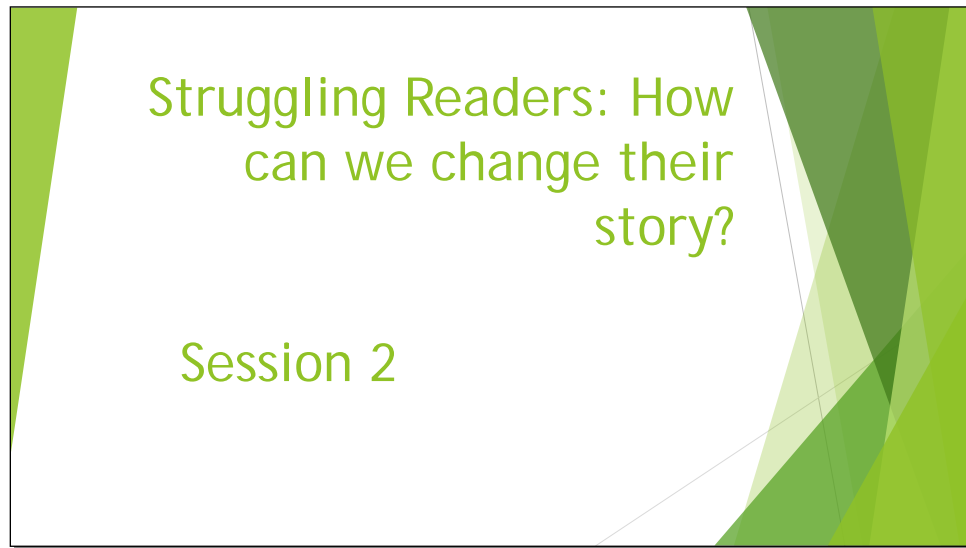
Review strategies and activities from session 1.

Let's share…..

Have teachers share any and all strategies as well as a lesson they tried with a group of struggling readers during the previous 2 weeks and if it was successful.

Let's take a break!!!
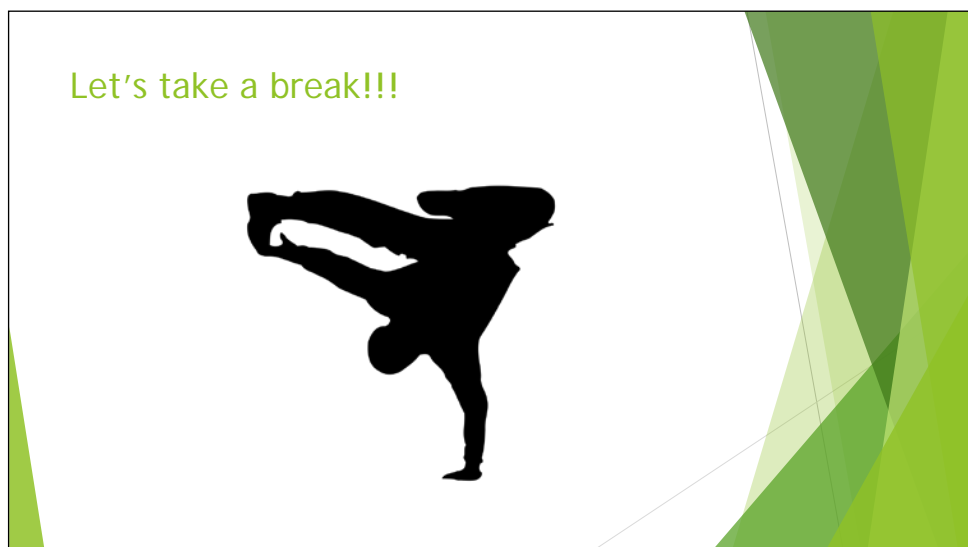
What strategies can struggling readers try as they read?

▶ During Reading Strategies

- ▶ Self-monitoring
- ▶ Questioning
- ▶ Inferring
- ▶ Visualizing

Self-Monitoring

▶ Students ask themselves 2 questions:

- ▶ Does my reading make sense?
- ▶ Am I understanding what I read?

  - ▶ How do they do this?

Questioning

Asking questions before, during, and after reading to gain a deeper understanding of a text

▶ Readers need to be taught to ask questions before, during, and after they read.

▶ Thick and Thin Questions

Explain the difference between thick and thin questions.

How can this strategy help readers better understand a text?

Explain that we have to teach children to ask questions before, during, and after reading in order to get to the deeper meaning of a text. While watching the video teachers will

get to practice using this strategy, then we will discuss how this activity helped them to understand the text better.

Even though inferring is a high level skill, there are simple ways to teach it. Explain that this is a video of a simple inference activity that can be placed in a center and used with struggling readers.
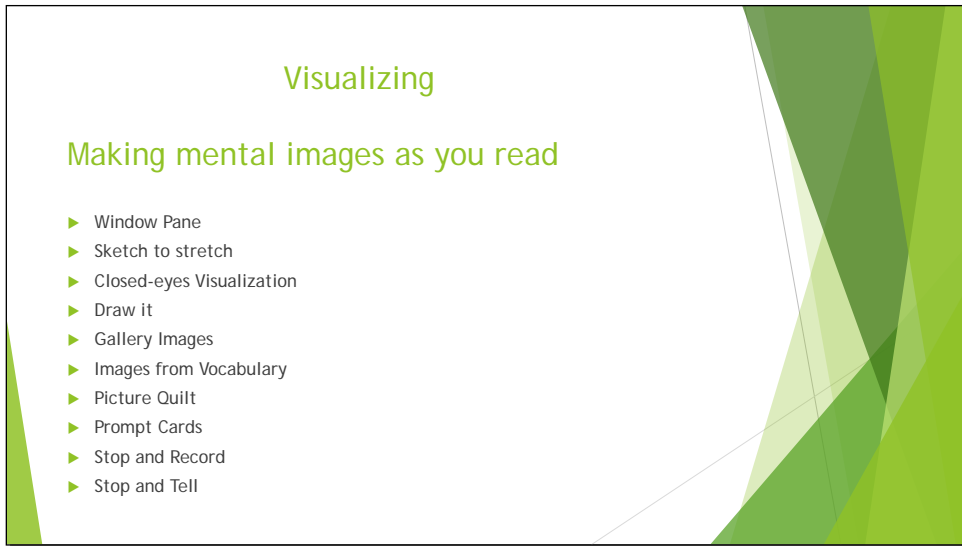

Ask teachers if they have ever heard of or used any of the strategies in their classrooms. If so, have them to explain the activity and how they used it. Explain any unfamiliar strategies.

Lesson Planning

- At your tables, break up into groups of 3. Try to choose partners not from your school.
- Think about the struggling readers in your room.
- You and your team will choose a book from the basket in order to prepare a small group lesson consisting of pre-reading and during reading activities.
- Use at least one pre-reading activity and one during reading activity learned from each of the sessions.
- Decide how you are going to present the lesson to the group.

You will have one hour….
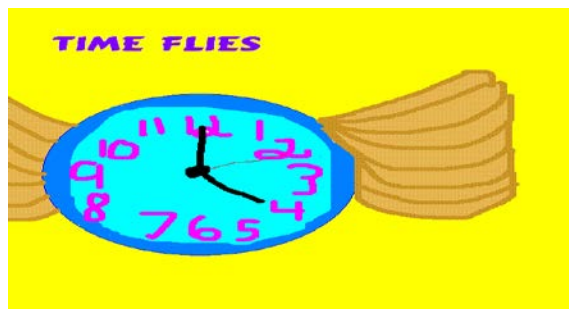
Teachers will present their lessons to the group.
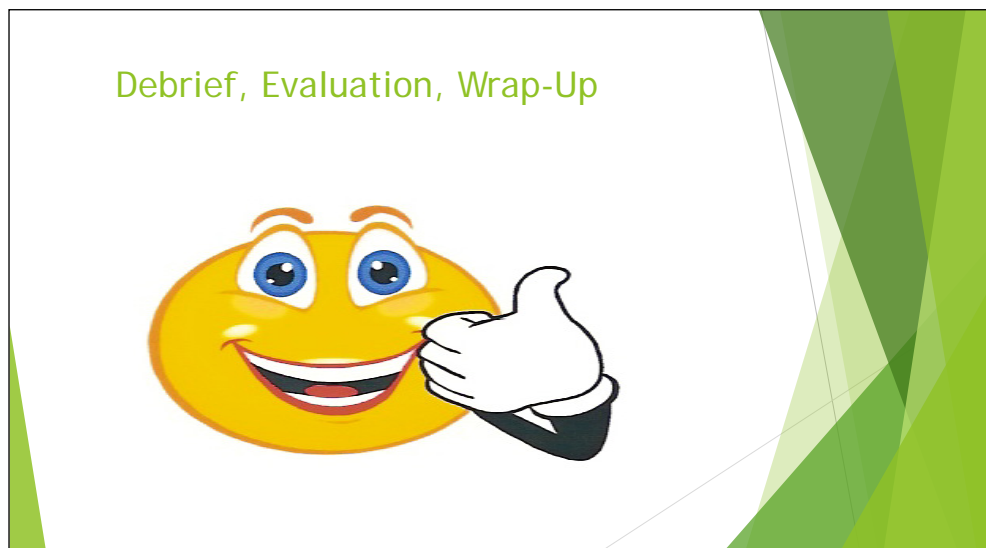
Discuss how the day went and what new information was learned. Complete the evaluation on today's session. Teachers will try the pre-reading and during reading strategies with a small group of struggling readers for two weeks. During the next meeting, everyone will share their results.

Session 3

 The following slides correspond with the training session for day 3. In session 3, teachers will review strategies from the previous two sessions. Summarizing and fluency will be discussed. At the end of the session, teachers will prepare lessons using before, during, and after reading strategies on a book of choice.
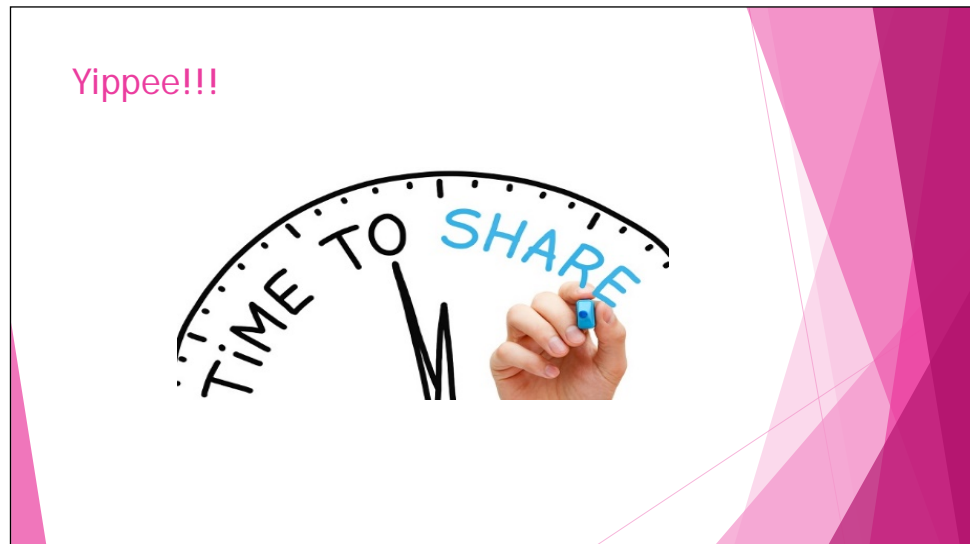
Review strategies from sessions 1 and 2.

Teachers share lessons using pre reading and during reading strategies that were used with a small group of struggling readers from the past two weeks.

Break time!!!

What's a good strategy for struggling readers to try after they read?

▶Summarizing!!

How does this help struggling readers?

▶ It forces them to focus on the most important ideas in a text.

Activities to help with summarizing..

- ▶ Read, Cover, Say
- ▶ Bubble Maps
- ▶ 3-2-1
- ▶ Word Splash
- ▶ ABC Summary
- ▶ Somebody Wanted But So
- ▶ Somebody Wanted But So and Then
- ▶ Study Cube
- ▶ Sum Summary
- ▶ Story Map

Teachers share and explain which activities they have used before. I will explain any unfamiliar activities.
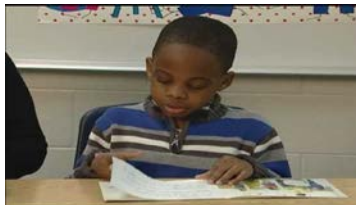

In this video, the teacher is showing a struggling reader how to summarize nonfiction text. Pay close attention to her strategy. Then, we will discuss it.

Fluency

On a sticky note, teachers respond to this question: What does fluent reading sound like? Share responses.

What can you do to help a child with fluency?

Teachers take notes from the video in order to answer the question at the top of the slide. Share responses once the video is over.

Teachers explain the activities they have used. I will explain any unfamiliar activities.

Guess What? Its....

Glad you could join us!

Lesson Planning

► Break up into groups of 3. Try to work with someone you haven't before.

► Your group will choose a book from the basket in order to prepare a full lesson consisting of pre-reading, during reading, and after reading strategies.

► Decide how you are going to present to the group.

You have one hour...

Teachers share lessons.

Explain that as teachers we can change a struggling reader's story by giving him the strategies needed for successful reading and comprehension. We must prepare them to be successful readers. Discuss how the day went and what new information was learned. Complete the evaluation on today's session. Teachers will try the pre-reading, during reading, and after reading strategies with a small group of struggling readers for two weeks. At the end of the two-week period, teachers will email me to tell me about their lessons and how everything went. Thank everyone for coming.

Appendix B: Permission Letter to Use STAR and AR

RENAISSANCE LEARNING

901 Deming Way, Suite 301
Madison, WI 53717
Phone: 800-884-5060
Fax: 608-884-5062
www.renaissance.com

May 31, 2016

Dear Alicia McGill:

The purpose of this letter is to grant you permission to use Renaissance Learning's materials, including STAR Reading and Accelerated Reader, in your research project.

If you have any questions about the research base for any of our products, please do not hesitate to contact the Research Department, email research@renaissance.com.

Best regards,

Director of Educational Research
Renaissance Learning, Inc.
901 Deming Way, Suite 301
Madison, WI 53717-1979

Appendix C: Data Use Agreement

DATA USE AGREEMENT

This Data Use Agreement ("Agreement"), effective as of March 23, 2015 is entered into by and between Alicia McGill and Limestone Central Elementary. The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set ("LDS") for use in research in accord with laws and regulations of the governing bodies associated with the Data Provider, Data Recipient, and Data Recipient's educational program. In the case of a discrepancy among laws, the agreement shall follow whichever law is more strict.

1. Definitions. Due to the study's affiliation with Laureate, a USA-based company, unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the USA "HIPAA Regulations" and/or "FERPA Regulations" codified in the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.

2. Preparation of the LDS. Data Provider shall prepare and furnish to Data Recipient a LDS in accord with any applicable laws and regulations of the governing bodies associated with the Data Provider, Data Recipient, and Data Recipient's educational program.

3. Data Fields in the LDS. No direct identifiers such as names may be included in the Limited Data Set (LDS). In preparing the LDS, Data Provider shall include the data fields specified as follows, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the research: STAR- Grade Equivalent Scores, STAR-Zone of Proximal Development Scores, Accelerated Reader Scores.

4. Responsibilities of Data Recipient. Data Recipient agrees to:

   a. Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;

   b. Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

   c. Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

   d. Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and

   e. Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.

5. <u>Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS.</u> Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS **for its Research activities only.**

6. <u>Term and Termination.</u>

    a.   <u>Term.</u> The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.

    b.   <u>Termination by Data Recipient.</u> Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.

    c.   <u>Termination by Data Provider.</u> Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.

    d.   <u>For Breach.</u> Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.

    e.   <u>Effect of Termination.</u> Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.
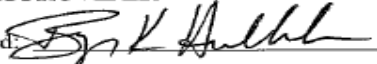
7. <u>Miscellaneous.</u>

    a.   <u>Change in Law.</u> The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.

    b.   <u>Construction of Terms.</u> The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.

    c.   <u>No Third Party Beneficiaries.</u> Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.

d.   Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

e.   Headings. The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.

DATA PROVIDER

Signed: _Bryan K Hullender_

Print Name: _Bryan K Hullender_

Print Title: _Principal_

DATA RECIPIENT

Signed: _Alicia McGill_

Print Name: _Alicia McGill_

Print Title: _Ed.D Candidate_