

Comprehension Needs Reading for a Purpose

EDUC 507 Literature Review

Corinne Messman

NORTHWEST CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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Instructor: Vivian Moen

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Corinne Messman

Northwest Christian University

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Abstract

Reading has been the core focus of all academics and continues to be, even in this incredible era of the 21st Century in which our global society is infused with technology. Our world has reached amazing literate rates in our population. As this has occurred, higher academic standards are sought by leading countries for their youth. In the United States increasing reading comprehension has been a focal point of much research by private and public entities. World correlations show U.S. student reading achievement has fallen in the last decade.

For the past five decades much research and adopted trends have framed the methods of teaching reading in elementary schools that has changed as the pendulum of educational mandates have changed. Schools have adopted the ‘newest’ and ‘best’ practices that are often politically influenced and/or financially manifested into our public school systems.

What remains constant is that we are educating elementary students from kindergarten through fifth grade with the tools and strategies that will empower them for a life-time. In turn, we are creating the foundation for every entity in our society. Since the core subject of reading is integrated in all other subject matters, our language arts skills are incredibly necessary. Each student is valuable and no limitation based on literacy skills should impede a student's ability to make marked gains in their future goals.

Keywords: communication, comprehension, DIBELS, fluency, literacy, Readers’ Theater, reading strategies, and RTI

Main Idea: Literacy refers to the ability to read for knowledge, write coherently, and think critically about the written word. Visual literacy includes in addition the ability to understand all forms of communication, be it body language, pictures, maps, or video. (Wikipedia, 2012)

Introduction

In effort to increase reading comprehension toward mastery for students, we must make connections that give purpose and value to reading. This encompasses all academic success, plus students' guided personal goals for their present and future needs. The literature I reviewed has many common philosophies and several conflicting perspectives. There is a need of designing schools that are less parent-dependent (Alington, 2001, p. 7) conflicts with many school goals and philosophies. This may be one example that common language and united perspectives can solve diverse views that truly share common literacy goals. Students need support after school too.

There are vast reasons for the need to be literate. History states the major changes in literacy after the printing press made the printed word more accessible to a larger population. Once written word became a common tool to the general population, not just for the financially elite or socially elite, world-wide literacy rates dramatically increased. New standards and goals are continually developing to meet the needs and demands of our society. The literature I reviewed, with respect to timelines of statements, verifies that improvements are being made in the identification and support for student comprehension success is an ongoing concern.

This literature review will identify recent and current trends used that aim to enhance the comprehension success of students in the 21st century thus far. The findings of this research and programs utilized in local schools can lead to the implementation of differentiate instruction theories using technology that increase student comprehension abilities and self-confidence.

If teachers could create interventions that helped struggling reader to find books and magazines and other materials they could read and really want to read, teachers might even get them excited about reading voluntarily outside of school (Allington 2009, p104). Struggling readers are a identified by the rate in which they read aloud but students often read aloud less frequently outside of school the higher the grade level they are in. Therefore, the need to target reading comprehension support for struggling readers in third grade is very important to overcome the silent reading coverups.

Literature Review

Much research is available on the topic of comprehension. Nearly all of my findings stated reading is needed for student achievement and life success. A reader who is fluent and automatic in his or her decoding will be able to read at a fairly rapid pace and with expression (Rasinski, 2003). Reading requires understanding and interest in content and comprehension can be expressed in verbal discussions. The decoding of language and understanding of concepts are critical for student achievement in school and later employment success. Those involved in Education agree on these main ideas but have some varying ideas on accomplishing these end results. There are some very structured/directed instruction curriculum models to a general integrated more flexible, whole language approaches that are devoted to building literacy in elementary students. Many teachers having taught over twenty years have noted that there is not one program that proves to be researched as an undeniable proven successful approach. Then the assessments of reading components are noted as a primary concern. I have identified these evaluative measures.

Identification of Reading Comprehension Needs

DIBELS Fluency Evaluations

Some models have been fully embraced recently in Oregon and other states. One of these is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) program, created by Dr. Roland Good and Dr. Ruth Kaminski of the Dynamic Measurement Group, developed with the University of Oregon in 2003. The 6th Edition of this web-based database is available curriculum. The prior versions are used by many schools and districts. This new version is addressing the issues of interventions primarily based on one-minute timings. Note: these programs must be purchased and make it a concern that the ‘newest’ programs are not then purchased due to budget constraints. But these districts often incorporate other means of ‘update’ needs in their seven year incorporation of the RTI and DIBELS models. Many school

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districts that piloted these programs noted early on that the ‘fluency test’ or ‘rate’ data is just an indicator of students at risk, stating the correlations between the rate at which children read and the likelihood of their ability to comprehend is significant in deeming interventions. Districts attempting to incorporate a ‘ten year’ implementation of these programs often jumped to drastic interventions or limited progress for evaluation by using these indicators as the main source for interventions.

In the sixth edition, quicker evaluations are designed to address this concern. The first version has been criticized for its snap shot approach of short analysis on key components that impact reading comprehension. Public schools today are in the midst of a very data driven school settings currently. This came about due to the need to validate goals used to meet No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requirements. Response to Intervention Model (RTI) is often integrated with DIBELS. These systems are incorporated to target those students that are not meeting standards set by grade level requirements. When this data is consolidated then students are identified as needing strategic and intensive interventions. Upon six week intervals a team that consists of specialists, an administrator, and the classroom teachers design intervention for each student in need. The nice part in conferencing with guardians of students in need is the ability to show statistical data that gives a window into the students reading skills.

EasyCBM

EasyCBM is another database with clear data support that uses fluency rate assessment indicators and has comprehension evaluations that show data and subtopic analytical charts and graphs that indicate areas of concern. This system can work to support the findings in DIBELS

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or contrast them, which can support further evaluations for student interventions needed. This program lends itself to incorporation of differentiated instruction analysis to show whether interventions are making an impact on student's ability to demonstrate meeting or exceeding comprehension standards.

Differentiated Learning Groups

Students benefit from whole group instruction at grade level to incorporate the access of subject content and vocabulary of all subjects in standard based curriculum. This was summarized in most of the literature I am including as references. Several sources stated that the children develop language heard and spoken before they are able to read and write using this vocabulary. As students master the language concepts of grammar and higher order processing skills, such as the ability to inference and synthesize content, within sequential or grade level materials they cannot fully utilize more advance levels independently.

Students need to spend time reading at their ability level to gain skills for fluency and comprehension success. These students need to have quality modeling of reading skills, time spent practicing independently and to others in the classroom and at home. One way to begin to foster literate conversation in your classroom is to consider helping students draw the text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997).

The consensus was that students need to read frequently to themselves, with others, and be read to. The more students read the more they advance. When students have a purpose to read or see that reading is an essential component in others' lives they will want to hear, read, or be read to more.

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There are many students that are identified as unmotivated or reluctant readers. There can be many reasons for this. Some of these students have a variety of learning challenges. They can range from inability to actually track text, maintain concentration, process information, or process language. Research states there can be many reasons for these issues of which are not easily identified.

Fluency v. Comprehension

Fluency is commonly associated with the ease of reading at a conversational rate, with voice, and expression. When this is able to be done with corresponding grade level material students are likely to comprehend well. But some students read at a slower rate with more understanding than those who read so fast but have no comprehension of what they read. Then which child actually reads with better comprehension, the one that needs to reread and takes the same amount of time as the 'slower' reader. If a child can inflect feelings and emotions from the characters in expressions while reading aloud and another child reads in monotone voice with no relevance to the punctuations at the same rate, then which one reads with greater comprehension? Studies have found that misconceptions of student's comprehension abilities may be creating unnecessary interventions or inappropriate ones.

Nearly all references found that ongoing formative and summative assessments were necessary. Most agreed that formative assessments and frequent interactions with students were most valuable. Finding a reason for reading by students was the critical component. All students have value and have an impact on our society. In maintaining a cohesive, non-judgmental classroom environment that empowers learners to overcome academic challenges that impact learning can allow for building self-confidence in students to embrace differentiated instruction.

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When students that have writing challenges have alternative methods to express reading comprehension rather than handwritten essay answers for assessments are likely to raise assessment compilations of data. Different methods in achieving reading comprehension goals of independently read material compared to materials read to a student for processing the information through auditory measures can drastically change the data collected. This is needed to establish interventions for students successfully obtaining the best instructional methods to their passions to build literacy skills that support life-long purpose for reading.

Creating Enhancements of Comprehension

The 21st Century technological advancements are certainly impacting the perception of a need to read. Making connections with the visuals, content links, and tools to create a reason to share information learned. Correlating design shapes, images, and color coding effects to make text concepts more intense can help learners store information into memory and aid in recall .

Research Questions

Primary: Using differentiated instruction with technology enhancements, how do tools and strategies affect marked gains in student's reading comprehension?

Secondary: What strategies can students use to make the greatest impact on increasing their reading comprehension?

Participants

The Study Demographics

My study will occur with the students in my third grade class at Veneta Elementary School, Fern Ridge School District. My class has a large percentage of students with low scoring assessments in reading comprehension. I have thirty students: ten girls and twenty boys

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currently. Our school has a student population of approximately 350 students from kindergarten through fifth grades. We have 59% of our students on the free and reduced lunch program. This school is located west of Eugene, Oregon, in Lane County. There are city, rural, and farm families with students who attend the two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. I will identify six to eight students with deficiencies to study targeted interventions that aim to increase comprehension skills for these students.

Since we have a rotating group of students receiving strategic and intensive interventions many need both interventions from a consensus of the Grade Level Team per six week review. This may effect whom I have to work with. Those with only Individual Educational Programs for writing are students that I would like to include in my study. Some of these students have little parental support. Some parents are struggling with the ability to be of any assistance to their child as it has been stated, “This is too difficult for me, can you show us how to do...”.

Action Research

Purpose of Research:

In reviewing researched based literature and journals, and in reflecting on interventions implemented in which I have collaborated on with colleagues in multiple districts over the past twenty-four years, I am seeking to implement my action research areas in which reading comprehension mastery can be improved in students. With students emerging as independent readers in third grade, I want to find valuable supports that allow students to reach attainable and marked growth toward academic success by strengthening reading comprehension.

Action Research Intervention Plan

Interventions:

I will implement small group and individual instruction per individual student and with students in small groups. I will incorporate trained educational assistants to assist students with learning challenges to increase comprehension skills.

This small group of students will demonstrate learned skills and strategies to students that are meeting/exceeding comprehension standards. I will use technology tools to alleviate learning challenges that may hinder the accurate reports of student comprehension use in the mainstream setting. The use of simple keyboards, NEOs will aid students in answering comprehension questions.

Data Collection and Reflection

Artifacts that will be generated from student generated results on standardized tests such as DIBELS and EasyCBM. DIBELS indicators will target the need for comprehension enhancements when aligned with the EasyCBM data results on the fluency and comprehension results of student assessment. Modeling good reading practices and encouragement to self-monitor are important.

Observational and interview data is important. Collecting research based data from Scholastic Weekly Reader (hard copy and online) are improving resources that have integrated curriculum that gives a purpose for reading to meet increased academic standards and student topics of interest.

Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills online resources, states current goals and mandates that students must master on summative assessments. In planning to meet or exceed standards OAKS Sample Tests can be found and used as formative assessment tools by schools and families in Oregon.

In my action research, Field Notes and Observational Records will be kept and analyzed. References to researched based data will be correlated. These notes will be based on current

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Common Core State Standards used in lesson plan designs to ensure students are receiving appropriate curriculum as differentiation is implemented.

Archived Reports will form the baseline data along with the Inquiry Data from the Likert Scale: Survey Monkey Results. This will show a connection to or disqualify the strategies used to make marked gains in overcoming discrepancies between fluency rates and comprehension levels. Having a baseline data is the only way data makes sense to me. How else would there be a noted progression or decline or stagnant outcomes? Then the data collected can be analyzed as to how the final data measures up.

These data collection strategies will show measurable outcomes as to whether the chosen interventions make a difference in performance or attitude of students. The baseline, mid-point formative assessments (teacher reviewed/student reviewed), and summative assessments will be evident in triangulation of graphic data reports. I am using baseline of information found in the Archived Artifacts with respect to a collection of the same Student Generated: Standardized Tests (DIBELS and EasyCBM) data from an archived time/data correlation to evidence prior to my action research on students.

Building Confidence Conclusion

When students have a purpose as to why they are reading and create a desire to meet that purpose comprehension goals are easier to meet. When teachers, parents, and community members are shown to make connections and create enthusiastic relationships that incorporate the reason to read by obtaining entertainment and new information, they contagiously affect children with similar desires. Children mature by seeking to please and gain approval from loved ones and caregivers due to our human nature. Then it is our obligation to ensure we involve students and their families to help our students make academic success for greater reasons than measuring up to

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assessment demands. Our focus needs to be on the greater assets of reading well. To obtain an old value of literacy with a new generation connection embracing the 21st Century realities and opportunities for the upcoming generations, we must make time to show the real passions for reading. Oral reading provides us with the means to interpret how reading occurs in the brain since we are not able to access brain mapping or scanning methodologies (Rasinski, 2003 p.35). Repeated reading use to occur more frequently in effort to remember valuable quotes and biblical passages. This was done when access to scripture and valuable content was not easy to obtain. Repeated reading gave learners more practice that made them more proficient readers. [As many sources] agree two ways to help students become proficient, expressive, and meaningful readers through read aloud and by providing students with support as they read (Rasinski, 2003, p. 75) Timothy Rasinski, further elaborates on recording students reading, much like in Readers Theater, after repeat reading has been practiced incorporating character sense and voice. I find the options have multiplied as technology access to students increases in applications that are accessible to them (more often at home than school) to make their efforts shine.

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