

Spring 2-21-2020

Reader's Theater: A Quasi-Experimental Study for Secondary Students

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Reader's Theater: A Quasi-Experimental Study for Secondary Students

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Higher Education

Audrey Rabas, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Concordia University–Portland

2020

Abstract

A quasi-experimental quantitative study using a pretest-posttest design examined the effects of Reader's Theater to eighth graders fluency and comprehension development. The study used 50 eighth grade students with 25 students making up the control group and 25 students making up the experimental group. Reader's Theater was used as an intervention with the experimental group for 30 minutes a day for 6 weeks while the control group used regular instructional methods including summarizing, questioning, and text-dependent questions. Data were gathered using a fluency passage from Easy CBM and a 20-question comprehension passage from Easy CBM. Most students showed improvement in their fluency and comprehension scores after the study. Data suggested that Reader's Theater is effective in increasing both variables among students within the intervention group. The gains between the experimental group and the control group based on posttest data showed a significant difference. Results from this study indicated the effectiveness of using Reader's Theater at the secondary grade level to increase both fluency and comprehension scores. This study was unique in that it uses a primary grade level intervention such as Reader's Theater with eighth grade students to suggest a way to bridge reading gaps in secondary students.

Keywords: reader's theater, fluency, comprehension, intervention

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my past students who provided me with the inspiration to do more to help struggling readers. I hope this dissertation helps future students not only bridge reading gaps but also to encourage the enjoyment of reading.

Acknowledgments

I would like to share my appreciation to my husband, Daniel Kennedy, who has supported me, been my cheerleader through my struggles, and exhibited significant patience in my lack of attention through this dissertation process. I would also like to express my thankfulness for my understanding children who have helped inspire me to show them that anything is possible with hard work and dedication.

I am extremely appreciative of my dissertation chair, Dr. Audrey Rabas, for her motivation and uncanny ability to know when I needed the extra push through email to start writing again. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Greg Aldred and Dr. Julia Britt. It was wonderful to have people experienced and knowledgeable in their fields to work through difficult situations with.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Students in the United States struggle to read at grade-level, which hinders their ability to be successful in school and future careers. Researchers have examined the causes of reading difficulties in elementary grade students (Rasinski & Young, 2017). According to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, roughly one third of U.S. students read at or above the proficient level, one third read at the basic level, and one third read at the below basic level (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). In other words, two of every three students in U.S. schools have reading proficiencies below the level needed to do grade-level work adequately.

In response to the growing gap of below-level readers, Congress put in place the Response to Intervention Initiative (Allington, 2011). The legislation and accompanying regulations have a dual focus: (a) to provide increasingly intensive expert reading instruction to ensure that students having difficulty learning to read are not simply getting too little or too inexpert reading instruction; and (b) to locate students who exhibit difficulties even after receiving intensive reading instruction, especially those identified as students with learning disabilities (Allington, 2011). Finding effective reading intervention strategies in the classroom is a continuous challenge for teachers. If used correctly, reading interventions can help decrease the gap in reading levels in both general education students and special education students (Connor, Alberto, Compton, & O'Connor, 2014).

However, integrating effective fluency strategies is the only way to increase those gaps, but fluency often becomes less important than comprehension once students reach the middle school level (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Chall (1996) suggested students go through stages of reading development (Goldman, Snow, & Vaughn, 2016). The gap for comprehension abilities

becomes evident by the time students reach fourth grade (Goldman et al., 2016). The large gap occurs because at around the 4th grade, teachers shift their focus from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” in the different content areas (Goldman et al., 2016, para. 3).

Another possible contribution to the poor reading fluency seen in middle school students is that most often reading fluency is either omitted or briefly covered in both undergraduate and graduate-level teacher classes (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). As a result, teachers commonly receive very little teacher instruction regarding how to explicitly teach reading fluency and why teaching reading fluency is important. Frequently, teachers focus their class reading instruction on reading comprehension and decoding skills while neglecting reading fluency instruction (Barton, Freeman, Lewis, & Thompson, 2001). Many times teaching new skills is done in isolation rather than as a strategy (Barton et al., 2001). Also, according to Lipson and Lang (1991), there remained to be a great deal of confusion among the research as to what are effective strategies for improving reading fluency as well as the correlation between fluency and the overall reading ability.

One strategy to use as a reading intervention that addresses both fluency and comprehension is Reader’s Theater. Reader’s Theater provides an engaging way to encourage students, specifically adolescent learners, to read and re-read, thereby developing their reading skills (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2013). During Reader’s Theater, a group of students works together to read a scripted play based on a previously read text. The teacher provides students with roles and students must recite the lines repeatedly, thereby accepting ownership of their roles (Parenti & Chen, 2015). Reader’s Theater can be beneficial for both reading and content areas. Reading fluency, comprehension, automaticity, and prosody can be enhanced through the use of Reader’s Theater (Parenti & Chen, 2015).

In order to understand the problems addressed through Reader's Theater as a reading intervention for middle school students, there needs to be a noted context of the problem that has arisen from the lack of fluency instruction. According to Rasinski and Young (2017), the most significant cause of low reading achievement levels stemmed from the inability of students to read fluently. Reader's Theater incorporates the research-based strategy of repeated readings, which is a highly valuable instructional strategy that is a very effective component of a reading program and endorsed by the National Reading Panel, 2000 (Therrien, 2004). Researchers have shown that repeated readings can facilitate growth in reading fluency and other aspects of reading achievement (Rasinski, 2014). However, the most significant research in proving the effectiveness of repeated readings and Reader's Theater is limited to primary grades; yet, students who lack the foundational skill of reading fluently will continue to struggle well past primary grade level (Rasinski & Young, 2017). Therefore, additional research at the middle school grade level on the use of Reader's Theater for fluency and comprehensive skills may offer a way to increase reading proficiency levels, which will help all students be successful in higher grades.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

Previous research on best fluency and comprehension practices is extensive, but lack emphasis on students in middle school (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). Middle schools implement reading, writing, and grammar into one reading block, with a specific focus on literary elements (Wuebbels, 2014). Implementation of effective reading strategies and interventions remains inconsistent. With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, teachers should be even more committed to ensuring success in every student. The most effective approach to leaving no child behind in reading is to actively pursue the goal of reading fluency in middle

school classrooms. Existing research on reading fluency indicated that fluency is an important factor in reading education and thus should be part of any comprehensive and effective reading curriculum (Rasinski, 2004).

Reader's Theater integrates repeated reading and assisted reading practices into one specific method by providing students a script to practice with teacher coaching, with the goal of performance after a set amount of time. Reader's Theater is not a new practice in the educational environment and has been researched in the past, specifically in the primary grades. Researchers reported the positive impact of Reader's Theater in the primary grades to increase fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Young & Rasinski, 2009; Young & Rasinski, 2018; Young, Valadez, & Gandara, 2016). Researchers also supported the positive impact of Vygotsky's theory of proximal development and scaffolding as well as Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence. Reader's Theater adheres to both Vygotsky's theory and Gardner's theory because it meets the criteria of play and scaffolding as well as meeting the needs of many types of learners (Gardner, 1983; Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014; Robinson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

As reading standards continuously change educators expect students to perform at a higher level, more and more students are falling behind grade level. Students struggle to remain reading at grade level because there is less emphasis on fluency in the secondary years than comprehension (Rasinski & Young, 2017). Fluency is an important part of vocabulary development and reading comprehension but is often overlooked, especially when students move to middle school (Lin, 2015; Mraz et al., 2013; Rasinski, Rupley, Pagie, & Nichols, 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018). The focus in secondary grades is mastering standards, which leaves no time

to incorporate all the aspects that makeup comprehension, including fluency, automaticity, and word recognition (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Students continue to struggle to read at grade-level when in middle school because the focus shifts from skills like fluency, accuracy, and automaticity to mastering standards (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Young, Stokes, and Rasinski (2017) stated the continued importance of implementing fluency and comprehension strategies to help students make significant gains in both comprehension and word study in middle school.

Reading fluency refers to the reader's ability to develop control over surface-level text processing so that he or she can focus on understanding the deeper levels of meaning embedded in the text (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). If a student fails to read fluently and with expression, that student will fail to understand the meaning behind the text (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Because teachers test fluency in middle school as the number of words read correctly per minute, there is a significant emphasis on speed versus prosody. Readers in middle school tend to lose the ability to read for meaning rather than speed, thus leaving them unable to truly comprehend at grade-level (Rasinski & Young, 2017). This inability to understand the meaning of a text leads to significant issues in all genres deemed necessary by state standards and success in higher grades (Rasinski & Young, 2017).

Reader's Theater incorporates the effectiveness of repeated readings and assisted readings into one motivating method (Parenti & Chen, 2015). The goal of Reader's Theater is to provide students with a script to practice multiple times using different reading techniques such as silent readings, paired readings, and group readings. This allows students to develop their oral reading fluency which will progress into a greater emphasis on expression and comprehension (Parenti & Chen, 2015). According to Rasinski and Young (2017), Reader's Theater is considered a phenomenal solution to meet the needs of struggling readers because it integrates

many fluency elements into one activity. However, it is not known if the implementation of Reader's Theater with middle school students increases fluency or comprehension.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students. Students who read at lower reading levels often lack the motivation to read and grow. A study of the effectiveness of Reader's Theater was needed at the secondary level because students who continue to struggle in middle school will increase their restraints as they continue through their school years (Rasinski et al., 2016). Secondary students continue to lack the necessary fluency and comprehension skills to read proficiently (Rasinski, Stokes, & Young, 2017; Young et al., 2017). This study may help provide additional and less expensive resources in response to the need for a more comprehensive reading model at the secondary level.

Past and recent research specifies that fluency is still an important element in reading education and therefore should be part of any complete and productive reading curriculum (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Because assessment drives both instruction and intervention methods, it is necessary to provide data to support any proposed resource. This study may provide the data needed to drive the change needed in the middle school curriculum. The researcher's personal philosophy of education is that all students can learn and grow and is shown through the conceptual framework that initiates this study.

Research Questions

A quantitative quasi-experimental study was used to evaluate the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students. Evaluating the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students was the

objective of this study. In response to this objective, two research questions were addressed. Those research questions along with associated null and alternative hypotheses are:

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read?

H_{O1} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{A1} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{O2} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A2} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O3} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A3} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{O4} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A4} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth grade students?

H_{O5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{A5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{O6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{O8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

This quasi-experimental quantitative study was designed to determine if there is a significant difference in both comprehension and fluency between Reader's Theater students and a control group. This researcher aimed to provide substantial evidence to suggest Reader's Theater as a research-based practice for bridging gaps within middle school students. The researcher hoped that using the data from both the experimental group and a control group as a comparison would provide the support necessary to implement a new reading intervention within the school district from which the sample came.

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

The results of this study may enhance the learning and teaching of middle grades Reading Language Arts students through effective intervention and extension strategies that regularly teach fluency and comprehension. Through the repetition of the Reader's Theater approach, students should gain confidence in their reading abilities and naturally increase their fluency through the repetition of theater-type scripts. Reader's Theater is an engaging approach to reading and comprehension that motivates both students and teachers. Instead of reading regular textbooks and rote memorization of scripts, Reader's Theater allows students the opportunity to read from the scripts so they can focus on the reading and not memorization. The objective of Reader's Theater is to provide students with a script to practice multiple times using different reading techniques such as silent readings, paired readings, and group readings, allowing students to develop their oral reading fluency which will progress into a greater emphasis on expression and comprehension (Clementi, 2010). This strategy is extremely flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of any student, thereby implementing an effective differentiated approach to classroom instruction.

Previous research does not indicate a strong presence of reading fluency interventions in middle school. Deficiencies in the research include types of interventions that target both fluency and comprehension for both struggling readers and grade-level readers. This researcher intended to limit these deficiencies and provide a study that suggests a way to increase both fluency and comprehension within one effective program. Although there is a significant emphasis on fluency and comprehension skills within the elementary curriculum, there is a lack of fluency instruction at the middle school level (Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018). This study builds from the Keehn et al.'s (2008) study and previous Reader's

Theater research done in primary grades and could potentially be used to fill in the gap for more interventions to increase both fluency and comprehension in the middle grades, especially in the general education department.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, conceptual terms related to literacy, fluency, comprehension, and reading skill development that are integral and critical to this study are operationally defined.

Accuracy. Accuracy in word decoding refers to the ability to sound out the words in a text with minimal errors. Automatic processing refers to readers needing to expend as little mental effort as possible in the decoding aspect of reading so that they can use their finite cognitive resources for meaning-making (Rasinski, 2004).

Automaticity. Automaticity is the speed or ability to read words and connected texts automatically (Thoermer & Williams, 2012). Automaticity in word recognition refers to the ability to recognize or decode words not just accurately but also automatically and effortlessly (Rasinski, 2014).

Comprehension. Comprehension is understanding what one reads (Rasinski & Young, 2017).

Comprehension strategies. Comprehension strategies refer to specific research-based strategies used within the core curriculum of a Tennessee middle school. These strategies include graphic organizers, summaries, making connections, questioning, metacognition, story elements and structure, and monitoring for comprehension (Adler, 2001; Block & Parris, 2008).

Fluency. Fluency is the ability to decode words in a fluid, swift manner, free of any errors (Thoermer & Williams, 2012).

Prosody. Prosody is when the reader can parse the text syntactically and semantically appropriate units, with correct rhythm and tone while reading orally (Rasinski, 2004; Thoermer & Williams, 2012; Young & Rasinski, 2009). Prosody is the ability to read with expression and meaning but to do that, a reader must have some degree of comprehension of the passage (Rasinski, 2014). Prosodic elements include volume, pitch, phrasing, etc. (Rasinski, 2014). Assessing prosody includes listening to students read orally and rate expressiveness on a guiding rubric. Researchers found this assessment to be valid, reliable and connected to other measures of reading fluency (Rasinski, 2014).

Reader's Theater. Reader's Theater is a strategy used to incorporate repeated readings of the same text. Students practice roles within scripts that are at their reading level, increasing slowly as the weeks pass, which produces increased accuracy, rate, and prosody (Parenti & Chen, 2015).

Response to Intervention (RTI). Response to Intervention is a three-tiered approach to target the needs of struggling readers. The term Tier I is the core classroom instruction delivered to all students. Tier II includes both Tier I instruction plus additional support in whichever skill is lacking, usually an additional 40 minutes in the needed subject area within a school day. Tier III includes Tier I instruction as well extended, intensive interventions which may include pull-out times for skills (Tennessee State Government (TN) Department of Education, 2016).

Secondary grades. Secondary grades include grades sixth through eighth grade, or the middle school grades as determined by Tennessee school districts.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

For this study, it was important to consider assumptions, delimitations, and limitations before conducting the study. This study aligned with the district's mission and vision statement

which ensures that all students are prepared to succeed in life and enable them to exceed high academic standards. Therefore, this study factored in several assumptions concerning the expectations of both the students in the district as well as its teachers and included issues that threaten internal and external validity, ethical issues, and reliability.

Assumptions

Assumptions in statistical data refer to the characteristics that certain parametric tests should contain (Statistic Solutions, n.d.). Any infringement to these assumptions can change the interpretation of the results within the test (Statistic Solutions, n.d.). Assumptions included in the study were the expectations of the teacher and students, materials implemented throughout the school district, assessment of student needs, the use of instruction and intervention practices, and consistency in classroom management. The researcher assumed that the teacher aligned intervention materials relevant to the scope and sequence of the standards relevant to the academic quarter. The researcher also assumed that the two classes within the study were comparable due to randomly assigned participants.

The researcher assumed that the teacher used the students' needs as a basis for teaching, in accordance with the Easy CBM assessments given three times a school year. The researcher also assumed that the students participating in this study were defined as having a fluency and/or comprehension deficit, but still within the norms of a general education setting rather than an inclusion setting. General education is the students without an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), in which they receive special education services such as pull-outs or inclusion classes.

Furthermore, the researcher assumed that classroom management techniques were consistent, with all students aware of the expectations both within the classroom and during the intervention of Reader's Theater. Having consistency in classroom management was significant

for the results in the study so that lack of results or positive results could not be attributed to poor classroom management. Positive behavior supports continued to be implemented school-wide while both students and faculty modeled school-wide behavior expectations. Faculty explicitly taught expectations for behavior both in the classroom and within the school, with rewards given for positive behavior as a part of the school culture and environment.

Limitations

Limitations in a research study are the characteristics of design or methodology that could influence the findings of the research (Price & Murnan, 2013). Limitations within this study resulted from several factors, including the research design, instrumentation, and sampling methodology. The researcher of the study used a convenience nonrandom sampling of students who were predetermined at the research site. While this sampling is common, this limits the external validity of the study. Another limitation was the nonequivalent groups and smaller sample sizes. Because the groups were nonequivalent, there could be different rates of improvement not necessarily linked to Reader's Theater. The different rates of improvement could be attributed to outside factors such as natural academic growth.

Second, this study was limited using only one test to measure the pretest and posttest data. This study used the Easy CBM test for both the pretest and posttest of fluency and comprehension. The researcher measured students using four separate tests to compare the rate of improvement for fluency and comprehension.

Third, the study was limited based on the length of the overall time of six weeks and within the daily curriculum. The amount of time spent using Reader's Theater was 30 minutes per day chunked from a 1.5 hour class period. The researcher allotted students within the experimental group a maximum of 30 minutes per class period with the intervention while

students in the control group had 30 minutes of extra comprehension skills practice. A longer amount of time for the study and for a longer portion of class time could help eliminate these limitations.

Another limitation was the potential for bias because the teacher was the administrator of both the experimental and control groups and the tests that were given. This particular limitation was managed by the administrator following a strict lesson plan for both the control group and the experimental group. There were no deviations from the original plan. The only difference in instruction between groups was the allotted Reader's Theater strategies time of 30 minutes per class period while the control group completed additional comprehension activities. Finally, the most significant limitation in the study was that the researcher had no control over the variance among the control and experimental group. However, there was no reason to believe that two general education classes would differ in ways that impacted the results.

Delimitations

Research delimitation refers to the features of a study that were controlled by the researcher but limit the scope of the study. Delimitations in the study resulted from decisions made by the researcher such as the choice of a quantitative quasi-experimental study, the setting of the research, and the choice of the dependent variables. Delimitations limited the population to the boundaries within the school district as well as those set by the researcher. Specifically, the study was delimited to two eighth grade classes in one school. The validity of the findings was limited to the measures used, meaning the tool used to measure fluency and comprehension could be valid only in districts using the same tool.

Summary

This study was inspired by a desire to make a difference in reading interventions and extensions for both struggling readers and grade-level readers at the middle school level. This study was grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky's theory of proximal development and scaffolding and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Historically significant literature was reviewed and aligned with this study to provide a backbone for the purpose of this study.

The extent of literature in Chapter 2 is used to provide a relevant and comprehensive foundation for this study. The researcher explored different types of reading theories as well as a variety of research methodological literature and a synthesis of research findings that helped inform this study within Chapter 2. The researcher detailed the methodology used to organize this research in Chapter 3. This quantitative study used a quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group design which included the collection of pretest and posttest data. The researcher shared findings and supporting data in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 was a discussion of the outcomes concerning literature as well as practice and implications for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development sent out a warning to educators about the difficulty of adolescent learners in the United States (Keehn et al., 2008). The Council claimed that secondary schools may be the “last best chance” for many students to obtain the skills needed to be successful in college and life (Keehn et al., 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017) reading reports, “64% of U.S. 8th-graders read below grade level, according to their results on the 2013 National Assessment of Education Progress reading test” (p. 2). In response to this alarming statistic, educators across the United States continue to research reading-based interventions to decrease the gap in reading proficiency.

Study Topic

Reader’s Theater is a research-based intervention that incorporates the effectiveness of repeated readings and assisted readings into one motivating method (Clementi, 2010). The objective of Reader’s Theater is to provide students with a script to practice multiple times using different reading techniques such as silent readings, paired readings, and group readings, allowing students to develop their oral reading fluency which will progress into a greater emphasis on expression and comprehension (Clementi, 2010). The literature provides an overview of past research studies in which Reader’s Theater has been a substantial factor with increasing fluency and comprehension in elementary students. The literature review also provides support for the importance of continued fluency instruction at the middle school level.

Context

Reader’s Theater is important for the development of comprehension and fluency within an eighth-grade classroom, specifically in a low-income urban school with a high level of diversity. The school educates a population of 750 students, containing sixth, seventh, and eighth

grades. The school population includes 62% Hispanic or African American students and a low-income population of 76%. The topic is relevant within this context because low-income, African American, and Hispanic students had a significantly lower score average in reading scores in 2017. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018) report, African American students scored an average of 26 points below Caucasian students while Hispanic students scored an average of 18 points below Caucasian students. Furthermore, free and reduced lunch students scored 19 points less than students in middle-class households (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Significance

The significance of further studies in low-income schools can be attributed to statistics found in the National Center for Education Statistics (2018). Based on a 500-point scale, the average 2017 reading score for middle school students in high-poverty schools (250) was lower than the average scores for middle school students in mid-high poverty schools (261), mid-low poverty schools (270), and low-poverty schools (281) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Many students enter high school in the United States without the necessary literacy skills to be successful in high school, let alone in a future career (Reardon, Valentino, & Shores, 2012).

Problem Statement

Although there is a significant emphasis on fluency and comprehension skills within the elementary curriculum, there is a lack of fluency instruction at the middle school level (Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018). The problem under investigation is that two thirds of 8th-graders fail to read proficiently at grade level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The literature review analyzes this problem based on past fluency and comprehension scores, past studies using Reader's Theater as an intervention to

correct this problem, and the importance of continued research to increase fluency and comprehension in middle school (Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018).

Organization

The literature review was conducted using key terms such as Reader's Theater, fluency, comprehension, and middle school within the ERIC and Education Databases in the Concordia University library. The article search was mostly limited to these terms within the date ranges of 2013 through 2018. The literature review begins by introducing the conceptual framework of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory as a basis for the importance of the study. The literature review analyzes and examines the effects of Reader's Theater in past studies in the primary grades followed by the importance of fluency and comprehension instruction in both primary and secondary grades. Finally, the review examines the inconsistencies with past fluency instruction and the connection between fluency and comprehension as well as the unintended positive outcomes of Reader's Theater.

Conceptual Framework

As reading standards change and become more difficult across the United States, the gap between fluency and comprehension widens, specifically at the middle school grade level. Students struggle to remain at grade-level, in part due to the significant emphasis placed on fluency in the primary grades with very little emphasis in the secondary grades (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). The focus in secondary grades is mastering standards, which leaves no time to incorporate all the aspects that makeup comprehension, including fluency, automaticity, and word recognition (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Young et al. (2017) stated the continued

importance of implementing fluency and comprehension strategies to help students make significant gains in both comprehension and word study in middle school.

Reading fluency refers to a reader's ability to process one-dimensional text to focus on understanding the profound meaning within the text (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Fluency has three dimensions: accuracy in word coding, automatic conversion, and prosodic reading (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Reading fluency is tested as speed reading in an academic environment; however, if readers read rapidly and correctly but with no articulation and feeling in their voices and disregard punctuation, it is improbable that they will completely comprehend the text (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). There are not many readers who read texts in real life intending to read fast so teaching students to read fast as an assessment for fluency sets them up to fail in real-life because they lose the purpose of reading for meaning (Rasinski & Young, 2017).

Reader's Theater incorporates the effectiveness of repeated readings and assisted readings into one motivating method. Reader's Theater aims to provide students with a script to practice multiple times using different reading techniques such as silent readings, paired readings, and group readings. This allows students to develop their oral reading fluency, which will naturally progress into a greater emphasis on expression and comprehension.

With the No Child Left Behind Act, teachers should be even more committed to ensuring success in every student. The most effective approach to leaving no child behind in reading is to passionately seek to target reading fluency in middle school classrooms (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Past and recent research specifies that fluency is still an important element in reading education and therefore should be part of any complete and productive reading curriculum (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004).

The researcher's personal philosophy of education is that all students can learn and grow. The researcher noticed many things in her first year of teaching, including an extreme deficiency in the motivation to read in middle school students. This lack of motivation to read dramatically decreased her students' academic abilities. Students appeared frustrated with the curriculum and the difficulties they faced with understanding the text. This frustration could be attributed to the changes that occur both academically and emotionally in middle school. According to Bullion-Mears, McCauley, and McWhorter (2007), not only is the text more challenging in middle school but adolescent readers also change significantly in physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. Students are moving quickly between concrete and abstract ideas and gaining the ability to be reflective and analytical thinkers (Bullion-Mears et al., 2007). The researcher used multiple strategies to differentiate the text for better understanding, including chunking difficult text, partner work, and using the jigsaw method to achieve better outcomes. The students still struggled to decode the meaning of the words no matter how the material was presented. This could be attributed to the language structures used by both text and teachers in middle school, which is longer, more formal, more complex, and involves students in acquiring the language of instruction (Bullion-Mears et al., 2007).

Through reflecting on these struggles, the researcher studied approaches that would first motivate the students and eventually increase reading fluency and comprehension. Reader's Theater was an interesting perspective for her students. At first, the researcher used it to motivate her students to want to read. As time progressed, she realized it would be a significant approach to teaching fluency to the students. Based on the researcher's experience, Reader's Theater is not limited to reading premade scripts repeatedly. For example, writing Reader's Theater scripts with students help encourage language and literacy development while establishing critical thinking

and engagement (Claudia, 2018). Students can take a textbook story and rewrite it into a script of their own (Claudia, 2018). Additionally, literature units can be implemented from Reader's Theater scripts (Claudia, 2018). The possibilities are endless.

Reader's Theater has been demonstrated in multiple studies to be effective in primary students to not only increase fluency but also increase automaticity and comprehension (Mraz et al., 2013; Young, Stokes, & Rasinski, 2017). However, there is a gap among the emphasis of fluency and the use of Reader's Theater s within a middle school setting. Further research could specifically examine the effect the intervention has on automaticity, fluency, comprehension, and reading levels on middle school students.

Fluency is continuously bypassed and ignored as a significant element of reading instruction (Rasinski, 2014). Fluency continues to be an important part of reading instruction and always will be (Rasinski, 2014). Fluency still matters past elementary because impediments get bigger and bigger. Rasinski et al. (2016) claimed that educators should not ignore disfluent reading. Students should practice fluency just like other skills such as music and sports because practice makes better readers.

While Reader's Theater applies to multiple theories and studies that will be discussed in the literature review, the most significant theories to this study are Vygotsky's theory of proximal development and scaffolding and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Vygotsky (1978) suggested the theory of proximal development in which a knowledgeable reader uses the knowledge gained from past experiences to create new understandings from text (Richardson, 2016). According to Vygotsky, play creates a student's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2013). Through play, students of all ages can learn how to increase their abilities and discover how to react when faced with a variety of rule structures (Vygotsky, 2013).

Vygotsky (1978) stated the importance of scaffolding using modeling and students' application of knowledge gained from reading in a wide array of ways (Richardson, 2016). As students build their understandings, they enlarge their frames of reference and ultimately become better learners (Robinson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978, 2013). Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development suggested that adolescents can move to a greater skill level when adults demonstrate an exercise or assignment until the child acquires that particular skill. Vygotsky's (1986) social development theory declared that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level" (p. 57). Vygotsky (1978) observed that adolescents can grasp and enhance skills by interacting with other adolescents who have already mastered the skill. The teacher implements scaffolding during teaching that promotes the students to learn how to formulate their thinking, so they can advance from the unfamiliar to the familiar (Vygotsky, 1978).

As a student builds skills in those areas, the teacher slowly withdraws supports so students can successfully complete a task without help (Vygotsky, 1978). When a teacher is involved with students and their playing to learn, students are more likely to take the activity as a method of learning, and ultimately, the play can lead to preparations for life (Vygotsky, 2013). This applies to the teacher's role in Reader's Theater, which emphasizes a gradual release of support. When a lesson includes more than one style of learning, it is more likely to reach more students, which will in turn increase engagement within the classroom. If students are not engaged in the activity, they are less likely to learn (Dewey, 1938/1998; Robinson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978).

Another theory equally important to this study is Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner (1983) identified nine distinct intelligences in which he claims all students

possess. The difference in students' lies within the strength of each intelligence. Gardner suggested that these contrasts oppose an educational system that expects that people all learn in an exact way with the same subject materials and content and that an equal system should be used to examine student learning (Lunenburger & Lunenburger, 2014). Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence refers to people who learn best through movement and hands-on activities. Musical intelligence refers to people who acquire new knowledge best through rhythm and musical elements. Interpersonal learners acquire new knowledge optimally by interacting with other people such as within group projects. Intrapersonal students learn the most through independent study and reflection-type lessons. Reader's Theater serves to meet most of Gardner's multiple intelligences including bodily-kinesthetic when students perform a writing piece, interpersonal when students edit scripts, intrapersonal when students reflect on the written piece, linguistic when students can complete oral discussions about the text, and musical intelligences when students create Reader's Theater with writing (Lunenburger & Lunenburger, 2014).

Using Vygotsky's theory and Gardner's theory, one can explore the outcomes of Reader's Theater on middle school students in the areas of fluency, automaticity, comprehension, and reading levels. In addition, one can examine the effect of using Reader's Theater as a core curriculum unit to not only master state standards but to also increase reading fluency, automaticity, and comprehension in eighth grade students at all reading levels. By implementing Reader's Theater as a unit of study in the middle school classroom, teachers may be able to enhance the learning of all students by providing them with confidence in their reading abilities and their motivation to learn. Figure 1 illustrates the causes of low comprehension and reading levels in secondary students.

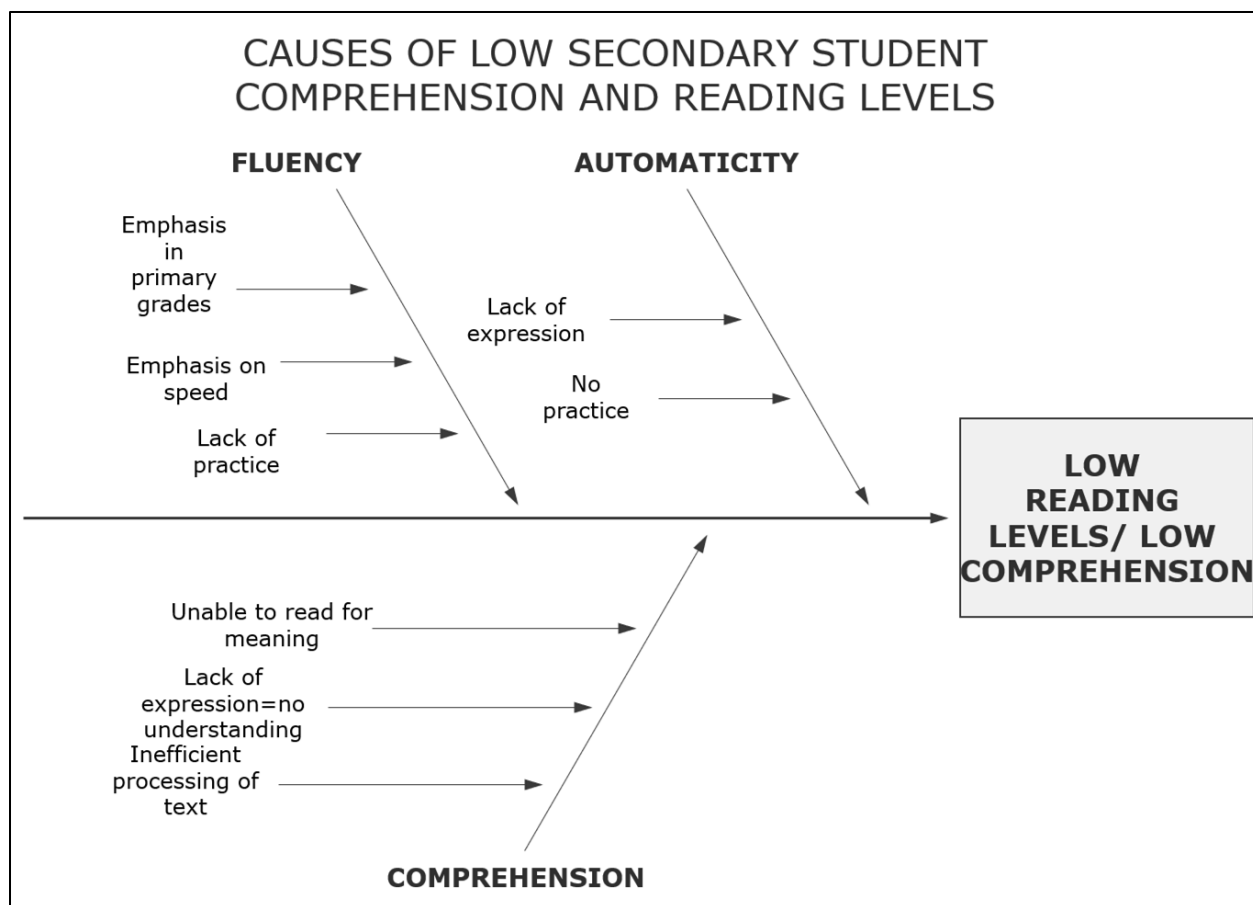


Figure 1. Cause and effect of three components of fluency instruction (image researcher created).

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

The concepts of repeated reading, Reader's Theater, fluency and comprehension are grounded in the theories of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligence as well as LaBerge and Samuels (1979). Rasinski has also been influential in not only proving the value of Reader's Theater but also in proving the importance of fluency in all age groups. This literature review analyzes the effects of Reader's Theater in primary grades, provides background for the importance of fluency instruction, and examines the results of Reader's Theater and performance methods on comprehension and fluency.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Lev Vygotsky (1978) is a well-known theorist who developed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory which declares that students learn best in a social setting where an adult or friend teaches the content to them. Specifically, Vygotsky's (1978) cultural-historical theory "considers the history of human development to be a complex interplay between the processes of natural, biologically determined development and the cultural development created by the interaction of a growing individual with other people" (Bodrova & Leong, 2015, p. 372). Vygotsky's ZPD theory emphasizes that the natural result of lower intellectual functions such as reflexive attention, mindless memory, and sensory-motor thought transforms into higher intellectual functions (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). Vygotsky claimed that "when the child enters into a culture, he not only takes something from culture, assimilates something, takes something from outside, but culture itself profoundly refines the natural state of behavior of the child and alters completely anew the whole course of his development" (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 223 as cited in Bodrova & Leong, 2015).

Vygotsky (1978) stated that children could go from being a product of their environment to being fully in control of their environment (Bodrova & Leong, 2015), as accomplished through what Vygotsky's idea of play. According to Bodrova and Leong (2015) when writing about play, Vygotsky associated play with the make-believe play between preschoolers and primary-school-age children. This imaginative play had three characteristics: imaginary situations, role-playing, and following a specific set of rules (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). Reader's Theater is a significant example of the development of a child through the zone of proximal development through play. By nurturing intentional behavior, play steers to the blossoming of elevated cerebral functions (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). Through Reader's Theater, children can

place themselves in the characters of the role they are assuming and become intentional about their actions and movements, thus exhibiting what Vygotsky (1978) defines as “higher mental functions.” Higher mental functions are possible due to the intrinsic relationship among the children’s roles and the rules (Bodrova & Leong, 2015).

Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory

Howard Gardner, a developmental psychologist, Gardner popularized the theory of multiple intelligences with the book *Frames of Mind* in 1983 to challenge and extend the design of the customary standard of the intelligence quotient test, introduced in 1904 by Binet (Armstrong, 2009). The multiple intelligences theory reported that everyone is gifted with seven intelligences that can be assessed through their ability to both decipher complications and gain an understanding of new concepts (Gardner, 2006). Of all the multiple intelligences that Gardner’s (1983) theory identified, the predominant intelligences commonly tested and practiced in the classroom are linguistic and logical-mathematical (Mullican, 2012). Linguistic intelligence is defined as the “capacity to use words effectively, whether orally (e.g., as a storyteller, orator, or politician) or in writing (e.g., as a poet, playwright, editor, or journalist)” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 15). Armstrong (2009) described logical-mathematical intelligence as an unmistakable ability and power in using numbers adequately and rationale well.

The theories of intelligence often connected to the fine arts and sports are visual-spatial intelligence, musical-rhythmic intelligence, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (Jing, 2013). Visual-spatial intelligence is defined as the ability to interpret three-dimensionally and delicately examine the relationships amidst shapes, form, space, and color (Jing, 2013). Musical-rhythmic intelligence enables people to interpret, clarify, and convey meaning through sound (Mullican, 2012). Of all these intelligences, musical-rhythmic intelligence is the first to make an appearance

(Gardner, 2006). Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is a person's ability in the areas of stability, coordination, finesse, speed, and power (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014).

Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to observe and answer suitably to the tones, dispositions, incentives, and wishes of others (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). These students learn through interaction with others and tend to have many friends and prefer to work in groups (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). According to Gardner (2006), when people have an excessive amount of interpersonal intelligence, they have the most success because of their elevated propensity for communication. Intrapersonal intelligence refers to a person's ability to understand and differentiate among one's own feelings (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). These people can also pull upon knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, wants, and intelligences (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). The essence of intrapersonal intelligence permits someone to connect and differentiate intricate feelings and inner experiences (Gardner, 2006).

Reader's Theater allows students to develop the skills necessary to not only achieve success in fluency, expression, and comprehension but to also develop skills relevant to Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. Specifically, students develop the ability to understand others through roles and to further develop an understanding of themselves and their strengths and weaknesses. Erikson (1968) established that adolescence is when a person starts to establish their own identity within the paradigm of roles both interpersonally and intrapersonally. This can be a difficult experience because adolescents are just now beginning to understand their own feelings, emotions, and incentives, while they continue to face major tension from their peers (Erikson, 1968). Reader's Theater provides opportunities for learning through bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences and brings them outside the comfort zone of the traditional linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences.

The Effects of Reader's Theater in Past Research in Primary Grades

Reader's Theater as an intervention for fluency and comprehension has been researched and studied at the primary grade level for many years. Young and Rasinski (2009) have been instrumental in demonstrating the success of Reader's Theater in increasing reading fluency among elementary students. They conducted an action research study that examined the effects of Reader's Theater to increase reading fluency as well as prosody, automaticity, and accuracy. When a student is reading for speed, there is a very minuscule amount of thought given to reading with purposeful expression (Young & Rasinski, 2009). This takes away from the main purpose of reading, which is reading to find meaning. Reading for meaning is the purpose behind the reading of any text. When the meaning is lost because of speed, students lose the purpose for reading and cannot comprehend the text (Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Furthermore, Young and Rasinski (2009) suggest that an unintended consequence for using reading rate to assess fluency is students identifying fast reading as proficient reading. Fluency has taken a turn from reading for meaning to reading for speed (Young & Rasinski, 2009). Young and Rasinski's (2009) claim that fluency needs to be about more than speed is relevant to all students. Teachers and academic coaches perform constant progress monitoring tests to measure fluency based on speed, but the current state tests in Tennessee lack the measurements for the characteristics of a fluent reader beyond speed. Fast readers do not breed fluent readers.

Young and Rasinski's (2009) study used twenty-nine-second grade students who received the Reader's Theater intervention every day, which usually took 20–25 minutes. Each of the second-grade students had reading levels ranging in early Kindergarten to midyear third grade. The researcher added Reader's Theater to an equitable literacy program that included reading

presentations, shared readings, guided reading, independent reading, and word study. The Developmental Reading Assessment was given at the beginning and the end of the year to measure students' independent reading level based on word recognition accuracy and comprehension as well as automaticity and prosody (Young & Rasinski, 2009). The Texas Primary Reading Inventory was used to measure automaticity and prosody during a pre-and post-test on a grade-level passage. Finally, the researcher measured prosody using a rubric designed to detect and document the attributes of a fluent reader.

Young and Rasinski (2009) studied the outcomes of a 5-day format in which each day had a different Reader's Theater objective. The goal of the study was to increase student abilities in reading with the expression for meaning rather than speed (Young & Rasinski, 2009). The findings in the study support the claim in that the results demonstrate significant progress by students throughout a school year. Student performances showed skillful reading that was accurate, self-assured, properly paced, prosodic, and full of meaning and excitement (Young & Rasinski, 2009). Findings in post-tests showed gains in word recognition and accuracy, rate and automaticity, and prosody (Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Additionally, Young and Rasinski's (2009) study demonstrated the significant impact Reader's Theater has on all aspects of fluency and student motivation but is limited to young readers. Researchers applied consistent intervention approaches and appropriately tested the measures of fluent reading. The approach of implementation was consistent and followed a strategic daily method of instruction. The limitation of the study lies within the qualitative measure of engagement and motivation. Students and parents could have completed surveys about the subject of fluency before and after implementation of Reader's Theater.

Another study completed by Young and Rasinski (2018) further supported that the stable application of Reader's Theater in grade two classrooms can have a huge impact on students' reading fluency. The study was quasi-experimental using Reader's Theater to examine the effects on word recognition and prosody as opposed to a control group that did not use Reader's Theater. The study stated the importance of prosodic reading, citing Goodman (1964) who said that students who read aloud with proper assertion were probably going to comprehend the text better than the students who did not (Young & Rasinski, 2018). A great connection exists asserting that students reading with expression and assertion have a higher probability to understand a grade-level text, and fluency instruction must target both words per minute and prosody (Young & Rasinski, 2018).

The 2018 study included 70 second graders, with 29 students serving as the treatment group. Students were taught by the same teacher over a two-year span. The difference in instruction was limited to the first 15-minute block of reading in which the treatment group received Reader's Theater while the comparison group participated in book-box reading or reading independently. Young and Rasinski (2018) reported that in prosody and words read per minute, the Reader's Theater group made greater progress than the comparison group. The findings supported the claim that consistent implementation of Reader's Theater can have a significant impact on reading fluency in second graders (Young & Rasinski, 2018). However, the limitation lies within Reader's Theater being only 15 minutes within a 90-minute balanced literacy program, so it cannot be definitively determined that Reader's Theater is the only cause for gains (Young & Rasinski, 2018).

Previous studies have concluded that Reader's Theater is effective on fluency as well as expression in primary grade students. An unintended consequence of this increase is an increase

in accuracy and comprehension. There is a strong basis for continued use in elementary schools. However, there is a lack of previous research indicating the use of Reader's Theater in middle school grades and its effectiveness. Although there is no research with middle school grades, there should be because students who continue to struggle in middle school will increase their impediments as they continue through their school years (Rasinski et al., 2016).

The Importance of Fluency

Even with the emphasis on comprehension in the middle school level, fluency still matters. Teachers and administrators often dismissed and overlooked fluency as a significant element of reading instruction (Rasinski, 2014). Fluency continues to be an important fragment of reading instruction and always will be (Rasinski, 2014). The difference within instruction for fluency at the middle school level lies with the perceptions of educators. Educators now instruct and assess fluency as fast reading rather than for expressiveness and reading for meaning (Rasinski, 2014). Because fluency is a significant factor for comprehension, all components should be taught and assessed by teachers including prosody and automaticity (Rasinski, 2014). Educators should model fluent reading, use assisted reading to supply fluency support and provide opportunities to practice reading through a consistent model used in the classroom (Rasinski, 2014).

Rasinski (2014) cited recent studies that prove a significant link between fluency and comprehension. The studies showed that low achieving students were usually equally low in fluency and comprehension (Rasinski, 2014). The writers of state standards indicate students should master foundational reading competency no later than fifth grade, yet levels of proficiency continually decrease throughout the years, especially in middle school. According to Rasinski (2014), part of the problem lies with the perceptions of educators of teaching fluency

past the lower elementary level. Another problem is that teachers assess fluency in 1 minute and typically taught and practiced in less than 5 minutes. This does not help with stamina, so educators do not understand the effect on fluency or fluency's effect on comprehension as students become more engaged in a text in one setting (Rasinski, 2014). Rasinski (2014) suggested that both fluency and comprehension should increase after long periods of time practicing.

A greater emphasis on reading fluency is placed on young readers because it contributes to a strong foundation needed for comprehension and the success of reading in the future. With increased challenges in the student curriculum, students are required to read more complicated text in a meaningful way that analyzes the text (Parenti & Chen, 2015). According to Parenti and Chen (2015), it is fluency that enables the reader to reduce cognitive space and allows students to give more attention to finding meaning within a text. Fluency can and should be explicitly taught and when it is taught sufficiently, it creates a positive outcome on overall reading achievement to support the need to explicitly teach fluency (Parenti & Chen, 2015). Parenti and Chen (2015) asserted that digital natives should be aware of the need for students to be taught differently because they demand rapid access. Parenti and Chen (2015) used Reader's Theater as an example of a largely adept pedagogical tool for increasing student fluency performance.

Fluency is not only important for further comprehension skills; it is also important for motivation. According to Worth and Boradux, as cited by Mraz et al. (2013), when teachers make fluency a priority and continue to instruct using materials that are entertaining and appealing, students are better able to fulfill the most important objective of reading instruction, which is reading independently for learning and enjoyment. Research suggests that by engaging students in performance activities like Reader's Theater, which has a dual purpose of increasing

students' reading fluency and is a motivational tool, teachers can build a condition for reading instruction (Young & Nageldinger, 2017). Kabilan and Kamarudin (2010) claimed that the only way in to increase learners' interest and incentive to learn, teachers need to create an experimental learning environment where learners can experience learning literature through stimulation and enjoyment. Kabilan and Kamarudin (2010) conducted a study to receive feedback about the motivation of Reader's Theater in the middle school classroom. The researcher analyzed the results of the study using both quantitative and qualitative data, which support that Reader's Theater helps motivate learners to read literature (Kabilan & Kamarudin, 2010). This was detectable from both the students' quick responses to the assigned tasks and the effort they applied during rehearsals and the staging of Reader's Theater (Kabilan & Kamarudin, 2010).

Past studies in middle school suggest there is still an alarming number of secondary students who are unable to read analytically and execute higher-level cognitive assignments (Keehn et al., 2008). Because of the lack of fluency instruction in middle grades, students have developed negative attitudes towards reading (Keehn et al., 2008). Teachers need interventions past the elementary grade level to not only increase fluency and comprehension but to also motivate these students to grow and learn. Fluency impediments do not disappear in the secondary school years. Once a student is below reading grade-level texts, the deficit continues to rise without interventions. As stated by Fredricks et al. (2011), many researchers have referred to fluency as the missing part of reading programs. Consequently, the report of the National Reading Panel of 2000 specified that fluency should be a part of any effective literacy instruction (Fredricks et al., 2011). Therefore, fluency is just as important in the middle grades as in the primary grades.

Inconsistencies with the Connection between Fluency and Comprehension

A significant issue with fluency strategies lies within the inconsistencies in defining fluency and its connection with comprehension. Fluency is deemed an important element of skilled reading, and the National Research Council report concluded that sufficient reading progress is dependent upon enough practice in reading to achieve fluency (Keehn et al., 2008). Truly fluent readers must move past identification of the words to the meaning below. Stahl and Kuhn (2002) suggested that the majority of reading fluency has flourished by third grade, but other research suggested that students can resume evolving components of fluent reading past this grade (Keehn et al., 2008).

The inconsistency with fluency strategies and fluency assessments could be based on the lack of a uniform definition for fluency. Many researchers have had differing opinions on what fluency is and is not. For instance, Dahl and Samuels (1974) focused on the rate to indicate fluent readers while LaBerge and Samuels (1974) examined both rate and accuracy in their investigations of fluency (Keehn et al., 2008). Schreiber (1980) focused on phrasing, yet Dowhower (1987) emphasized the importance of prosodic features like pitch, pauses, and stress (Keehn et al., 2008). All these misconceptions in defining fluency and its importance has led more recent researchers like Rasinski (2004) to define fluency as a multidimensional construct (Keehn et al., 2008).

The significant focus of comprehension strategies at the middle school level could be attributed to the link between fluency and comprehension. Based on older research studies, teachers strongly taught fluency at the lower elementary level, with an emphasis on comprehension instruction at the middle school level. Allington (1983) and Samuels and Farstrup (1992) claim that the strong connection between fluency and comprehension is the most

convincing basis to focus instructional efforts on students at all grade levels to become more fluent readers (Keehn et al., 2008). Hudson, Lane, and Pullen (2005) describe the connection between fluency and comprehension as being directly related to one another. Lack of accurate reading leads the reader to misunderstand the author's intended meaning and ultimately misunderstand the text (Keehn et al., 2008).

Based on the background studies connecting fluency and comprehension, Keehn et al. (2008) conducted a six- week study to examine the effects of a well-known fluency strategy known as Reader's Theater on eighth-grade low-level readers who statistically lack the motivation to learn to read. The researcher conducted the study using one control group of 20 students and one experimental group of 16 students, with an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative measures found that students in the Reader's Theater class made statistically compelling gains in fluidity and expressive measures of oral reading when compared to the control group. The Reader's Theater group nearly doubled the vocabulary gain of the control group, and the qualitative measures found that Reader's Theater had the potential to influence struggling adolescent readers and to shape their conviction with reading (Keehn et al., 2008). However, there was no significant difference in comprehension among the control group and the Reader's Theater group.

The Keehn et al. (2008) study was limited by the number of students who participated. The questionnaire that served as the qualitative measure asked open-ended questions but had a mix of positive and negative responses from students. While some students indicated their enjoyment of Reader's Theater, others indicated they did not like the repeated reading aspect of the strategy (Keehn et al., 2008). Another limitation of the study was the inclusion of both students with identified learning disabilities and students without disabilities. The variety of

different learning abilities could misrepresent the results based on ability. Text selection to analyze the effects of Reader's Theater on both groups of eighth grade students included passages meant for sixth-grade readability. Although this study had limitations, there were significant factors within the study that suggested further literacy studies should be conducted specifically within the middle school level to determine the effectiveness of Reader's Theater on fluency and comprehension.

Implementing Reader's Theater to Improve Comprehension

Implementing Reader's Theater can not only increase reading fluency but also be used to target reading comprehension and word study (Young et al., 2017). Teachers can use Reader's Theater with additional components besides fluency, accuracy, automaticity, and prosody, which focuses on reading comprehension and word study. The release of responsibility in the Reader's Theater scripts should be more gradual due to the increased text complexity. Because of the success of Reader's Theater in fluency, prosody, accuracy, reading rate, and automaticity, the increase in comprehension has been an unintended consequence.

Young et al. (2017) cited multiple sources to suggest the implementation of Reader's Theater for targeting comprehension and word study including Rinehart (1999), Worthy and Prater (2002), and Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) notion of gradual release. Specifically, Rinehart (1999) reported that Reader's Theater can be used as a reinforcement for students who struggled with reading and provide encouragement to examine the use of the activity with diverse student populations while Worthy and Prater (2002) indicated the use of Reader's Theater to increase student motivation (Young et al., 2017).

Past research suggested the importance of repeated readings as well as the generation of questions while reading as an effective way to boost comprehension (Young et al., 2017).

A recent meta-analysis concluded that larger effects on students' word recognition automaticity were achieved when students first listened to the text read aloud and repeatedly read the text (Lee & Yoon, 2017). Research has suggested that four readings are optimal (Young et al., 2017). However, there is no explicit study listed in the article to suggest the success of this further use for Reader's Theater.

The research and support listed provide a valid background for the need for furthering the use of Reader's Theater. Young et al. (2017) provided a suggested schedule for implementation of Reader's Theater to target comprehension and word study but have provided no definitive evidence to support the claim. This article provided gaps in current research specific to Reader's Theater. The article specifically provided gaps in middle school usage of Reader's Theater and the actual study of Reader's Theater to test the theory of significant gains in comprehension and word study. Young et al. (2017) suggested that by implementing a new weekly schedule using Reader's Theater to target comprehension and word study, students generate questions and assume more responsibility for the process. Jeanne Chall's (1996) stages of reading development further emphasize the importance of instructional practices that successfully support adolescents in reading for understanding and encourage purposeful engagement with the text, social support, and learning new material that leverages prior knowledge (Goldman et al., 2016).

Reader's Theater builds on Chall's (1996) stages of reading development by providing a means to actively engage in a text that naturally develops reading skills, build vocabulary and content knowledge, and enlightens readers with the content area, discipline-specific language (Goldman et al., 2016). Goldman et al. (2016) reiterated the importance of teaching all aspects of reading throughout grades four through twelve. Reader's Theater has been proven effective in

past studies for fluency and comprehension but further studies in the middle-grade levels could prove to bridge the gap for students struggling to meet grade-level expectations.

The Effects of Performance Methods to Enhance Students' Reading Fluency

Young et al. (2016) conducted a five-week quasi-experimental study to examine the effects of using Reader's Theater combined with another performance method called Rock and Read to increase reading fluency as well as the neglected component of prosody. The researcher in the study specifically analyzed the effects of pairing Rock and Read with Reader's Theater and only Rock and Read on 51-second grade students. The researcher chose 51 subjects as a nonprobability sample at three different classes and served as the treatment and comparison groups. The five measures included expression and volume, phrasing, pace, word recognition automaticity, and smoothness.

The researcher conducted the study based on Samuels's (1979) repeated readings theory as a practice-based approach to increase reading fluency and expressive reading techniques like Reader's Theater (Young et al., 2016). It is important to develop and revise methods to enhance all components of reading fluency, including word recognition automaticity, expression, and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace (Young et al., 2016). Reader's Theater has been proven to be effective for fluency and prosody as well as student motivation. Young et al. (2016) suggested a way to expand on that is to use a combination of Rock and Read and Reader's Theater. The intent behind stacking both rather than dividing them was to increase growth in students rapidly (Young et al., 2016).

Moreover, Young et al. (2016) provided substantial data to indicate the effects of Reader's Theater and Rock and Read combined as well as just the Rock and Read component. The effects of both were significant for all five measures. The effects for just the Rock and Read

group was also significant for all five measures. The control group also yielded gains in most measures but not as significantly as with one or both interventions.

One or both methods in the Young et al. study increased fluency in all five measures. However, Young et al. (2016) determined that based on the control group, comprehension was lost or decreased without all five measures of fluency (Young et al., 2016). This conclusion was determined by the control group that increased the reading rate but not the prosodic rate and failed to exhibit the gains the test groups achieved (Young et al., 2016). Fluent readers not only read quickly but also read with prosody and automaticity to comprehend the text.

Additionally, Young et al. (2016) further emphasized the continuous need to revise methods to increase student achievement as well as provides substantial research and studies to support the effectiveness of Reader's Theater. This study provides background for the measures in which Reader's Theater supports and enhances. Also, the Young et al. (2016) study provides a previous study baseline for the effect of implementing Reader's Theater in conjunction with another intervention, but it is limited because it only addresses second-grade students. Further studies in the effectiveness of Reader's Theater within secondary grade levels could provide a more well-rounded solution to reading level improvement.

The Effects of Reader's Theater on Student Motivation and Comprehension

Reader's Theater has not only been beneficial with increasing fluency but has also included the added benefit of motivating students to read. Collier (2015) noted:

By the time students reach middle school, their interest in learning and desire to perform wanes, so that by high school, a significant number have checked out, viewing school as boring and frustrating and the content as irrelevant to their lives—with worrisome implications for their futures. (para. 2)

This lack of motivation can be seen through attendance, class disruptions, and through discussions of dropping out of school (Collier, 2015). Reader's Theater offers teachers a way to motivate students in obtaining an appreciation for English books and obtaining meaningful experiences from the characters in the plot (Lin, 2015). Reader's Theater fosters students' cooperative learning through group work and enhances the students' interest in learning English (Lin, 2015). Lin's (2015) study intended to examine the effect of Reader's Theater training on elementary students, specifically changes in comprehension before and after Reader's Theater activities. It also compared students' responses to English learning, the students' opinions on the activities, and student responses to English books.

Lin (2015) provided a small sample of 32 sixth-grade students for the use of Reader's Theater for instructing English reading. The study lasted for 44 days, with participants being those that have learned English within the past three years. The measurements within the study included both quantitative and qualitative measures and included the framework from Marcus (2002) on the importance of reading aloud. Other influences in this study included Huang (2007) and Lee (2010), whose research reported the effectiveness of Reader's Theater on students' writing development. Lin (2015) cited Miccoli (2003) to provide a background of the benefits of Reader's Theater such as the emphasis on words, structures, pronunciation, thoughts, motivation, and comprehension. While many studies support the importance of Reader's Theater for learners, Lin's (2015) study indicated that Reader's Theater can foster students' cooperative learning through group work and interest to learn English. These results were based on pre-and post-questionnaires from the students.

However, Lin's (2015) study did include several limitations. While the qualitative measures were positive, the quantitative measures were not as significant. The findings suggest

44 days of Reader's Theater training was not long enough to cause a significant proficiency change (Lin, 2015). Lin (2015) suggested increasing the sample size and using Reader's Theater for older students. Future students should increase the amount of time with Reader's Theater, especially in English Language Learners (Lin, 2015). By implementing Reader's Theater in older students, such as adolescents, for a longer period, there is the potential for more of a significant proficiency change in English Language Learners (Lin, 2015).

Review of Methodological Issues

The literature review examined multiple classroom experiences. The studies conducted using Reader's Theater have included a wide array of students and implementation processes. The research methods conducted in the studies have also been comprehensive in that there is a variety of quantitative, qualitative, and quasi-experimental. However, there may have been some weaknesses in the studies that require further research.

Mixed Methods and Quasi-Experimental

Young and Rasinski (2009, 2018) conducted two separate studies examining the results of Reader's Theater on the fluency of second-grade students. In the 2009 study, Young and Rasinski implemented Reader's Theater with 29 students with a range of reading abilities and analyzed the results of quantitative tests such as the Developmental Reading Assessment, Texas Primary Reading Inventory, and a prosody rubric. The results of this study demonstrated noteworthy progress by students over the course of the year (Young & Rasinski, 2009). Based on both quantitative and qualitative measures, student performances produced proficient reading that was properly paced, prosodic, confident, accurate, and full of meaning and enthusiasm. Quantitative findings in posttests showed gains in word recognition and accuracy, rate and automaticity, and prosody (Young & Rasinski, 2009).

In the 2018 study, Young and Rasinski used a quasi-experimental method analyzing the effects of Reader's Theater on second-grade students. The study included 70 students, with 29 students serving as the treatment group while the remaining students received normal reading instruction (Young & Rasinski, 2018). The same teacher taught students over a two-year span. The difference in instruction was limited to the first 15-minute block of reading in which the treatment group received Reader's Theater while the comparison group participated in book-box reading. The findings suggested that consistent implementation of Reader's Theater can have a significant impact on reading fluency in second graders, positively impacting prosody and words read per minute (Young & Rasinski, 2018).

Although both studies by Young and Rasinski were comprehensive, they did include limitations, specifically the small grade-level representation. The weakness in the 2009 study was that it examined a wide variety of fluency factors both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study could have been more effective in examining specific factors such as reading rate, accuracy, and word recognition quantitatively while using qualitative measures such as surveys and observations to examine motivation and confidence. The purpose of this study and the outcomes were not specific enough and limited to the growth of one grade-level. This study reveals a gap in higher grade-level studies using Reader's Theater to increase a limited amount of fluency factors.

The weakness in the 2018 study lies within the mixed methods of implementation. Because the study included using Reader's Theater as 15 minutes of a 90-minute balanced literacy program, it cannot be definitively determined that Reader's Theater is the only cause for gains (Young & Rasinski, 2018). The researcher conducted the study over a 2-year period, which could also significantly impact the gains recorded. Although the study recorded that the

treatment group made significantly higher gains than the control group, implementing the same process for a shorter amount of time without additional interventions could show a more accurate result of the effects of Reader's Theater.

Qualitative

Karabag (2015) used qualitative measures to analyze secondary students' opinions about Reader's Theater. Karabag (2015) implemented Reader's Theater to 72 eleventh grade students for four weeks and interviewed the students at the end of the unit. The results of this study indicated that Reader's Theater can be used as an operating method to teach the subject content effectively (Karabag, 2015). The data in this study also supports preexisting research that recommends using Reader's Theater for fluent reading, toning, listening, empathizing, understanding, content and concept learning and participating (Karabag, 2015). Qualitative research methods are a great way to highlight the how and why of the study, but the effects of fluency on secondary students were not determined.

While the literature review examined a variety of research methods for the effects of Reader's Theater, there is a lack of research for secondary students. The most commonly used method in the literature review was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. This combination effectively measures the impact of Reader's Theater. However, the studies specific to secondary students lack the necessary quantitative measures to effectively analyze the impact of the intervention.

Synthesis of Research Findings

The majority of research on the topic of Reader's Theater reported a positive correlation between Reader's Theater, fluency, and comprehension (Parenti & Chen, 2015; Rasinski, 2014; Young et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018). Past research has seen increases in fluency

in all five measures and comprehension in the majority of students involved. No negative effects have been reported in the research in relation to Reader's Theater as an intervention for fluency and comprehension.

Reader's Theater studies further emphasized the direct correlation between fluency and comprehension. The research determined that comprehension is lost or decreased without all five measures of fluency (Parenti & Chen, 2015; Rasinski, 2014; Young et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018). Therefore, fluent readers not only read quickly but also read with prosody and automaticity to comprehend the text (Parenti & Chen, 2015; Rasinski, 2014; Young et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018).

Another common theme among research for Reader's Theater is the use of Samuels' (1979) repeated readings theory. The studies suggested that Reader's Theater is effective because of the use of repeated readings. Past and present research suggested that repeated readings commonly accomplished larger effects on students' word recognition automaticity when students first listened to the text read aloud (Lee & Yoon, 2017). Research has shown that four readings are favorable (Young et al., 2017).

Additionally, Reader's Theater has also shown evidence for increasing student motivation for reading (Kabilan & Kamarudin, 2010; Richardson, 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2017). Past research studies have focused on Reader's Theater for dual results in increasing both fluency and motivation. The researchers conducted studies to measure engagement and motivation through teacher observations, student feedback, and surveys (Kabilan & Kamarudin, 2010). Data concluded that Reader's Theater helped motivate students to read literature and immerse themselves in the lives of the characters (Kabilan & Kamarudin, 2010; Richardson, 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2017).

The last common theme among the research was the suggested implementation process for future research studies. A common suggestion for the use of Reader's Theater in a classroom was to use Reader's Theater 5 days a week for at least 20 minutes. Students should follow a different procedure and skill with the use of Reader's Theater every day, with the goal of performance in mind on Friday (Goldman et al., 2016; Lee & Yoon, 2017; Parenti & Chen, 2015; Young et al., 2017).

Critique of Previous Research

Many people perceived Reader's Theater as a positive influence on students' academic achievement in general. Its effects have been reported to be significant in the advancement of both fluency and comprehension. However, there are inconsistencies within past research that suggest more research and studies are needed to definitively suggest Reader's Theater as an effective intervention tool.

Longevity and Participant Numbers

The use of Reader's Theater in the classroom continues to achieve positive outcomes. However, one consistent criticism of the intervention is that no research has been conducted over an extended period of time. Past research has been limited to 4 to 6 weeks of study, mostly in conjunction with other interventions. Secondly, the number of participants in the research is low, averaging 20 students or below (Keehn et al., 2008; Richardson, 2016; Young et al., 2016). Studies handled over a longer period of time with a larger number of students may give more conclusive results.

Lack of Studies Involving Different Genres of Text

With the push of standards to include more informational text in reading, more studies should be conducted to increase comprehension within a wider range of text. Interventions such

as Reader's Theater should include text from the different genres like poetry, nonfiction, drama, and classic literature (Calo, 2011; Coombs & Young, 2014; Goldman et al., 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2017). Coombs and Young (2014) report a lack of student skills to delve deeper into informational text. Coombs and Young (2014) stated: "Using informational text to explore questions associated with literature and inviting students to present their ideas through Reader's Theater productions offers a new and innovative way to engage students in critical analysis of informational text as well the kinds of writing demanded by the standards" (p. 13). Reader's Theater not only offers creative opportunities to delve into the different genres of texts but also improves students' reading and academic skills, particularly for struggling readers or ELL students who often increase in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills as a result of practicing and performing Reader's Theater scripts at the elementary (Keehn et al., 2008; Young & Vardell, 1993) and secondary level (Black & Stave, 2007).

Need for More Studies Specific to Secondary Students

The most significant gap in the available literature lies within the effectiveness of Reader's Theater for fluency and comprehension in secondary grades (Young et al., 2017). Further studies should be conducted in the secondary grades, specifically within public schools with low-achieving reading scores in a low-income community because students who continue to struggle in middle school will increase their impediments as they continue through their school years (Rasinski et al., 2016). Although research with Reader's Theater has thus far been limited to primary grades, there seems to be enough evidence to demonstrate a strong need for Reader's Theater at the secondary level.

Chapter 2 Summary

In summation, early studies not only reveal the effectiveness of Reader's Theater but also the need for further research specifically in the secondary grade levels. Evidence has indicated that Reader's Theater benefitted students in the areas of fluency, comprehension, and motivation (Young et al., 2017; Kabilan & Kamarudin, 2010; Keehn et al., 2008; Lin, 2015; Parenti & Chen, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018). Additionally, past studies have reported the significance of continuing fluency instruction along with comprehension in order to accomplish reading independently for meaning (Mraz et al., 2013; Rasinski, 2014; Rasinski et al., 2016; Rasinski & Young, 2017; Young & Nageldinger, 2017).

Although past studies have been thorough and extensive, there have been limitations within certain areas of the studies. For example, very little research has been conducted within a middle school setting. Middle school students continue to lack the necessary fluency and comprehension skills to read proficiently (Rasinski et al., 2017; Young et al., 2017). Other limitations include the number of participants in past studies, the amount of time devoted to the study, and the use of different genres used to increase fluency and comprehension using Reader's Theater (Calo, 2011; Coombs & Young, 2014; Goldman et al., 2016; Keehn et al., 2008; Richardson, 2016; Young & Nageldinger, 2017).

Based on this review of literatures, which establishes a unique conceptual framework using Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development, Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, and LaBerge and Samuels' (1979) repeated reading theory to understand the effects of Reader's Theater on middle school students, there is ample reason for believing that an investigation examining the impact of Reader's Theater would result in socially

significant findings. Therefore, I can claim that the literature review has contributed strong support for pursuing a research project to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read?

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth grade students?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

According to the literature, while there is a significant emphasis on comprehension at the secondary level, there is very little emphasis on fluency instruction and the correlation between both aspects to students' reading achievements (Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), two-thirds of eighth-graders do not read proficiently at grade level. Because of this statistic, educators continuously search for methods to help students read on grade-level proficiently (TN Department of Education, 2018). Reader's Theater has previously been used to improve reading proficiency in primary students, specifically to increase all components of fluency (Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018; Young et al., 2016).

The focus of this study was to examine the effectiveness of Reader's Theater on improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students. A review of Chapter 2 supported the lack of emphasis on improving fluency as well as comprehension at the secondary level. Buehl (2017) noted that comprehension for content is needed. However, Reader's Theater has been studied and demonstrated as an effective means of intervention for primary level students with fluency, prosody, comprehension, and motivation in past studies (Kabilan & Kamarudin, 2010; Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Young & Rasinski, 2018). Although there are some studies involving the use of Reader's Theater with secondary students, a review of Chapter 2 also supported the lack of research on the effect of Reader's Theater in middle school students, specifically comprehension and fluency (Lin, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Rasinski & Young, 2017).

In the remainder of this chapter, the study's purpose will be discussed as well as an overview of the quasi-experimental quantitative study and the specific methodology that was used. The discussion of the methodology includes a description of the sample and population that was utilized, an explanation of instrumentation, and material that was used. Also, descriptions of the independent and dependent variables that are fundamental to the study and a detailed description of the data collection and analysis procedures will be discussed. Lastly, threats to the validity of the study will be discussed as well as viability and ethical issues will be addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this 6-week quantitative quasi-experimental study using both an experimental and a control group was to evaluate the impact of Reader's Theater on improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students. Based on the literature review, there is a lack of use of Reader's Theater in secondary grades to promote growth in fluency and comprehension (Young et al., 2017). A study of the effectiveness of Reader's Theater was needed at the secondary level because students who continue to struggle in middle school will increase their restraints as they continue through their school years (Rasinski et al., 2016). Secondary students continue to lack the necessary fluency and comprehension skills to read proficiently (Rasinski et al., 2017; Young et al., 2017). This study aims to help provide additional and less expensive resources in response to the need for a more comprehensive reading model at the secondary level. The researcher used Reader's Theater as an intervention for eighth grade students at a middle school in Tennessee. The aim of the study was to gather empirical evidence to facilitate a change in instructional methods to increase fluency and comprehension at the middle school level.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Evaluating the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension, as determined by two Easy CBM tests, in secondary students was the objective of this study. In response to this objective, two research questions were addressed. Those research questions along with associated null and alternative hypotheses are:

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read?

H_{O1} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{A1} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{O2} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A2} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O3} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A3} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{O4} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A4} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth grade students?

H_{O5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{A5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{O6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{O8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

Research Design

Similar to Keehn et al. (2008), a quantitative quasi-experimental was conducted using a nonequivalent group design which included the collection of pretest and posttest data for both an experimental group and a control group. Several factors led to this approach. First, in the school that participated in this study, reading comprehension and fluency levels are determined by

students' scores on Easy CBM. Fluency is measured by the number of words read correctly within one minute or oral reading fluency as measured by Easy CBM. Comprehension is measured by reading a passage and answering 20 multiple choice questions as measured by Easy CBM. Students are then placed within reading intervention programs based on these scores. The students who fall under the 10% range of grade-level are placed in a fluency intervention program (Easy CBM Norms, 2013). Students who fall between 11% to 25% are placed in an aggressive comprehension intervention (Easy CBM Norms, 2013). Finally, students landing in the 26% to 50% range are placed in a higher-level comprehension program while those above 50% are considered non-risk for reading deficiencies, as determined by Easy CBM Norms (2013).

Because schools place significant emphasis on Easy CBM data, the logical conclusion was that the results of Reader's Theater used as an intervention should be evaluated using the same instrument. A quantitative method was appropriate for this study because it tests "objective theories by examining the relationship among variables...those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings" (Creswell, 2014, p. 32). The Reader's Theater study tested the hypothesis and quantified the data, but there was the assumption that Reader's Theater would be as effective in secondary students as it was with primary students based on past research. The quantitative approach uses deduction to make the connection between theory and data, objectivity as the relationship to the research process, and generality to inference from data (Morgan, 2007).

With these characteristics, the research design that was used in this study can be considered a quantitative quasi-experimental pretest-posttest comparison of nonequivalent

groups (Creswell, 2014). In the pretest-posttest nonequivalent group design there is a treatment group that is given a pretest, receives a treatment, and then is given a posttest (Price, 2015). During the same time, a nonequivalent control group is given a pretest, does not receive the treatment, and then is given a posttest (Price, 2015). This type of study addresses not only whether the treatment participants improve but also whether they improve more than the control group (Price, 2015). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of Reader's Theater on fluency and comprehension within the treatment group, as compared to the control group. This was accomplished by comparing pretest and posttest fluency scores within each class. Comprehension development was determined by an Easy CBM comprehension posttest at the end of the study. The research design also allowed for the determination of the effectiveness of Reader's Theater by comparing the sizes of gain in both the control group and the experimental group.

Quantitative methodology is appropriate when numerical data, such as the percentages that are used in the Easy CBM analysis, is used to answer research questions (Creswell, 2014). Because research findings can be used to drive reading instruction within the current school district, there is more of a need for objective findings prevalent in quantitative studies.

Qualitative data were unnecessary in this study because there was little need for interviews and observations which may contain subjective data and researcher bias (Creswell, 2014). To analyze whether there was a significant difference in fluency and comprehension among a control group and a treatment group, as determined by a pretest and posttest, quantitative methodology ensures that the data gathered is both reliable and replicable (Warner, 2013).

Target Population, Sampling Method and Related Procedures

The target population from which this study sample was drawn consisted of readers on all reading levels in one middle school located in Tennessee. The experimental sample consisted of 25 students in eighth grade with reading levels ranging from sixth grade to grade-level. The control group consisted of 25 eighth grade students with reading levels ranging from sixth grade to grade-level. Past studies and literature support this sample size but has been limited in that the studies focus mainly on primary students or students within a special education environment (Keehn et al., 2008; Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018; Young et al., 2016). Participants included a wide variety of cultures, language variations, and socioeconomic factors. Since the students who were examined in this study were included because of their availability within already formed classes, the non-random sample can be considered a convenience sample of naturally formed groups (Creswell, 2014).

Instrumentation

A grade-level fluency passage generated from Easy CBM was used to analyze the fluency data and compare the differences in fluency in both the treatment group and the control group. The students were given a pretest and posttest from Easy CBM on fluency (see Appendix E). Students were also given a pre-and posttest grade-level comprehension passage generated by Easy CBM (see Appendices F and G). This task consisted of reading a passage and answering 20 multiple choice questions within a 90-minute time limit. Easy CBM is a primary data source used within the chosen school district. Students are given a percentage score based on the number of questions correct, and Easy CBM analyzes their rate of improvement from previous tests. The Easy CBM test accounts for two data points, a fluency test that was separate from the comprehension test. Score ranges for the fluency were assessed as the number of words read

correctly per minute, and the score ranges for the comprehension test included a percentage of the 20 questions correct from 0% to 100%. These scores represented that the use of Reader's Theater as an intervention provided the necessary tools for students to apply to other texts and assessments.

Data Collection

Concordia University–Portland Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to Reader's Theater implementation or data collection to ensure that participants are at minimal risk. Students were given a permission slip to be signed by their guardians for permission to be involved in the study (see Appendix B). The authorization was given by the director of the school district before the implementation of the study. The instruments used are permissible for use by any teacher within the school district.

This study collected data from students assigned to two different classes: a control group and an experimental group. The specific control group and the experimental group classes were randomly chosen after permission forms were returned by another teacher pulling a number from a basket. One class was tested at the beginning of the six-week study, then exposed to Reader's Theater, and tested at the end of the intervention. This process provided a pretest score and monitored any change in achievement levels after the treatment. One class served as the control group in which students were pretested, taught using the approved literature curriculum, and post-tested at the end of the intervention. Both classes studied six short stories over a six-week period using approved literature comprehension methods, but the experimental group used Reader's Theater as a fluency extension activity for 30 minutes while the control group completed additional comprehension tasks. The control group used traditional comprehension methods to study each short study such as graphic organizers and note-taking with no fluency

practice. The experimental group, on the other hand, read the short story and performed an adapted Reader's Theater version of the short story throughout the week, and completed various RT tasks (see Appendix H) as designed by Rasinski et al. (2017).

Students in the experimental group were tested at the beginning of the six-week study on a fluency passage and a comprehension passage through Easy CBM, then exposed to Reader's Theater, and tested at the end of the intervention on fluency and comprehension through Easy CBM. The control group was tested at the beginning of the six-week study on a fluency passage and a comprehension passage through Easy CBM, then taught through a regular classroom curriculum designed by the district and tested at the end of the study on fluency and comprehension through Easy CBM. This process provided a pretest score and monitored any change in achievement levels after the treatment as well as any differences in achievement between the two groups.

Implementation of Reader's Theater in the experimental group followed a strict layout for each of the stories per week (see Appendix H). The implementation process was crucial to the development of a higher comprehension for the experimental group. A release of responsibility for comprehension, less teacher support as the study progressed, was important because the text chosen in this study was more complex (Young et al., 2017). The reading block within the school district is 90-minutes long every day. Implementation of Reader's Theater tasks consisted of 30 minutes of Reader's Theater tasks every day after regular literature instruction. Day one of every week included teacher modeling of the script while students generated questions. Day two included a choral reading of the script, in which groups read the script four times for optimal understanding and created a summary of the script (Lee & Yoon, 2017; Young et al., 2017). The third day involved small-group rehearsal where students were assigned parts and practice while

the teacher monitored and talked about the meaning of the script (Young et al., 2017). Day four included a dress rehearsal in which students did a run-through of the scripts, with significant emphasis placed on expression for optimal audience enjoyment. Afterward, each person retold the script to a partner within his or her group (Young et al., 2017). On the last day of each week, students performed their scripts in a grand performance for outside members of the school community and discussed what they liked about the script and what could have made it better.

While the implementation of Reader's Theater within the experimental group is complex, the control group used the same short stories to test comprehension. The control group followed the same process for understanding as outlined by the Pearson Literature textbook, which includes identifying key vocabulary, writing summaries, answering pre-determined comprehension questions, and whole-class discussion of themes, main ideas, characterization, and plot (see Appendix I). The experimental group and the control group followed the same story lesson plan, but the experimental group had an extra 30 minutes dedicated to Reader's Theater while the control group completed extra comprehension tasks.

Operationalization of Variables

This six-week quasi-experimental study included one independent variable, Reader's Theater intervention and two dependent variables, comprehension and fluency. Reader's Theater was used in the treatment group as an extension of short stories. Reader's Theater consists of a multi-faceted and deliberate schedule in which students perform the short stories as a drama to emphasize word meaning, tone, and prosodic reading. The two dependent variables, comprehension and fluency, were defined by Easy CBM scores from two different passages determined by a pretest at the beginning of the study and a posttest at the end of the study. The comprehension Easy CBM assessment consists of a story with a set of multiple-choice questions,

like other standardized tests in Tennessee. The fluency portion consists of a one-minute passage where the teacher marks the words read correctly and any errors made during the reading.

Data Analysis Procedures

Statistical analysis was used to examine the differences in fluency and comprehension within the intervention group as well as the differences within growth among the control group and intervention group. The data on the two dependent variables, fluency and comprehension, was collected as a pretest and posttest from two groups of students. One group served as the treatment group while the other served as the control group. Based on preliminary assumptions, the data were analyzed using an independent t test. An independent samples-test is appropriate when trying to determine whether a difference between the means of two independent groups exists while using a continuous dependent variable (“Independent samples t-test”, n.d.). An independent samples t test was used to examine the difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of fluency as well as comprehension, at the beginning of the research.

A paired sample t test was also conducted to compare the mean scores of pretest and posttest of an Easy CBM test in both comprehension and fluency for both the control group and experimental group in order to find out whether Reader’s Theater is helpful with increasing fluency and comprehension in middle school students or not. An independent sample t test was performed to compare the post-test mean scores of two groups (control and experimental groups) to investigate whether there was a significant difference between these groups regarding the type of treatment.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations in a research study are the characteristics of design or methodology that could influence the findings of the research (Price & Murnan, 2013). Limitations within this study resulted from several factors, including the research design, instrumentation, sampling methodology, and teacher bias. The study used a convenience nonrandom sampling of students who were predetermined at the research site. While this sampling is common, this limits the external validity of the study. Another limitation of the study was the nonequivalent groups. Because the groups were nonequivalent, there could have been different rates of improvement not necessarily linked to Reader's Theater. Also, the smaller sample size is a limitation. Finally, this study had the potential for bias because the teacher was the administrator of both the experimental and control groups and the tests given. There may also be other outside variables that may influence the variables and results that the researcher cannot control such as time of day taught, issues in the home, and the moods of the students.

Research delimitation includes the features of a study that were controlled by the researcher but could limit the scope of the study. Delimitations in the study resulted from decisions made by the researcher such as the choice of a quantitative quasi-experimental study, the setting of the research, and the choice of the dependent variables. Choosing quantitative rather than qualitative prevents learning from readers' experience. The setting was limited to one school located in Tennessee, so it makes it difficult to prove significance in other areas. The validity of the findings was limited to the measures used. Comprehension contains many levels of understanding that makes it difficult for Easy CBM to truly capture increases. Lastly, fluency only measures the rate of improvement in words read per minute, not prosodic development or other fluency aspects.

Internal and External Validity

Internal validity is used to determine if the inferences made among the cause and effect of relationships between variables is a fact (Trochim, 2006a). Therefore, internal validity is a relevant concern in studies that seek to determine if an independent variable makes a significant difference to the dependent variable. This study aimed to determine if Reader's Theater shows a difference in fluency and comprehension, as shown by comparing a control group. Because of this, challenges to internal validity are significant.

External validity is the estimation of truth within conclusion generalizations (Trochim, 2006b). In this study, the goal was to not only determine if Reader's Theater is effective among the participants but to also draw conclusions about the usefulness of Reader's Theater as a permanent intervention. Consequently, threats to the study's external validity are equally important.

Internal Validity

Selection bias is a threat to the internal validity of the study because groups are not randomly assigned and not equivalent. Although non-equivalent groups are the most commonly used methodology in experimental education research, it lacks the strength of internal validity due to the lack of definitive similarities (Trochim, 2006a). Selection-Maturation within this study was also a concern. Regular classroom instruction was given to both groups so an increase in fluency and comprehension could be attributed to both instruction and Reader's Theater. According to Trochim (2006a), the groups could have matured at different rates, not necessarily in response to the treatment. Changes within the posttest at the end of the study could have been a natural occurrence of regular classroom growth.

External Validity

Although, field studies in a real-world environment have enhanced external validity, there can be threats due to the people, places, or times (Trochim, 2006b). The threat to this quasi-experimental study external validity lay within the non-randomized sample within a specific school district. External validity is a generalization that can be interpreted in different ways. For example, educators could argue that Reader's Theater would only work within the particular school district or that the time of year the study completed altered the outcome of the effects (Trochim, 2006b).

Expected Findings

Reader's Theater has been studied and implemented in past research, specifically in lower grade levels. Because of the past literature, the findings in this study were expected to result in gains from pretest to posttest. The researcher expected to find more significant gains in the experimental group versus the control group due to the findings in previous literature and studies.

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read? Anticipated results were most likely to include a positive difference in fluency between Reader's Theater students and a control group after a Reader's Theater intervention. Keehn et al. (2008) showed a positive difference between a Reader's Theater treatment group and a control group. Other studies such as Young and Rasinski (2009) demonstrated positive effects in reading fluency in primary-aged students, specifically on all aspects of fluency including expression, automaticity, and accuracy.

This positive difference of the hands-on intervention of Reader's Theater can also be predicted by Vygotsky's (1978) theory of proximal development and scaffolding and Gardner's

(1983) theory of multiple intelligences. Higher increases are likely to develop due to the level of student engagement within Reader's Theater and the gradual release of responsibility (Vygotsky, 1978). Reader's Theater appeals to multiple forms of Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, especially the paradigm of interpersonal and intrapersonal roles. The use of multiple intelligences within Reader's Theater strongly suggests positive outcomes for fluency increases within the treatment group.

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth grade students? Anticipated results most likely included a positive difference in comprehension between Reader's Theater students and a control group after a Reader's Theater intervention. Lin (2015) demonstrated an increase in comprehension among primary students but did not focus solely on studying the difference between a control group and a treatment group. Chall's (1996) stages of reading development further help predict a positive significant outcome for comprehension after Reader's Theater. Reader's Theater uses a repeated reading strategy while providing a means to actively engage in a text that naturally develops reading skills, builds vocabulary and content knowledge, and familiarizes readers with the content area, discipline-specific language (Goldman et al., 2016).

Ethical Issues in the Study

Ethical issues were minor due to Reader's Theater being considered a best educational practice (Young et al., 2017). Because students participating in the treatment group were receiving the same classroom instruction as the control group, there is no actual harm done, only enrichment. Additional pretests and posttests could have caused some concern, but these particular tests aligned with the required types of tests throughout the school year and could have been seen as extra practice for the required standardized tests. Another ethical concern was a

conflict of interest on the researcher's part due to the expectation of success within the study. This had the potential to create researcher bias because the researcher was the administrator of the tests and intervention.

In order to prevent ethical issues in this study, this researcher took multiple preventative measures. First, maintaining the confidentiality of student records was of high priority. This was accomplished through careful management of data, specifically removing all identifying information from electronic files that were used to address the research questions. Student names were replaced with numbers, which is highly recommended for researchers, according to Wiles, Crow, Heath, and Charles (2008). Second, any raw data were stored in a locked filing cabinet within a locked classroom. Excel files, notes, and any other electronic documents were stored on a password-protected jump drive. All data will be destroyed after publication. Finally, informed consent such as forms informing parents and students of the study and any additional testing was given before the start (see Appendices A, B, and C). Any students who opted out still received classroom instruction and Reader's Theater intervention, but data would not be collected from these students.

Summary

The purpose of this 6-week quasi-experimental study was to evaluate the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students, as compared to a control group. Past studies demonstrated the success of Reader's Theater as an intervention to increase fluency and comprehension in primary studies (Lee & Yoon, 2017; Young et al., 2017). The literature has shown that the use of Chall's repeated reading strategy within Reader's Theater is an effective means to naturally increase fluency (Goldman et al., 2016). Similar to the Keehn et al. (2008) study, this study aimed to show the effectiveness of Reader's Theater at the

secondary level to increase both fluency and comprehension. Hopefully, the findings in this study will allow for the empirical evidence needed to supply administrators and teachers with an added and effective intervention for secondary students.

The effectiveness of Reader's Theater was assessed using a quantitative methodology and a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest comparison of nonequivalent groups. Two dependent variables were collected in this study, measuring fluency and comprehension. Easy CBM was used to collect the data to compare the control group and the treatment group. The data collected from both groups at pretest and posttest were analyzed using an independent samples *t* test at the beginning of the study. A paired sample *t* test was also conducted to compare the mean scores of pretest and posttest of an Easy CBM test in both comprehension and fluency for both the control group and experimental group in order to find out whether Reader's Theater is helpful with increasing fluency and comprehension in middle school students or not. Last, an independent *t* test was used to examine the difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of fluency as well as comprehension.

The research design choices that were made in this study resulted in some limitations to the study's internal and external validity, which were discussed in this chapter. These limitations demonstrate that the differences within the groups cannot definitively be credited to the intervention. Several characteristics of this study required specific generalizations based on past research and the study's findings but were made with caution. Ethical issues within the study were given special attention and remain limited within the study. The goal of the study was to ensure all students receive the best instruction possible for them, whether they are a part of the control group or treatment group. Student records were kept confidential and anonymous to

ensure the privacy of any student data from anyone other than this researcher. Efforts made to ensure confidentiality within this study were also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 will present a description of the sample as well as a summary of the results. A detailed analysis of the results, outliers, and normality will be reviewed. Finally, the results will be analyzed based on each hypothesis and research question.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of the quasi-experimental quantitative study was to evaluate the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students. The research design that was used in this study can be considered a quantitative quasi-experimental pretest-posttest comparison of nonequivalent groups (Creswell, 2014). In the pretest-posttest nonequivalent group design there is a treatment group that is given a pretest, receives a treatment, and then is given a posttest (Price, 2015). During the same time, a nonequivalent control group is given a pretest, does not receive the treatment, and then is given a posttest (Price, 2015). This type of study addresses not only whether the treatment participants improve but also whether they improve more than the control group (Price, 2015). The purpose of determining whether or not Reader's Theater is effective in increasing fluency and comprehension was accomplished by the comparison of pretest and posttest fluency scores within each class. Comprehension development was determined by an Easy CBM comprehension posttest at the end of the study. The research design also allowed for the determination of the effectiveness of Reader's Theater by comparing the sizes of gain in both the control group and the experimental group.

The study included one independent variable, Reader's Theater intervention and two dependent variables, comprehension and fluency. Reader's Theater was used in the treatment group as an extension of short stories. Reader's Theater consists of a multi-faceted and deliberate schedule in which students perform the short stories as a drama to emphasize word meaning, tone, and prosodic reading. The two dependent variables, comprehension and fluency, were

defined by Easy CBM scores from two different passages determined by a pretest at the beginning of the study and a posttest at the end of the study.

When signed consent forms were returned, the names of the participants were placed into a word document as anonymous numbers 1 through 25 for both the experimental group and the control group. Pretest fluency data and pretest comprehension data were input into the document next to the assigned number. At the end of the study, posttest data were manually inputted into the document (see Appendix M). Participant anonymity was of the utmost importance due to privacy and confidentiality.

This study was implemented in a high-poverty school, with 100% of students on free lunch. At the end of the 6-week study, the pretest data were compared to the posttest data within the experimental group and control group. A total of fifty students were included in the study, divided between a control group and an experimental group. Reader's Theater was used as an intervention for eighth grade students at a middle school in Tennessee. Easy Curriculum-Based Measures (Easy CBM) fluency tests were used as a pretest and posttest to analyze the effectiveness of Reader's Theater on fluency. Fluency was measured by the number of words read correctly. Easy CBM comprehension tests were also used as a pretest and posttest to help determine if Reader's Theater had any effect on comprehension growth. Delimitations for the study included decisions made by the researcher such as the choice of a quantitative quasi-experimental study, the setting of the research, and the choice of the dependent variables.

The steps taken to increase the validity of the study were for the researcher to be the primary teacher of both the control group and the experimental group and remain consistent in the teaching approach to both groups. The study aimed to gather empirical evidence to facilitate a change in instructional methods to increase fluency and comprehension at the middle school

level. The two following research questions and corresponding hypotheses were designed to achieve this purpose:

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read?

H_{O1}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{A1}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{O2}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A2}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O3}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A3}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{O4}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A4}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth grade students?

H_{O5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{A5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{O6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{O8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

The theoretical framework used to guide the study included Vygotsky's theory of proximal development and scaffolding and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. In the remainder of this chapter, the study's sample will be described, the results will be summarized, and a detailed analysis of each research question will be discussed. The validity of the study will be analyzed and summarized. The results will include tables illustrating the findings for both groups in comprehension and fluency levels.

Description of the Sample

This study was needed to help students at the secondary level because of the high statistics of students reading below grade-level in eighth grade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The target population from which this study sample was drawn consisted of readers on all reading levels in one middle school located in Middle Tennessee. Participants included a wide variety of cultures, language variations, and socioeconomic factors. The school is made up of the following demographics: White (41.1%), Hispanic (30.7%), and African American (24.2%), with 100% of students on free lunch. The gender breakdown of the participants for the control group was 44.0% ($n = 11$ male and 56% ($n = 14$) female. Participants in the experimental group included 52% ($n = 13$) male and 48% ($n = 12$) female. Sixty-five students were recruited, but only 50 consent forms were returned, with 25 students representing the control group and 25 representing the experimental group.

Multiple permission forms were sent home to a total of three classes, and the study began when two of the three classes returned the forms. The third class was not used in the study at all and received regular classroom instruction. The students who participated in the study were assigned numbers randomly one through 25 in each group that was entered into a spreadsheet. Pretest scores from both the Easy CBM fluency test and the Easy CBM comprehension test were entered for both the control group and the experimental group. Intervention for the experimental group began at the beginning of the second week of school and was conducted 5 days a week, 30 minutes per day, and lasted for 6 total weeks. An Easy CBM fluency posttest was administered at the end of the six weeks to determine fluency growth. A separate Easy CBM posttest was given at the end of the 6 weeks to measure comprehension growth.

Summary of the Results

The following section will review the validity of the findings and the reliability of the study. The statistical analysis used for the study and the significance of the analysis will be analyzed. Finally, the measures taken within the study to ensure high validity and reliability will be discussed.

Validity

The validity of the findings was limited to the measures used, meaning the tool used to measure fluency and comprehension could be valid only in districts using the same tool. Another threat to validity included prior knowledge obtained from previous exposure to the content of the passages or a media format of the text. This threat to the validity of prior knowledge was minimal due to the on grade-level texts in which the participants were tested. Finally, a threat to validity and reliability could be the natural growth of reading levels, comprehension, and fluency based on regular classroom instruction and rate of improvement. The steps taken to minimize threats to validity included implementing the intervention at the same time every day for the exact same time frame, 30 minutes.

Reliability

Easy CBM was used to measure both fluency rate, as determined by words read correctly per minute, and comprehension. Park, Irvin, Anderson, Alonzo, and Tindal (2011) found Easy CBM reading comprehension measures to have acceptable levels of reliability the purpose repeated measures to monitor progress as well as to screen three times a year for comprehension levels. The data were analyzed using independent samples *t* test. An independent samples-test is appropriate when trying to determine whether a difference between the means of two independent groups exists while using a continuous dependent variable (“Independent samples t-

test”, n.d.). An independent t test was used to examine the difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of fluency as well as comprehension, at the beginning of the research. A paired sample t test was conducted to compare the mean scores of pretest and posttest of an Easy CBM test in both comprehension and fluency for both the control group and experimental group in order to find out whether Reader’s Theater is helpful with increasing fluency and comprehension in middle school students or not.

Statistical analysis was used to examine the differences in fluency and comprehension within the intervention group as well as the differences within growth among the control group and intervention group. The data on the two dependent variables, fluency and comprehension, was collected as a pretest and posttest from two groups of students. Data were collected using a chart from Microsoft Word and transferred to SPSS for outlier tests, Kolmogorov-Smirnov calculator for normality, and GraphPad for independent samples t tests and paired samples t tests. Based on these statistical tests, several assumptions were made, as discussed within the detailed analysis section.

Detailed Analysis

Two forms of analysis were used to analyze the data collected. The independent samples t test was used to analyze the differences in means between the control group and the experimental group for both a pretest and posttest on fluency and comprehension. There are specific assumptions for the independent samples t test including the scale of measurement, random sampling, normal distribution, adequacy of sample size, and equality of variance in standard deviation.

A paired-samples t test was used to analyze the means as a way to measure growth within each group after the Reader’s Theater intervention. The paired sample t test is a statistical

procedure used to determine whether the mean difference between two sets of observations is zero (“Paired Samples T-Test”, n.d.). The paired samples t test has four assumptions including that the dependent variable is continuous, observations are independent of each other, the dependent variable is normally distributed, and does not contain any outliers (“Paired Samples T-Test”, n.d.). All the statistical assumptions were examined and reported in the following sections.

Outliers

Outliers are the apparent nonnormality of a few data points. Both the independent samples t test and the paired samples t test assumes that there are no outliers. A large outlier can inflate the sample variance of data, decrease the t statistic, and essentially eliminate a significant difference that would otherwise be seen in the data. Therefore, all data were checked for outliers. Checking for outliers was accomplished by using the SPSS software to help identify normal distribution, specifically using a boxplot. A boxplot was used to check for outliers in both comprehension and fluency. No outliers were identified in the fluency boxplot (see Appendix J for fluency boxplot). One outlier was identified in the comprehension pretest for the experimental group (see Appendix K for comprehension box plot). No changes within the study were used in response to this one outlier.

Normality

Another assumption within the design was that each group is normally distributed. This assumption was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality (“Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality”, n.d.). Knowing if the data is normally distributed is important because parametric statistical tests to analyze data only works when the data is normally distributed (“Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality”, n.d.). The output for the fluency pretest

for the control group was a p value of .88 while the posttest was .92, indicating that the pretest data does not differ and is normally distributed. The fluency pretest data for the experimental group was .88 while the posttest p value was .98, which indicates that the data is normally distributed. The output for the comprehension pretest for the control group was a p value of .22, and the posttest value was .65 which shows a normal distribution. The comprehension pretest for the experimental group was a p value of .88, with a posttest output of .42, proving a normal distribution. Therefore, according to the tests of the eight sample groupings, the data is normally distributed (see Appendix L).

Summary of the Tests of Assumptions

The results of the tests of statistical assumptions of an independent samples t test and a paired samples t test include no significant outliers as determined by an SPSS boxplot and normal distribution as determined by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality. The output of the pretest and posttest for comprehension showed normal distribution in both the experimental and control groups. The output of the pretest and posttest for fluency also showed a normal distribution between groups.

Research Questions

Two research questions with corresponding hypotheses were addressed in this study:

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read?

H_{O1} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{A1} . The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{O2}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A2}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O3}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A3}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{O4}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A4}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth grade students?

H_{O5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{A5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{O6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H₀₇. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H₀₈. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

The analyses used allowed for the evaluation of the effectiveness of Reader's Theater in improving both fluency and comprehension from pretest to posttest. All statistical analyses for this study were performed using GraphPad. Data were assembled using a table dedicated to each group of participants. Data analysis began with testing for normality to account for out-of-range scores. There were no out-of-range scores. Fluency scores were calculated using the correct words read per minute. Comprehension scores were calculated with the number of questions correct out of a total of 20 questions.

Results of Hypothesis 1. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

Table 1

Pretest Fluency Scores From the Experimental Group and the Control Group

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Control	138.04	25	31.10	48	0.5620	0.5768
Experimental	133.32	25	28.22			

Note. $p < .5768$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

Independent sample t tests were used to examine the differences in mean, with a confidence interval of $> .95$. The results of the two independent samples t test for hypothesis 1 ($t(48)=0.5620$, $p < .5768$) indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference in the average pretest fluency scores between the control group and the experimental group participants from which the samples came. The average fluency scores of the experimental group, ($M = 133.32$, $SD = 28.22$) was less than the average fluency scores of the control group, ($M = 138.04$, $SD = 31.10$) before the Reader's Theater intervention.

The pretest for fluency for students in both the control group and experimental group indicated that there was not a significant difference in the mean score before the study. This allowed for the assumption that both groups were equally distributed to stand correct. The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. The statistical means of the pretest fluency scores and the standard deviations of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Results of Hypothesis 2. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

Table 2

Pretest Versus Posttest Fluency Scores for Experimental Group

Experimental	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest	133.32	25	28.22	24	2.6572	0.0138
Posttest	140.32	25	24.01			

Note. $p < .0138$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

Paired sample t tests were used to examine the difference in mean from a pretest and posttest of the experimental group, with a confidence interval of $> .95$. The results of the paired samples t test for hypothesis 2 ($t(24) = 2.6572$, $p < 0.0138$) indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the average pretest fluency scores between the experimental group and the posttest scores of the experimental group from which the samples came. The average fluency pretest scores of the experimental group, ($M = 133.32$, $SD = 28.22$) was less than the average posttest fluency scores of the experimental group, ($M = 140.32$, $SD = 24.01$) before the Reader's Theater intervention.

The pretest versus posttest scores for fluency for the experimental group indicated a statistically significant difference in the mean score after the study. The mean score increased from 133.32 to 140.32, indicating that Reader's Theater was effective in increasing fluency scores over the course of a six-week intervention. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The statistical means of the pretest and posttest fluency scores and the standard deviations of the experimental group participants are presented in Table 2.

Results of Hypothesis 3. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group. The mean

score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

Table 3

Pretest Versus Posttest Fluency Scores for the Control Group

Experimental	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest	138.04	25	31.10	24	0.1131	1.6444
Posttest	134.24	25	30.18			

Note. $p < 1.644$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

Another paired sample *t* test was used to examine the difference in mean from a pretest and posttest of the control group, with a confidence interval of $> .95$. The results of the paired samples *t* test for hypothesis 3 ($t(24) = 0.1131$, $p < 1.6444$) indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference in the average pretest fluency scores between the control group and the posttest scores of the control group from which the samples came. The average fluency pretest scores of the control group, ($M = 138.04$, $SD = 31.10$) was more than the average posttest fluency scores of the control group, ($M = 134.24$, $SD = 30.18$).

The pretest versus posttest scores for fluency for the control group did not suggest a significant difference in the mean score after the course of the study. In fact, the mean score decreased from 138.04 to 134.24 after the study. The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. The statistical means of the pretest and posttest fluency scores and the standard deviations of the control group participants are presented in Table 3.

Results of Hypothesis 4. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

Table 4

Posttest Fluency Scores Between the Experimental and Control Group

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Control	134.24	25	30.18	48	0.7883	0.4344
Experimental	140.32	25	24.01			

Note. $p < 0.4344$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

Independent sample *t* tests were used to examine the differences in the mean of the posttest fluency scores between groups, with a confidence interval of $> .95$. The results of the two independent samples *t* test for hypothesis 4 ($t(48)=0.7883$, $p < 0.4344$) indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference in the average posttest fluency scores between the control group and the posttest scores of the experimental group from which the samples came. The average fluency posttest scores of the control group, ($M = 134.24$, $SD = 30.18$) was less than the average posttest fluency scores of the experimental group, ($M = 140.32$, $SD = 24.01$) after the experiment. The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. The statistical means of the posttest fluency scores and the standard deviations of the participants are presented in Table 4.

Results of Hypothesis 5. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

Table 5

Pretest Comprehension Scores From the Experimental Group and the Control Group

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Control	14.44	25	2.16	48	5.7382	0.0001
Experimental	10.56	25	2.60			

Note. $p < .0001$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

Independent sample *t* tests were used to examine the differences in the mean of the pretest comprehension scores between groups, with a confidence interval of a $> .95$. The results of the two independent samples *t* test for hypothesis 5 ($t(48)=5.7382$, $p < .0.0001$) indicate that there is an extremely statistically significant difference in the average pretest comprehension scores between the control group and the pretest comprehension scores of the experimental group from which the samples came. The average comprehension pretest scores of the control group, ($M = 14.44$, $SD = 2.16$) was more than the average pretest comprehension scores of the experimental group, ($M = 10.56$, $SD = 2.60$) before the Reader's Theater intervention.

The pretest for comprehension for the control group and experimental group indicated an extremely significant difference between the groups. This indicated that the control group with a mean score of 14.44 started the study at a higher advantage over the experimental group with a mean score of 10.56. The null hypothesis is rejected. The statistical means of the pretest comprehension scores and the standard deviations of the participants are presented in Table 5.

Results of Hypothesis 6: The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

Table 6

Pretest Versus Posttest Comprehension Scores for Experimental Group

Experimental	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest	10.56	25	2.60	24	4.4594	0.0002
Posttest	12.44	25	2.52			

Note. $p < .0002$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

A paired-samples t test was used to examine the difference in mean from a pretest and posttest of the experimental group, with a confidence interval of $> .95$. The results of the paired samples t test for hypothesis 6 ($t(24) = 4.4594$, $p < 0.0002$) indicate that there is an extremely statistically significant difference in the average pretest comprehension scores between the experimental group and the posttest comprehension scores of the experimental group from which the samples came. The average comprehension pretest scores of the experimental group, ($M = 10.56$, $SD = 2.60$) was less than the average posttest comprehension scores of the experimental group, ($M = 12.44$, $SD = 2.52$) after the Reader's Theater intervention.

The pretest versus posttest scores for comprehension for the experimental group indicated an extremely statistically significant difference in the mean score after the study. The mean score increased from 10.56 to 12.44 after the Reader's Theater intervention. The null hypothesis is rejected. The statistical means of the pretest and posttest comprehension scores and the standard deviations of the experimental group participants are presented in Table 6.

Results of Hypothesis 7. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

Table 7

Pretest Versus Posttest Comprehension Scores for the Control Group

Control	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest	14.44	25	2.16	24	1.1736	0.2521
Posttest	13.76	25	2.39			

Note. $p < .2521$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

Another paired samples t test was used to examine the difference in mean from a pretest and posttest of the control group, with a confidence interval of $> .95$. The results of the paired samples t test for hypothesis 7 ($t(24) = 1.1736$, $p < 0.2521$) indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference in the average pretest comprehension scores between the control group and the posttest comprehension scores of the control group from which the samples came. The average comprehension pretest scores of the control group, ($M = 14.44$, $SD = 2.16$) was more than the average posttest comprehension scores of the control group, ($M = 13.76$, $SD = 2.39$).

The pretest versus posttest scores for comprehension for the control group did not suggest a significant difference in the mean score after the course of the study. The mean score for the control group actually decreased from 14.44 to 13.76 after taking the posttest. Therefore, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. The statistical means of the pretest and posttest comprehension scores and the standard deviations of the control group participants are presented in Table 7.

Results of Hypothesis 8. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

Table 8

Posttest Comprehension Scores Between the Experimental and Control Group

Group	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Control	13.76	25	2.39	48	1.9029	0.0631
Experimental	12.44	25	2.52			

Note. $p < .0631$, $n = 25$ in all cells.

Independent sample *t* tests were used to examine the differences in the mean of the posttest comprehension scores between groups, with a confidence interval of a $> .95$. The results of the two independent samples *t* test for hypothesis 8 ($t(48)=1.9029$, $p < .0631$) indicate that there is not quite a statistically significant difference in the average posttest comprehension scores between the control group and the posttest scores of the experimental group from which the samples came. The average comprehension posttest scores of the control group, ($M = 13.76$, $SD = 2.39$) was slightly more than the average posttest comprehension scores of the experimental group, ($M = 12.44$, $SD = 2.52$) after the experiment. The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis. The statistical means of the posttest comprehension scores and the standard deviations of the participants are presented in Table 8.

This study aimed to evaluate the effects Reader's Theater had on increasing fluency and comprehension. Two research questions were addressed in this study.

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read?

The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean fluency score as measured by WPM was rejected. Table 2 indicates that there is a significant difference in the fluency score as measured by WPM after the Reader's Theater intervention.

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth

grade students?

The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean comprehension score as measured by Easy CBM was rejected. Table 6 indicates an extremely statistically significant difference in the mean comprehension score as measured by Easy CBM after the Reader's Theater intervention.

Chapter 4 Summary

In this chapter, the study's sample was described, the results were summarized, and a detailed analysis of each research question was discussed. The results included tables illustrating the findings for both groups in comprehension and fluency levels. The validity of the study was discussed. The study implemented Reader's Theater practices within the experimental group at the same time every day for 30 minutes after normal comprehension strategies while the control group had additional comprehension strategies. The same teacher taught both groups of participants with fidelity. Statistical analyses were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of Reader's theater to increase reading fluency and comprehension using a comparison of pretest and posttest scores within each group of students. Statistical analyses were also used to measure growth within both the experimental and control group after the study. Tables were included in the chapter.

A measurement of the posttest scores between the experimental and control group showed the growth of fluency overall to not be statistically significant. Although the experimental group grew in fluency within the group, when compared to the control group, the growth was considered insignificant. The mean score of comprehension between the control group and the experimental group indicated a not quite significant difference after the study. The

control group still had a higher score of 13.76 versus the experimental group mean of 12.44, but the difference is slightly less than the mean score of the pretest data.

In Chapter 5, the results will be discussed further with relevance to current and future research. Discussion of previous and current research in relation to the literature will be analyzed. Limitations of the study, implications for this study in practice, and recommendations for further research with Reader's Theater will be discussed. Finally, the conclusion of the study will summarize the relevancy and significance of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

Although reading fluency has been identified as a foundational reading competency in the United States by the Common Core State Standards, an expanding body of research has shown that many students in the upper elementary, middle, and secondary grades have not achieved adequate levels of fluency in their reading and thus experience difficulty in other areas of reading, including comprehension (Rasinski, 2014). The problem that guided this study was the struggle that students have to remain reading at grade level because there is less emphasis on fluency in the secondary years than comprehension because the focus changes to mastering standards rather than skills (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Rasinski & Young, 2017). Fluency is an important part of vocabulary development and reading comprehension but is often overlooked, especially when students move to middle school (Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018). Past and recent research specifies that fluency is still an important element in reading education and therefore should be part of any complete and productive reading curriculum (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004).

While there have been studies involving Reader's Theater in primary grades, a study of the effectiveness of Reader's Theater was needed at the secondary level because students who continue to struggle in middle school will increase their restraints as they continue through their school years (Rasinski et al., 2016). Reader's Theater allows students to read faster, have a better attitude towards a reading task, and comprehend meaning and author's purpose. This study aimed to help provide additional and less expensive resources in response to the need for a more comprehensive reading model at the secondary level.

This study was intended to evaluate the impact of Reader's Theater on improving fluency words read per minute and comprehension. Reader's Theater has been researched in the past and shown to have the potential to improve reading fluency and comprehension development of students (Mraz et al., 2013). This study further supports the significance of implementing Reader's Theater in middle school classrooms. Reader's Theater offered opportunities for building fluency and met the standards for speaking and listening such as appropriate volume, pronunciation, and pacing speech.

The findings have demonstrated that the students in the Reader's Theater experimental group had significant growth in both fluency and comprehension after the study. When compared to the control group, the mean scores in both fluency and comprehension after the study were not significantly different. However, there was actual growth within the experimental group based on posttest scores in fluency and comprehension while the control group decreased their mean scores slightly.

In the current chapter, a summary of the results will be discussed as well as the methodology used within the study. A discussion of the results will be used to analyze the impact of Reader's Theater on fluency and comprehension within a control group and experimental group. The results in relation to the literature and implications for practice will be analyzed based on this study. Finally, recommendations for further research will be suggested, specifically related to the limitations within this study.

Summary of the Results

Reading fluency and comprehension continue to be a struggle for secondary students (Rasinski et al., 2017; Young et al., 2017). Reading fluency is an essential component of reading. Without fluency, the meaning of the text is lost, thereby lowering levels of comprehension.

Teachers need to implement the most effective and engaging strategies to improve fluency. This is especially important at the middle school level because students often lose the motivation to learn by that age. Reader's Theater has been known to improve fluency, student engagement, and the classroom climate. The results of this study may enhance the learning and teaching of middle grades Reading Language Arts students through effective intervention and extension strategies that regularly teach fluency and comprehension. This study could also prove the effectiveness of using Reader's Theater as a part of a balanced literacy program for the entire year. Evaluating the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension in secondary students was the objective of this study. In response to this objective, two research questions were addressed. The following research questions and hypotheses were designed to achieve this purpose:

RQ1. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the fluency scores in eighth grade students, as measured by WPM read?

H₀₁. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H_{A1}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group.

H₀₂. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A2}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group.

H₀₃. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A3}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{O4}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

H_{A4}. The mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM fluency posttest of the control group.

RQ2. Is Reader's Theater effective in increasing the comprehension scores in eighth grade students?

H_{O5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{A5}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group.

H_{O6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{A6}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group.

H_{O7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A7}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension pretest of the control group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H₀₈. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

H_{A8}. The mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the experimental group is not equal to mean score on the Easy CBM comprehension posttest of the control group.

This study was grounded in the research of Vygotsky's theory of proximal development and scaffolding and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences stated that all students possess nine intelligences, but he claimed that every student differs in the strength of these intelligences (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). Currently, the education system relies heavily on linguistic learning and assessment. This is profoundly unrealistic to students with strengths in other modes of learning such as kinesthetic, musical, spatial, logical-mathematical, etc. According to Gardner and Vygotsky, one way for students to master a new concept is to play with it or simulate it, which meets many modes of learning styles. Yet, this effective instructional tool is often forgotten in older grades.

Students have a better chance of comprehending new learning if it is experienced rather than told (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). Through Reader's Theater, children can place themselves in the characters of the role they are assuming and become intentional about their actions and movements, thus exhibiting what Vygotsky (1978) defined as "higher mental functions" such as establishing author's purpose and meaning. Reader's Theater allows for students to play with new concepts through simulation and role-playing while improving their fluency and comprehension skills. Reader's Theater is a way to use many multiple intelligences together and a way to improve overall education (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014).

Past research has been conducted on the effectiveness of Reader's Theater on primary grade levels, specifically regarding increasing fluency (Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009; Young & Rasinski, 2018). These studies concluded that Reader's Theater has a positive impact on multiple facets of reading fluency with an added benefit of increasing student motivation (Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009; Young & Rasinski, 2018). Young and Rasinski (2018) further reiterated that between a control group and an experimental group, the experimental group made greater progress with increasing fluency, as measured by words read per minute, than the control group.

Fluency Results

RQ1 questioned if there was a significant difference in fluency between Reader's Theater students and a control group after a Reader's Theater intervention, as determined by WPM, in eighth grade students. In this study, students who received the Reader's Theater intervention did not improve significantly from the control group after a pretest to posttest analysis as measured by WPM, with a difference of a mean score of 138.04 to a mean score of 133.32 and a p value of $<.58$. This indicates there was not a statistically significant difference in the average pretest fluency scores between the control group and the experimental group participants from which the samples came.

However, after analyzing the results from a paired samples t test, there is a statistically significant difference in the average pretest fluency scores between the experimental group and the posttest scores of the experimental group from which the samples came. The pretest versus posttest scores for fluency for the experimental group indicated a statistically significant difference in the mean score after the study. The mean score increased from 133.32 to 140.32 with a p value of $<.0138$, indicating that Reader's Theater was effective in increasing fluency

scores over the course of a 6- week intervention. While the difference in fluency among the control group versus the experimental group was not significant, the difference from pretest to posttest within the experimental group is significant enough to deem Reader's Theater effective in increasing reading fluency as measured by WPM read in eighth-grade students.

Although the difference in mean scores between the control group and the experimental group were notably different, the achievements within the experimental group are even more notable. Out of 25 student participants, 17 showed at least some increase in fluency after the intervention. The lowest increase of words read per minute was five additional words after the Reader's Theater intervention. The largest increase from pretest to posttest was an additional 29 words read correctly per minute. Also, many of the errors observed during the pretest were completely absent during the posttest. Overall, students were more confident in their reading ability, and it showed through expression, which was unmeasured and automaticity. Words that the majority of students struggled to pronounce and read incorrectly were read with ease and accurately during the posttest. Perhaps most significantly, students appeared to be less apprehensive and more enthusiastic to read during the posttest as opposed to the reluctance and whispering observed during the pretest.

Comprehension Results

RQ2 questioned if there was a significant difference in comprehension between Reader's Theater students and a control group after a Reader's Theater interventions, as determined by Easy CBM measures in eighth grade students. In this study, students who received the Reader's Theater intervention indicated that there is an extremely statistically significant difference in the average pretest comprehension scores between the control group and the pretest comprehension scores of the experimental group from which the samples came. This difference is indicated by

the control group's mean pretest comprehension score of 14.44 versus the experimental group's mean pretest score of 10.56 with a p value of $<.0.0002$. The average comprehension pretest scores of the control group, ($M = 14.44$, $SD = 2.16$) was more than the average pretest comprehension scores of the experimental group, ($M = 10.56$, $SD = 2.60$) before the Reader's Theater intervention. This result indicates that Reader's Theater is effective with increasing comprehension scores within eighth grade students.

Not only was there a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group, but there was also a significant increase between the pretest and posttest of the experimental group as measured by the Easy CBM comprehension test. This difference was shown by the increase of the mean score from 10.56 to the mean score of 12.44 with a p value of $<.0.0002$, indicating the use of Reader's Theater significantly increases students' mean comprehension score. Out of 25 student participants, 19 students showed increases in comprehension percentages. The smallest increase noted was a 5 % increase from pretest to posttest. The largest percentage increase was 25%. This is extremely significant within the 6-week timeframe of the study. This further suggests the benefits of Reader's Theater as a means to increase comprehension scores among eighth grade students. The improvements within the experimental group could be attributed to the enjoyment of the performance aspect and the fun each student had in the cooperative learning environment.

Evaluation of the results. Evaluating the impact of Reader's Theater in improving fluency and comprehension, as determined by two Easy CBM tests, in secondary students was the objective of this study. A quantitative quasi-experimental was conducted using a nonequivalent group design which included the collection of pretest and posttest data for both an experimental group and a control group. Fluency was measured by the number of words read

correctly within one minute, or oral reading fluency as measured by Easy CBM. Comprehension was measured by reading a passage and answering 20 multiple choice questions as measured by Easy CBM. Because assessment drives both instruction and intervention methods, it was necessary to provide data to support any proposed resource. This study may provide the data needed to drive the change needed in the middle school curriculum.

The target population from which this study sample was drawn consisted of readers on all reading levels in one middle school located in Middle Tennessee. The experimental sample consisted of 25 students in eighth grade with reading levels ranging from sixth grade to grade-level. The control group consisted of 25 eighth grade students with reading levels ranging from sixth grade to grade-level. Participants included a wide variety of cultures, language variations, and socioeconomic factors. Since the students who were examined in this study were included because of their availability within already formed classes, the non-random sample can be considered a convenience sample of naturally formed groups (Creswell, 2014).

The participants were broken up into two groups: a control group that did not receive the Reader's Theater intervention and the experimental group that received 30 minutes of the intervention. One class served as the control group in which students were pretested, taught using the approved literature curriculum, and post-tested at the end of the intervention. Both classes studied six short stories over a six-week period using approved literature comprehension methods, but the experimental group used Reader's Theater as a fluency extension activity for 30 minutes while the control group completed additional comprehension tasks. The control group used traditional comprehension methods to study each short study such as graphic organizers and note-taking with no fluency practice. The experimental group, on the other hand, read the short

story and performed an adapted Reader's Theater version of the short story throughout the week, and completed various RT tasks as designed by Rasinski et al. (2017).

A grade-level fluency passage generated from Easy CBM was used to analyze the fluency data and compare the differences in fluency in both the treatment group and the control group as a pretest and posttest. A pretest and posttest grade-level comprehension passage generated by Easy CBM consisted of reading a passage and answering 20 multiple choice questions within a 90-minute time limit. Students were given a percentage score based on the number of questions correct, and Easy CBM analyzes their rate of improvement from previous tests. The quantitative data were collected from the fluency pretest and posttest as well as a comprehension pretest and posttest. Both groups were similar in both fluency and comprehension as determined by a pretest before the intervention. After the intervention, a posttest was given to analyze the effect of Reader's Theater on both fluency and comprehension.

Statistical analysis was used to examine the differences in fluency and comprehension within the intervention group as well as the differences within growth among the control group and intervention group. The data on the two dependent variables, fluency and comprehension, was collected as a pretest and posttest from two groups of students. An independent *t* test was used to examine the difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of fluency as well as comprehension, at the beginning of the research. A paired-sample *t* test was also conducted to compare the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of an Easy CBM test in both comprehension and fluency for both the control group and experimental group in order to find out whether Reader's Theater is helpful with increasing fluency and comprehension in middle school students or not. An independent samples *t* test was performed in order to compare the

post-test mean scores of two groups (control and experimental groups) to investigate whether there was a significant difference between these groups regarding the type of treatment.

This current study was used to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Reader's Theater on fluency and comprehension gains within a secondary classroom. While this was not the first Reader's Theater study within a secondary classroom, the Keehn et al. (2008) study focused on fluency and vocabulary with a much smaller experimental and control group. This study analyzed not only the growth among each group individually based on pretest and posttest scores on fluency and comprehension but also the difference in growth between the groups. The analysis of data was organized based on the study's research questions, with results summarized by research questions and hypotheses directly related to those questions.

Discussion of the Results

The results of this study were consistent with the research findings as discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory and Gardner's theory both support the use of Reader's Theater within a classroom. Reader's Theater applies to Vygotsky's theory of proximal development in the application of play through role-playing and acting in order to create new understandings from a text (Richardson, 2016; Vygotsky, 2013). Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences is utilized through Reader's Theater by accessing the areas of bodily-kinesthetic when students perform a writing piece, interpersonal when students edit scripts, intrapersonal when students reflect on the written piece, linguistic when students can complete oral discussions about the text, and musical intelligences when students create Reader's Theater with writing (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). Therefore, Reader's Theater adheres to both Vygotsky's theory and Gardner's theory because it meets the

criteria of play and scaffolding as well as meeting the needs of many types of learners (Gardner, 1983; Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014; Robinson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978, 2013).

Reader's Theater has been perceived as a positive influence on students' academic achievement in general. Its effects have been reported to be significant in the advancement of both fluency and comprehension in previous studies. Based on the results of this study, the use of Reader's Theater in the classroom continues to achieve positive outcomes. Because the most significant gap in Reader's Theater studies was the effect of using it at the secondary grade level, a more recent study to analyze the benefits of the intervention in middle school students was needed. Specifically, this study was conducted within a public school with low-achieving reading scores in a low-income community because students who continue to struggle in middle school often increase their impediments as they continue through their school years (Rasinski et al., 2016).

RQ1 questioned if there was a significant difference in fluency between Reader's Theater students and a control group after a Reader's Theater intervention, as determined by WPM, in eighth grade students. The results indicated that Reader's Theater had a significant impact on fluency as measured by pretest and posttest data within the experimental group. This shows that the increase of fluency scores, from 133.32 to 140.32, could be directly related to the intervention as measured by the lack of gains within the control group. The significant increase of reading fluency within the experimental group suggests that the use of Reader's Theater as an extension activity or as an intervention could be beneficial for students involved. The current study analyzed data from a rural small middle school with a high poverty and diversity level. Reader's Theater should be used as a tool in all middle schools that need additional support in fluency instruction.

RQ2 questioned if there was a significant difference in comprehension between Reader's Theater students and a control group after a Reader's Theater interventions, as determined by Easy CBM measures in eighth grade students. The difference in comprehension gains was extremely significant between pretest and posttest scores within the experimental group, from 52.80 to 62.20. This shows that Reader's Theater is effective in increasing comprehension levels within one group of students. Based on the findings within this study, Reader's Theater could be a significant tool in increasing comprehension levels within more than one school district.

Because there was a significant difference between pretest comprehension scores among the control and experimental group, it is difficult to determine if the Reader's Theater group gained more than the control group. However, the significant increase among the experimental group in both fluency and comprehension does suggest the benefit and effectiveness of Reader's Theater as an intervention technique to increase both areas. Future researchers may want to group a control group and an experimental group within a more equal level to more definitively define the effectiveness of Reader's Theater on the growth in comprehension.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The results of the current study are consistent with past research completed at the elementary level, indicating that Reader's Theater could be an alternative intervention used at the secondary level to help bridge the gaps among students. The results also further implicate the need for improvement within reading interventions that best meet the needs for both fluency and comprehension improvement (Mraz et al., 2013; Lin, 2015; Rasinski et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018). Due to the lack of fluency instruction at the middle school level, two-thirds of 8th-graders fail to read proficiently at grade level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Reader's Theater is a less expensive way to implement both fluency and comprehension

strategies into one effective means that demonstrates the rigor required of secondary education. Past studies have found that the implementation of Reader's Theater had a positive impact on fluency and comprehension at the elementary level (Young & Rasinski, 2009; Young et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018). All of these studies evaluated the effectiveness of Reader's Theater in elementary schools. The focus of all the elementary studies was to evaluate the improvement in fluency aspects rather than comprehension. The studies concluded that there was a significant difference in fluency levels after Reader's Theater with an unintended consequence of increasing comprehension levels as well as motivation (Young & Rasinski, 2009; Young et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2018).

An important part of this study was evaluating the benefits of Reader's Theater as a means to cohesively increase comprehension and fluency. Not only did this study help to integrate a motivating way to teach students to read more fluently with better comprehension but it also opens doors for further research into the different ways it can be used to increase other means of learning. For instance, writing Reader's Theater scripts with students help encourage language and literacy development while establishing critical thinking and engagement, further increasing comprehension and skills needed for future careers (Claudia, 2018).

Young and Rasinski's (2009) study used second-grade students to determine if Reader's theater was an effective way to increase reading with expression and meaning as well as for speed. Because of the way students are tested for fluency proficiency, students have begun reading for speed (Young & Rasinski, 2009). This means that there is very little thought given to reading with a purposeful expression which takes away from the main purpose of reading, which is reading to find meaning. (Young & Rasinski, 2009). When the meaning is lost because of speed, students lose the purpose for reading and cannot comprehend the text (Young & Rasinski,

2009). Young and Rasinski (2009) used their study to produce the results needed to prove that expression and meaning go hand in hand with fluency proficiency. Their study not only demonstrated significant progress throughout the school year but also post-tests showed gains in word recognition and accuracy, rate and automaticity, and prosody (Young & Rasinski, 2009). However, the studies conducted by Young and Rasinski in 2009 and 2018 had the limitation of being confined to second-grade students and with no emphasis on secondary students and comprehension.

Past studies in middle school suggest there is still a concerning number of secondary students who are unable to read analytically and execute higher-level cognitive assignments (Keehn et al., 2008). Because of the lack of fluency instruction in middle grades, students have developed negative attitudes towards reading (Keehn et al., 2008). Keehn et al. (2008) conducted a study with 36 eighth grade students over a 6-week period to examine the effects of Reader's Theater on multiple aspects of reading such as vocabulary, fluency, motivation, and comprehension. The results of the current study are also consistent with the findings of increasing fluency rate and fluency aspects like fluidity and expression found in the Keehn et al. (2008) study with eighth-grade students. However, Keehn et al. (2008) did not find any statistically significant difference in comprehension between the control group and the experimental group.

The current study was like the Keehn et al. (2008) study, but different in many ways. The Keehn et al. (2008) study included only students reading below reading levels and analyzed data using both quantitative and qualitative measures while the current study included students reading at all reading levels and only used quantitative data analysis. The current study used significantly more class time for implementation of Reader's Theater, with eighth-grade level

prewritten scripts, while Keehn et al. (2008) used texts ranging from fifth grade to seventh grade that were created by the teachers. Keehn et al. (2008) analyzed multiple facets of increases including vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and motivation while the current study specialized in analyzing the results of fluency as measured by words read per minute and comprehension. Because the current study was simple and direct, the results could be considered more valid to the effect of Reader's Theater on eighth grade students' fluency and comprehension. It allows for more direct answers to the research questions while the Keehn et al. (2008) study could be open to interpretation.

Reader's Theater may work well to increase both fluency and comprehension because it uses the repeated reading strategy that has been shown to be effective in improving reading (Rasinski, 2014). Repeated reading has been shown to be effective with both older students and elementary students. Reading the same passage over and over can significantly increase reading rate and accuracy, comprehension, and the benefits are carried over to other texts (Mraz et al., 2013). Reader's Theater integrates repeated reading and assisted reading practices into one specific method by providing students a script to practice with teacher coaching, with the goal of performance after a set amount of time.

Reader's Theater is not a new practice in the educational environment and has been researched in the past, specifically in the primary grades. Research reports the positive impact of Reader's Theater in the primary grades to increase fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Young and Rasinski, 2009; Young and Rasinski, 2018; Young et al., 2016). Reader's Theater allows for the repeated readings strategy with the added benefit of teacher guidance and feedback. Students show the ability to transfer the competency of fluid reading skills learned through practiced Reader's Theater to new texts.

The majority of research on the topic of Reader's Theater reported a positive correlation between Reader's Theater, fluency, and comprehension (Parenti & Chen, 2015; Rasinski, 2014; Young et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018). Past research has seen increases in fluency in all five measures and comprehension in the majority of students involved. Past Reader's Theater studies further emphasized the direct correlation between fluency and comprehension. The research determined that comprehension is lost or decreased without measures of fluency instruction (Parenti & Chen, 2015; Rasinski, 2014; Young et al., 2016; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018). The current study implemented testing for fluency as well as comprehension, without negative effects.

All of these studies correspond with the results obtained in the current study. The results of this current study suggest the importance of implementing new and improved methods of increasing reading fluency and comprehension to bridge the gaps within middle school students. The current study suggests empirical evidence that Reader's Theater improved fluency and comprehension among students at the secondary level.

Limitations

The current study was limited in a few ways. Limitations within this study resulted from several factors, including the research design, instrumentation, sampling methodology, and teacher bias. First, the study used a convenience nonrandom sampling of students who were predetermined at the research site. While this sampling is common, this limits the external validity of the study. If the study consisted of a random sampling that was not predetermined, the results could be interpreted as more valid because it would be considered a true experiment. Because the groups were nonequivalent, there could be different rates of improvement not necessarily linked to Reader's Theater. The different rates of improvement could be attributed to

outside factors such as natural academic growth. By choosing an equivalent group of students in future research, the study would reduce this limitation by proving that each group started at the exact same level.

Second, the study was limited based on the length of the overall time of 6 weeks and within the daily curriculum. The amount of time spent using Reader's Theater was 30 minutes per day chunked from 1.5 hour class period. Using the intervention for a longer amount of time within a class period could potentially increase scores more. A longer amount of time for the study and for a longer portion of class time could help eliminate these limitations.

Third, another limitation includes the use of only one test to measure the pretest and posttest data. This study used the Easy CBM test for both the pretest and posttest of fluency and comprehension. Students were measured using four separate tests to compare the rate of improvement for fluency and comprehension. This study and future studies could benefit from having another test to analyze results further.

Finally, this study had the potential for bias because the teacher was the administrator of both the experimental and control groups and the tests given. This particular limitation was managed by the administrator following a strict lesson plan for both the control group and the experimental group. There were no deviations from the original plan. The only difference in instruction between groups was the allotted Reader's Theater strategies time of 30 minutes per class period while the control group completed additional comprehension activities.

Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

This study was attributed to specific practice methods, policies, and theories. The practice methods include reading intervention practices, and the policies implicated are based on

Response to Intervention (RTI) used within the context of the study and school district. The implications from the results of the study are discussed in the following section.

Practice

Reading interventions and methods to improve reading abilities within all students were motivated by the rapid decrease of reading proficiency throughout the years. Two-thirds of eighth grade students fail to read proficiently at grade level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In response to these overwhelming statistics, administrators and educators worked to develop strategies to bridge gaps and prevent future deficiencies. Reader's Theater is a research-based intervention that incorporates the effectiveness of repeated readings and assisted readings into one motivating method (Clementi, 2010). The objective of Reader's Theater is to provide students with a script to practice multiple times using different reading techniques such as silent readings, paired readings, and group readings, allowing students to develop their oral reading fluency which will progress into a greater emphasis on expression and comprehension (Clementi, 2010). Reader's Theater is important for the development of comprehension and fluency within an eighth-grade classroom, especially in a low-income urban school with a high level of diversity.

Reading fluency and comprehension are both essential parts of any academics within any grade level. Students struggle to remain at grade-level, partly because of the significant emphasis placed on fluency in the primary grades with very little emphasis in the secondary grades (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). The focus in secondary grades is mastering standards, which leaves no time to encompass all of the parts that make up comprehension which includes fluency, automaticity, and word recognition (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). The findings within this study offer all reading teachers a practical way to not only engage students in learning to read but also

to increase student fluency and comprehension within a structured program through the use of Reader's Theater in all eighth grade Reading Language Arts classrooms. Based on the findings of this study, Reader's Theater is practical in increasing both fluency and comprehension to students who participated in the experimental group. This increase was indicated through the increase of the mean score in fluency from 133.32 to a mean score of 140.32 as well as an increase of the mean score in comprehension from 52.80 to a mean score of 62.20. The practice of Reader's Theater is not limited to reading teachers. Other content teachers can use scripts to help students comprehend difficult topics as well as a differentiated way to teach writing.

Reader's Theater incorporates the effectiveness of repeated readings and assisted readings into one motivating method. Reader's Theater aims to provide students with a script to practice multiple times using different reading techniques such as silent readings, paired readings, and group readings. The findings of this study offer another way for reading comprehension and fluency to be taught within specific intervention classes. Reading coaches can offer new instructional materials integrating Reader's Theater concepts to intervention teachers. This would allow a more scripted reading program but still allow for some teacher content choice.

Policy

Response to Intervention (RTI) is implemented after students have exhibited gaps in the skills needed for effective Tier 1 instruction. RTI refers to the Tier 2 instruction that allows each student additional time receiving the instruction needed to bridge gaps either in fluency or comprehension. Students are only referred to an RTI class after results from the Easy CBM test have placed them below the 25% level within a given skill. The students who fall under the 10% range of grade-level are placed in a fluency intervention program (Easy CBM Norms, 2013).

Students who fall between 11% to 25% are placed in an aggressive comprehension intervention (Easy CBM Norms, 2013). Finally, students landing in the 26% to 50% range are placed in a higher-level comprehension program while those above 50% are considered non-risk for reading deficiencies, as determined by Easy CBM norms (2013).

Theory

Vygotsky's theory of proximal development promotes learning through play and that play students of all ages can learn how to increase their abilities and discover how to react when faced with a variety of rule structures (Vygotsky, 2013). Vygotsky (1978) also stated the importance of scaffolding in order for students to apply new skills at a higher level. As students build their understandings, they enlarge their frames of reference and ultimately become better learners (Robinson, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978, 2013). Not only can students learn at a higher level when a skill is modeled by a teacher, but they can also further embrace new skills when interacting and learning from their peers (Vygotsky, 1978). The current research originates from the connection between Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding and play and Reader's Theater. This study was an attempt to use play and scaffolding through Reader's Theater as a way to improve fluency and comprehension levels of development. The results from the current study suggest the use of Reader's Theater as an intervention and extension activity could increase the rigor within the classroom while bridging skills-based gaps. Reader's Theater could potentially limit the number of students needing a Response to Intervention class by giving students extra practice in fluency to not only increase their fluency rate but also their comprehension levels.

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences suggests that all students exhibit some form of the nine different intelligences, with a stronger emphasis on specific types. The best way for adolescents to grasp and retain new skills and concepts is to teach in a way that corresponds

to multiple intelligences. Reader's Theater integrates multiple intelligences including bodily-kinesthetic when students perform a writing piece, interpersonal when students edit scripts, intrapersonal when students reflect on the written piece, linguistic when students can complete oral discussions about the text, and musical intelligences when students create Reader's Theater with writing (Lunenburg & Lunenburg, 2014). Thus, this study served as further evidence that meeting the different types of learning styles could improve students' ability to improve and learn.

Recommendations for Further Research

Reading strategies and interventions are essential within school districts, especially those with struggling demographics and readers. However, it is more important to have effective strategies and programs being administered. Because of the need for interventions to be research-based with empirical evidence, resources are often limited. This limitation applies specifically to programs that address more than one deficit at a time. Future researchers who expand on the current study could elaborate on several features to make the study more empirically sound.

For example, it was noted that one limitation within this study was the convenience nonrandom sampling of students who were nonequivalent. The classes involved in this study were not significantly different at the beginning of the study, but there were some differences observed based on the raw data. Future researchers could randomly assign students which would bring about a more experimental study that would include more validity. This could be implemented using classes that are more evenly distributed based on the level of abilities.

Another limitation noted was the teacher who administered the intervention. Future researchers could use multiple teachers to implement the intervention to eliminate any teacher bias among a larger scale of participants. This could be accomplished by using other schools

within the district. A study could be implemented using the same testing strategy with a control group and experimental group, but Reader's Theater could be used in one classroom in each middle school within the school district. This would create a more concrete conclusion on the effectiveness of Reader's Theater in increasing fluency and comprehension at the middle school level.

A study over a longer length of time than the 6 weeks allotted for this study could be beneficial. Future researchers could track changes in reading fluency and comprehension over an extended period. For example, students could participate in a Reader's Theater intervention for the entire school year, with progress monitoring data used to examine the effectiveness of the intervention throughout the school year compared to the data from a control group. The largest problem was the lack of time within the class period. While this study allotted 90 minutes of class time, the 30 minutes of Reader's Theater activities could have been longer for more effectiveness. The time for Reader's Theater activities felt rushed and often unfinished when the class period ended.

The current study was a 6-week quantitative study that analyzed the results based on numerical data. Qualitative data were unnecessary in this study because there was little need for interviews and observations which may contain subjective data and researcher bias (Creswell, 2014). Future research, however, could implement qualitative data in the form of interviews and observations for a more well-rounded analysis of the effect of Reader's Theater. Qualitative data could include the effects of Reader's Theater on student motivation as well as the effect of Reader's Theater on teacher motivation.

Conclusion

Research into effective ways to increase fluency and comprehension cohesively is limited. More research is needed to find reliable interventions that utilize strategies to increase both at the same time. This study was a contribution to that research. In one middle school located in Middle Tennessee, students were recruited to participate in a control group and experimental group to evaluate the effectiveness of Reader's Theater as an intervention to increase both fluency and comprehension in secondary students. Data were collected by pretest fluency and pretest comprehension and posttest fluency and comprehension from both groups at the end of the study. The goal of the study was met.

The limitations in the study restrict absolute certainty among the finding of the study. However, the results of the study are consistent with past studies in that Reader's Theater significantly increases fluency among secondary students. Also, Reader's Theater significantly increases comprehension among secondary students. Concerning the ever-changing reading standards and increase of students reading below grade-level, this study aimed to provide an effective reading solution to combat the reading proficiency problem. My hope for this study is that the results will allow the use of Reader's Theater as a tool to provide fluency and comprehension instruction that will increase reading levels on any standardized test as well as a way to motivate students to love to read once again.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

Research Study Title: Reader's Theater: A Quasi-Experimental Study for Secondary Students

Principal Investigator: Angela Kennedy

Faculty Advisor: Audrey Rabas

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Reader's Theater on reading fluency and comprehension. We expect approximately 50 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on August 12, 2019 and end enrollment on August 30, 2019. To be in the study, one class will participate in Reader's Theater in addition to the standard curriculum while the other class will only be using the standard curriculum. You will be given a pretest on fluency and comprehension at the beginning of the study and a posttest at the end of the study, regardless of whether you are participating in Reader's Theater. Doing these things should take less than 30 minutes of your time.

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a filing cabinet. Additionally, excel files, notes, and any other electronic documents will be stored on a password protected jump drive. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will only use a secret code to analyze the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private always and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

Benefits:

Information you provide will help with identifying curriculum and interventions to help increase fluency and comprehension in middle schools. You could benefit this by increasing your own fluency and comprehension as well as reading levels.

Confidentiality:

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

Contact Information:

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board.

Your Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

Participant Name

Date

Participant Signature

Date

Investigator Name

Date

Investigator Signature

Date



Appendix B: Parent Letter with Consent

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing because I will be conducting a short study which I hope increases reading fluency and comprehension in your child. The reason I am doing this is to determine if Reader's Theater is an effective way to increase fluency and comprehension in middle school students. I am working in this study, as the lead investigator, as my graduate level research with Concordia University–Portland, with Professor Audrey Rabas as my faculty advisor.

Your child will participate in Reader's Theater that coincides with a short story already integrated in the curriculum. This will be done during reading instruction time in school. Your child will not miss instructional class time. If your child does not want to this, or you do not want your child to do this, then your child can do extra comprehension questions as an alternative in this time. This activity will take approximately 30 minutes.

Your child does not have to do this. It is optional. There will be no penalty for not participating. In the same way, there is no advantage or favoritism for your child participating. If your child wants to stop participating, he/she can stop even if this is in the middle of the activity.

The activity for this study is scheduled for the middle of August until the beginning of September. We expect 50 students to participate.

The results will be collected in a way that protects the student's identity. The name and other identifying characteristics of your child will not be stored with the answers/observations specific to you or your child. To do this, we will give your child a code that only I will know. The code, and not the name or other identifying characteristic, will be stored with this private information. Reports will be made in group aggregate form; such as, the average and general group findings, with no individual identifying information linked to the information. The information will be stored in password protected computer while using file encryption to keep the data secure. The paper documents, such as this form, will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Three years after the study is completed, the study documents will all be deleted and destroyed.

The results of the study could benefit children and the school systems by offering an additional intervention or extension activity that improves reading fluency and comprehension.

We will ask your child if they want to participate. For us to ask your child, we need your permission, or consent.

Please read the parental consent form on the next page. If you agree, please fill out the form below and return this page before August 9, 2019.

Parent Consent

*As the parent or guardian of the child _____,
I consent.*

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

If you have any questions or concerns, you can call me.

I have also attached a second copy of this page for you to keep for your records. This study was approved by the Concordia University–Portland IRB.

Sincerely,

Angela Kennedy

Research Study Title: Reader’s Theater: A Quasi-Experimental Study for Secondary Students

Principal Investigator: Angela Kennedy

Research Institution: Concordia University–Portland

Faculty Advisor: Audrey Rabas

Appendix C: Child Assent Form

Dear Student,

I am doing a research study about how Reader's Theater helps reading fluency and comprehension. If you decide you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in Reader's Theater practice with me. The practice will be conducted at school during your reading instruction time.

There are some things you should know about this study. Your name will not be revealed in the study, but I will be using your Easy CBM scores before and after the study, as an average. This will not identify you in any way.

When I am finished with this study, I will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or that you were in the study. The information will be published in the hopes that the research will help teachers and schools do a better job understanding the academic needs and desires of all students. It may even help our school do a better job in the future of educating students like you.

You do not have to participate in this study and not participating will not affect your grade, your relationship with me as your teacher, or anything else about what you do at school. If you decide to stop after we begin, that is okay, too.

Sign this page, if you assent:

Name of Student: _____

Signature of Student: _____

Date: _____

Name of Investigator: Angela Kennedy

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Fluency Pretest

Student Copy Form 8-Fall

Sara could hardly believe her good fortune. After years of begging her parents to allow her to go horseback riding, it appeared as though her dream was about to come true. Her mom had told her the night before that for her eighth-grade graduation present they were going to send her to a riding academy for a full week in the summer. Since school would be ending in just two months, she had no time to waste, so she'd gotten up early to give herself time to go to the library and check out a few books on learning how to ride. She found many different titles on the shelf but finally settled for one with a lot of photographs and really clear explanations. As she tucked it into her backpack and hurried to class, Sara vowed to herself that she would study the book nightly.

A few months later, watching the taillights of her parents' car disappear down the long winding driveway of the riding academy, Sara sure hoped all her hard work had paid off. She desperately did not want to waste a moment of her time at the riding school. She was hoping she could move quickly from the absolute beginner class into a group of people with a bit more experience. Her personal goal was to be comfortable guiding the horse independently by the end of the week.

Day after day, Sara soaked up all the knowledge she could. She learned to groom the horses and clean their stalls. Her instructor taught her how to clean the saddle and bridle she used when riding. And, during her daily rides, she quickly moved from basic commands at the walk to more advanced independent work. By the time her parents came to pick her up, Sara had earned the respect of everyone at the academy.

Appendix E: Fluency Posttest

Student Copy Form 8-Winter

Newspaper reporters, Janis reminded herself, must be willing to endure discomfort when they were on a hot lead. They had to be determined not to give up, even when getting information for a story proved to be challenging. Of course, most reporters were older than thirteen, but she figured that didn't mean that she shouldn't try to live up to expectations. At the moment, Janis was investigating a story involving members of the rival middle school's soccer team. She had heard a rumor that they had come up with a way to cheat in the final game of the year. She was sure she could find out more if only she persisted.

She had started her investigation three days earlier, when she'd first caught wind of the speculation about the upcoming game. She had been in the cafeteria when she'd heard some girls talking about it. One of them had a cousin who attended the other school. The cousin had given the plans away when she was talking on her cell phone during a family visit. Janis had tried asking the girls more about the situation, but her questions hadn't brought any answers, so she'd decided to lurk around the other school to see if she could pick up any more rumblings.

Suddenly, good luck came her way. As she was leaning up against the gym at the other school waiting for the soccer players to come out, she overheard two girls talking to the coach. They discussed the plan to win the championship game by putting small pebbles in their opponents' shoes. According to the coach, the rocks wouldn't be big enough to notice at first, but they would cause enough irritation during the game that the players wouldn't be able to concentrate. Janis ran home to prepare the story for publication.

Appendix F: Comprehension Pretest

Seaside Terror

The memories and stresses of seventh grade receded into Joellie's mind as her family's truck hurtled down the winding two-lane highway to the coast. She loved her family's annual summer camping trip, and as they passed the sign inscribed with "Ocean Beaches-15 miles ahead," she knew they were almost at their traditional campground. Her mind raced with the prospect of seeing her cousins, aunt, and uncle, eating delicious barbeque and s' mores, and lazily combing the beach while soaking up the sun.

Joellie's thoughts were interrupted as her family's truck emerged from out of the trees, and they got their first glimpse of the ocean. The sky was completely clear, and from their vantage point on the road, the sea looked as though an azure- colored jewel had been flattened and spread all the way to the horizon. "You two have been awfully quiet back there," said Joellie's mom as she poked her head around the passenger seat.

"Mom, do you think we could get in some mountain hiking this vacation?" asked Tara, Joellie's identical twin. "We could stay in a cabin for a while, couldn't we?" Once again, the twins' minds seemed to be on opposite wavelengths. Like her family, except for Tara, Joellie loved ocean-side camping in tents; Tara preferred the idea of staying in a cabin in the mountains with clear blue lakes, hiking trails, and, especially, the crisp cool air. Tara was tired of sand and grit in her shoes, clothes, and food. The family rarely vacationed anywhere else other than the ocean, so Joellie was always happy with family vacations.

"Well," said her mother, "we' ll see what we can do." Tara sighed resignedly and looked wistfully out the window again. Her hopes for enjoying a retreat somewhere in the mountains definitely began to fade. Could she ever get the family to go to the mountains, ever? She looked at Joellie with envy.

Joellie turned to look at her sister and was surprised by the 100k on her face. Once again Joellie wished that her twin sister were someone who enjoyed sharing her views on nature.

The heat of the day was just starting as Joellie's family pulled into the campground. Her Aunt Tabby, Uncle go, and her cousins Tim and Steve, who were towing a trailer with their truck, soon joined them. Tara winced as the heat of the day hit her as she got out Of the car. A round of greetings and hugs were exchanged before everyone got down to work.

"Look alive, everybody," said Joellie's dad with just the slightest hint of a smirk. "We've got a lot a work to do to get the campground in order before ANY fun can take place.

"If you kids work hard, we can all go down to the beach after

Aunt Tabby. There were two trucks and her aunt and s trailer to unload, boxes to unpack, and the tents to set up. During those few hours of hard work, Joellie kept thinking about her Aunt

Tabby's promise and how good the cool ocean breeze would feel when they finished, and she worked even harder. Tara slogged along, joining in the work haphazardly.

Eventually, Joellie heard the words that she'd been anticipating. "think that about does it," her dad said. "think re set to have a little fun now, so let the vacation begin." As Joellie wiped the sweat from her brow, she surveyed the campsite, which now looked neat as a pin, with pride. Firewood was stacked neatly near the fire circle, the week's food was arranged in boxes and coolers under a canopy next to the picnic table, and four tents stood under the tall evergreen trees: one tent for Joellie's parents, one for Uncle BO and Aunt Tabby, one for her cousins Tim and Steve, and finally one tent stood nearest the picnic area for Joellie and Tara.

"All right everyone, grab your sunscreen and let's hit the beach," exclaimed Joellie's mom.

To Joellie the beach was beautiful, as always. She loved the mist in the air as she walked, splashed, and played in the surf with her cousins. Tara busied herself building mountain sculptures in the sand while her parents and aunt and uncle chatted, relaxing in lawn chairs. Seagulls swooped to and fro, banking on pockets of air just like the kites that Joellie and her family had brought a few years back. Later in the afternoon, Joellie talked Tara into hunting through tide pools with their cousins and herself, and they found not one, but two completely intact sand dollars for Joellie's shell collection. Eventually the sun dropped closer and closer to the sea, and Joellie heard her mother's voice over the sound of the incoming waves. "Tara, Joellie, Steve, Tim! Come on everybody, it's time to get back to camp and make supper."

As Joellie and her family crested the hill and entered their campground, she was lost in the examination of her new seashells. However, her head jerked up like it was on a spring when she heard the tone of her Uncle Bo's voice as he gasped, "What in the world?" Joellie drew a breath involuntarily as her eyes skimmed the chaos before her. The food that had been neatly boxed in the picnic area prior to their jaunt to the beach was now strewn throughout the campsite. The trays of cinnamon rolls that had made her mouth water in the grocery store, those special treats for tomorrow's breakfast, were now licked clean with not a trace of frosting left. The campsite floor was now a jumble of crumbs, chicken bones, and shredded packaging.

"Oh no! Not the s'mores," cried Steve as he stumbled on the remnants of graham crackers and marshmallows.

"What could have done this?" Joellie wondered aloud.

"It must have been a wild animal," her dad said. "Just look at those claw marks in the graham cracker box."

"An animal? What kind of animal?" Tara asked, unable to mask the fear in her voice.

"I saw a couple of warning signs at the ranger's office for cougars and bears," said Uncle go. "It could've been either of those."

"Lucky for us, they didn't get to this last package of hamburger meat or these buns, so we'll have enough food for tonight," observed Aunt Tabby. "We can drive into town tomorrow to get more supplies for the rest of the week," she offered helpfully after rummaging through the remains of the cooler.

"You mean we're going to stay here tonight and be bait for all the cougars and bears now that they know where all the food is?" asked Tara fearfully.

"Those animals won't bother us while we're here," said her mom. "They're more scared of us than we are of them."

"I doubt it," mumbled Joellie under her breath with a shiver, beginning to share Tara's intense fear. doubt it, very much."

While meals at the campground usually seemed to taste much better than the same food would at home, Joellie didn't enjoy that night's burgers at all. Every creak made by the trees in the forest and every leaf rustling in the wind put her even more on edge. She was sure that whichever way she looked, a bear, a cougar, or worse was creeping up behind her. She could almost feel the hot, wet breath of some kind of animal on the back of her neck. Looking around the picnic table at her family, she wondered whether they were feeling the same.

Her dad and Uncle BO were talking about some football game but seemed a bit distracted, looking more into the darkness of the woods than at each other. Her and Aunt Tabby were debating whether or not it would be wise to move to another campground. Her cousins announced their intention to sleep that night in their family's trailer and were sitting stone-faced just playing with their food. Poor Tara was the worst of all. She had hardly eaten anything and sat huddled in silence, just staring into the darkness surrounding the camp, and startling at every rustle of the trees in the wind and snap of the campfire. Tara obviously wasn't looking forward to the sleeping arrangements.

Joellie's dad finally spoke up, "OK, you guys, look...I know we're all a little shaken, but I think we're all letting our imaginations run a little too wild. don't think there's anything to worry about, but think we'll all feel better once we've had a good night's sleep. Let's just write Off the rest of the evening, get in our sleeping bags, and get some rest." Everyone at the table nodded solemnly, got up, and zipped themselves into their respective tents.

For once Joellie and Tara were of one mind as they lay whispering side by side in their tent, zipped up in their sleeping bags and wondering how they could possibly get to sleep given the circumstances. m scared, Joellie," whispered Tara. "DO you see, now, that being one with nature' isn't all that great?"

"Well, maybe," whispered Joellie, "but let's close our eyes, and at least try to get some sleep." The stress from the day must have taken its toll. Exhaustion overtook the entire family, and in less than an hour everyone at the campsite was fast asleep.

Joellie awoke to a strange rustling noise, but when her eyes opened, she could see nothing but darkness because the campfire had died down to a few glowing embers. Her mind immediately flashed back to the fear the mystery animal had aroused in her earlier. Was she hearing things? As if in answer to her thoughts, she heard the rustling again, followed by even more alarming sounds of clanging, snuffling, and ripping that seemed to be coming from the picnic table area next to them.

"Wake up, Tara! Listen!" said Joellie nudging her sister. "There's definitely something out there." Tara said nothing as she awoke, but Joellie could immediately feel her begin to quake.

After a few moments, Tara's voice came out in a squeak, "What is it, Joellie? What's in our campground?" She was sure in her mind where they should be sleeping.

"I don't know, Tara, but I'm going to find out!" whispered Joellie, realizing that she was sick and tired of being scared and having her camping trip ruined.

Joellie slowly reached for the flashlight near her pillow, and once that was in her hand, she began to slowly unzip the tent flap as quietly as possible. The entire time she listened carefully to the sounds of the mystery animal rummaging through the little food they had left, and considered just forgetting the flashlight, and instead screaming at the top of her lungs. She finally managed to make an opening large enough for the flashlight to fit through. Pushing the tip of the flashlight out of the tent, she pressed the switch. As the blinding light filled the picnic area, Joellie gasped, first catching her breath, and then laughing. A strange chittering sound came from the picnic area in response to the light.

"What kind of animal is it, Joellie?" asked Tara in a panic.

"See for yourself," said Joellie, as she unzipped the tent flap further. In the middle of the picnic table waddled a whole family of fat raccoons. The largest one was standing on his two hind legs, chattering madly as if to scold the girls for interrupting their midnight snack. Tara laughed in relief, leaning limp and quivering against Joellie's shoulder. Joellie glanced down at Tara, suddenly feeling a rush of compassion for her twin. Joellie whispered, "Hey, Tara, what do you think? Maybe, tomorrow, you and I, together, could talk to everybody about spending some of our vacation time in the mountains.

Staying in a solid cabin for a while could be fun, too."

1. What kind of animals ate the family food while they were at the beach?

- A. Cougars.
- B. Raccoons.
- C. Bears.

2. Why did Joellie's dad decide the food damage was done by animals?

- A. There were distinct Claw marks on the packages.
- B. He had heard there were wild animals in the area.
- C. The campsite was too messy for a human thief.

3. Why was Tara envious of Joellie?
- A.The family liked the same kind of vacation as Joellie.
 - B.Joellie got along with their cousins better than Tara.
 - C.Tara couldn't set up camp as well as Joellie could.
4. What showed that Tara was dreaming of being in the mountains?
- A.She was always talking about the cool, mountain air.
 - B.She built mountain shapes in the sand at the beach.
 - C.She wanted the tent to be closer to the woods.
5. How did Joellie's mom respond to the animals eating the food?
- A.She was nervous and insisted on sleeping in the trailer.
 - B.She was glad they didn't eat that night's dinner.
 - C.She explained that animals are scared of humans.
6. Why did the camping trip turn out to be good for Tara?
- A.It taught her not to be afraid of forest animals.
 - B.It helped her twin sister understand her better.
 - C.It made the family rethink camping at the beach.
7. What Was the main idea of the story?
- A.Families that understand each other have better vacations.
 - B.Wildlife should be respected, but it should not be feared.
 - C.Sharing difficulties can help bring people closer together.
8. What did Steve get upset about when they returned from the beach?
- A.That his tent was so close to the picnic area.
 - B.That the ingredients for s' mores were gone.
 - C.That there weren't any cinnamon rolls for breakfast.
9. What was the main reason the families didn't move to another campsite?
- A.Wild animals could be anywhere in the area.
 - B.The animals had eaten all their food already.
 - C.They had worked hard setting up the first camp.
10. What best describes Joellie and Tara's relationship?
- A.They only got along when they were doing something they both liked.
 - B.They didn't like each other much and argued about almost everything.
 - C.They liked each other even though they disagreed on some things.
11. Where would Tara have been most happy to be on a family vacation?
- A.In a cabin in the mountains.
 - B.In a tent in the mountains.
 - C.In a cabin at the beach.

12. Why did Joellie decide to face the animals at the campsite?
- A. She knew there was nothing she needed to be afraid Of.
 - B. She wanted to protect Tara from dangerous animals.
 - C. She wanted to stop worrying and enjoy her vacation.
13. What would Joellie probably have done if she had seen a bear with her flashlight?
- A. Stayed as quiet as possible.
 - B. Screamed for her parents' help.
 - C. Tip-toed away from the picnic area.
14. What made Joellie especially happy at the beach?
- A. There was a lot of mist coming Off the ocean.
 - B. There were a lot of seagulls at the beach.
 - C. She found sand dollars in the tide pools.
15. What could have been a problem with Joellie's decision to see what was outside their tent?
- A. She could have been attacked and hurt by a dangerous animal.
 - B. She could have been defenseless if her flashlight had gone out.
 - C. She could have scared Tara even more by confronting the animal.
16. What best describes what Tara was like in the story?
- A. Frustrated she didn't get what she wanted.
 - B. Resigned to accept things as they were.
 - C. Annoyed the family never listened to her.
17. When did the family go to the beach?
- A. When they got to the campsite.
 - B. After they set up camp.
 - C. After they cooked dinner.
18. What will probably happen on the next year's family vacation?
- A. They will spend some of their time in the mountains.
 - B. They will plan their vacation a lot more carefully.
 - C. Joellie and Tara will get along better than usual.
19. Why did Joellie have trouble enjoying her burger dinner?
- A. She was worried about an animal attack.
 - B. She was nervous for her family's safety.
 - C. She was angry that her vacation was ruined.
20. What was the main problem in the story?
- A. The family camped in tents instead of cabins.
 - B. A wild animal was loose in the campground.
 - C. Everyone was frightened by a wild animal.

Appendix G: Comprehension Posttest

Writer's Block

MS. Jackson wanted to challenge her language arts class with a story-writing contest being held in their city. The winner would get their photo in the newspaper, shake hands with the mayor, and receive \$1000 in prize money. Ms. Jackson passed out the rules for the contest and let the students know that she expected all of them to enter at least one story as a requirement for a final grade.

Amar's friend Kim looked at him with a mixture of amusement and pity and was surprised to see him smiling. She knew he had no interest in writing. Amal had never been an outstanding student in Ms. Jackson's class, but he always did his work and made sure he contributed during group work. He wasn't an outspoken member of the class, like so many of his classmates were. However, when the creative story-writing unit began, Amal was surprisingly the happiest student in class. He knew he wasn't much of a writer, but when he heard about the prize money, he was set afire.

He had a special need for that money! His single working-mom needed money to finish her course work in nursing. At one time she'd saved enough, but instead of using it for her education, she used it to take care of medical bills that Amal had racked up when he had his skateboarding accident a few months earlier. He felt badly about using up his mom's education money, especially because she had often told Amal and Kim not to do those dangerous skateboarding stunts they were so fond of doing. He had been executing a totally awesome stunt when he accidentally flipped and hit a brick wall, which resulted in broken bones and a bad head wound that required surgery.

He had healed quickly enough, but all of his mom's carefully saved education money was gone. So, here was his opportunity to make things right. He needed to write a story, just one story, but it had to be great. It had to win.

The first writing assignment was as challenging to Amal as he had expected. Sitting at home wondering what to write, he drew a blank and decided to call Kim. She suggested he just let his writing flow, so he sat at the computer for quite a while, but unfortunately, he came up with nothing. He called her again, whining that he had to win this contest, but she was busy struggling with her own story, so she wasn't inclined to be sympathetic with his plight. By the end of the evening, he still had nothing to take to class.

On Monday, Ms. Jackson assigned the students to discussion groups to read and discuss their writings. Amal felt extremely self-conscious about having nothing to share. The stress was becoming unbearable. He put off his classmates' questions about not having anything to share by saying that he was "working on it."

Over the next few weeks, almost all the students wrote more and more stories, and they began to shine at writing, even branching out to writing poetry and short film scripts. Even Kim had come

up with some pretty good stories, but Amal still had nothing to show for all his desperate thinking. He knew that he only needed to write this one fabulous story to win.

MS. Jackson confronted Amal about his lack of writing and explained that he absolutely must come up with a Story Of some sort. so, that night at home Amal sat again at his computer trying to write something, anything, and... found... that... he... had nothing to write. Story ideas as elusive as butterflies whirled in Amar s head, and though he'd gotten a few suggestions from some of his more sympathetic classmates, none would coalesce into a solid story line. All he could get were disconnected bits and pieces, wisps that didn't amount to anything. Amal had stumbled into a nothingness, an empty abyss devoid of any good storylines to write about, let alone the words with which to capture them. He had to come up with something to satisfy his teacher and, more importantly, Win the contest.

In class the next day, Amal sat with his discussion group, all of them greatly anticipating the first draft of what would surely be a pretty good story because he had taken so long to write it, and he began to sweat. Molly read another of her wonderful poems, Kurt read an experimental screenplay, and Vince read another story in the series he had been continuing. They had good discussions about the positive points and areas for improvement in each piece, and then it was Amar s turn.

Undeniably nervous, sweating, and red with embarrassment, Amal had to think fast about what to say. Sad to say, he was not thinking fast, and worse, he was not thinking well at all, so he lied. He had not written one word for today. m, um, keeping it a secret until Friday, but it •s really good," explained Amal. Every person in Amar s group loved this idea. They instantly grew excited and spread the word that their friend was writing something really great.

By the next day, Amal was in the exact same situation, plus the pressure of his classmates' expectations had grown, and the burden of the truth had increased. It was now two weeks and he had failed to write one word, which meant that he had let down his peers, missed two important homework assignments, and was no closer to winning the contest than before. Amal was not to escape his own trap of lies, however, because the days passed, and he still had nothing to share.

After enduring another class period of stress and shame, Amal went to MS. Jackson to confess all. She could fail him, shame him, make him confess his own failure before the class, but at least his conscience would be clear. After class, he walked up to MS. Jackson at her desk and spit out the words in a nervous fit, cowering and ready for any blow she might deliver.

"Amal, that •s Okay," she said calmly but firmly. "This happens to every writer on the planet. know you've done your work all year and tried your best, so why don't you relax today. If you think of something to write, great, if not, you can always take this class in summer school."

Hunched over his computer that night, this time with Kim by his side, Amal looked around the room grasping for inspiration. Kim, too, was baffled until she spotted the bookshelf that held some fiction books. Scanning the titles, she saw an Old book that might be useful, an anthology of short stories. After reading through the table of contents, Kim got the idea that Amal could just rewrite one of the stories in the book.

‘NO," she said, "this isn't really copying. You'll just be borrowing ideas, right?"

Satisfied that she'd solved her friend's problem, she left him to his work and escaped to go skateboarding. Amal thought that Kim probably was a little Off in her thinking, but he was desperate. He had to come up with something no matter what, but he decided to think it over for a while first. He lay on his bed with his arms behind his head and thought about his dilemma.

He got up in the middle of the night, chose a story from the book Kim had found, and began typing. He started by giving his story a new title, and then tried to rewrite the story by renaming the characters and creating a new city for the story to take place in. How could Ms. Jackson recognize the story if the setting was in another place and time, and he had new names for the characters? She probably had never even read the original story, right? He considered it wise to give the ending a new twist to further camouflage its origin, but it didn't seem to fit the style of the story, so he put the original back in. After many hours of copying, he was finally finished. He printed out his story and stuck it in his folder.

When he awoke again, it was to his alarm clock telling him it was time to get up for school. Amal drifted through his day in a nervous haze, watching the entire school pop around him with the uncontrollable energy of the last day of the year. Finally, in Ms. Jackson's class, the students stood up one by one to read.

Amal was last to read, and he felt completely drained of life and petrified with fear. The students had talked all week about what he might write and built up an unbearable pressure for him to perform.

Amal read his story, glancing nervously at his teacher now and again to see her reactions. Thinking that she might possibly recognize the story made him feel like his lungs were being squeezed, which made reading aloud very difficult. When he finished reading, the students were pleased. Not every student in the class was impressed with Amar's Story, but Molly, the smartest girl in class, told him she thought it was pretty good. Kim winked at him and smiled. When the final bell rang, the class disappeared into summer with a rush of excitement.

Amal was left standing alone in front of his teacher who sat looking at him over her half glasses. Ms. Jackson said, "Well, Amal, that was quite a story. Your writing style is surprisingly mature, isn't it? That story seems very familiar to me; in fact, it seems extremely familiar. Is there any reason should feel that way, Amal?"

Amal could no longer endure the stress. He cracked. The truth came pouring out in a torrent of confession. He told her about how hard he had tried to write and how he finally just copied the story. He also confessed his feelings of shame and humiliation, and then told her the reason why he needed money and how winning the writing contest could solve all his problems.

"Well," she said, "as for winning the contest, you can't enter that story, Of course." Then she suggested that he take one more night to put a story together. It didn't have to be a winning story,

just a story to turn in for class so he wouldn't have to take summer school. Amal wasn't sure one night would be enough time, and began to feel the flutter of panic again.

1. What did Mrs. Jackson require of her students for the writing assignment?
 - A. To write different types of stories to practice writing.
 - B. To enter at least one story in the city's writing contest.
 - C. To read stories to the other students in front of the class.
2. How did the rest of the class respond to the new writing assignment?
 - A. They got into it and even attempted additional styles of writing.
 - B. They complained about it and struggled with the assignments.
 - C. They were as excited as Amal about the contest and worked hard.
3. When did Amal decide to Copy the story?
 - A. After Mrs. Jackson said he would need to go to summer school.
 - B. After struggling really late at night the evening before the due date.
 - C. After Kim suggested that he Copy the story when trying to help him.
4. Why did Amal's lies make things worse instead of relieving the situation?
 - A. He couldn't ask for help because he'd said he didn't need it.
 - B. He spent his creative energy on excuses instead of writing.
 - C. He couldn't deliver what he promised, and it made him anxious.
5. Why did the other students get so excited about Amal's new story?
 - A. They liked Amal and wanted him to do well in the class.
 - B. They liked his idea of writing a great story in secret.
 - C. They were confident Amal could do great writing.
6. What is probably the reason Amal wasn't able to come up with a Story?
 - A. He didn't apply himself when trying to write at night.
 - B. He was only a mediocre student and not very creative.
 - C. He couldn't handle the stress of trying to win the contest.
7. What did Kim's suggestion that Amal Copy the story say about her?
 - A. She was more interested in finishing the project than in being honest.
 - B. She was willing to spend her energy and time for the sake of friendship.
 - C. She liked to take the easy way out when it came to getting projects done.
8. Why did Amal feel guilty about his skateboarding accident?
 - A. His mom had to take him to the hospital and missed her nursing class.
 - B. He had been hurt doing exactly what his mom asked him not to do.
 - C. His mom had to care for him while he healed so she couldn't study.

9. Why Was Kim surprised that Amal smiled at the presentation of the new English assignment?
A. She thought he didn't really like writing.
B. He wasn't a very good student in general.
C. He didn't like speaking in front of groups.

10. What was the main problem in the Story?
A. The story Amal finally turned in he had copied from another writer.
B. If Amal didn't win the contest, his mother couldn't go to nursing school.
C. Amal couldn't think of an original story before the school year ended.

11. Why did Amal want money so badly?
A. To pay for his hospital bills from the skateboarding accident.
B. To help his mom pay for the rest of her nursing courses.
C. To help pay for household bills because he had a single mom.

12. Why did Amal decide to copy the Story?
A. He became desperate as the due date approached.
B. He didn't see anything wrong with copying a Story.
C. Kim suggested it, and she assured him that it was OK.

13. What was the main problem in Amal's decision to copy the story?
A. He decided to follow his friend's advice on how to get the story done.
B. He decided it was Okay to copy someone else's writing rather than do his own.
C. He assumed Mrs. Jackson wouldn't know the story that he copied from.

14. What option did Amal have at the end of the story?
A. Talk his way out of summer school.
B. Write a new story to pass the class.
C. Submit a new Story for the contest.

15. What event caused Amal to confess that he had copied the story?
A. Mrs. Jackson told him the story sounded familiar to her.
B. He read the story to the class, and they didn't like it much.
C. His guilt overwhelmed him after Kim winked at him in class.

16. What was the main idea of this story?
A. Friends don't always give the best advice.
B. Waiting until the last minute can ruin plans.
C. Honesty early on can prevent problems later.

17. How did Amal get through his writing classes without doing the homework?
A. He said he was working on a story that was a secret.
B. He made promises that he would think Of a story soon.
C. He shared story ideas without doing any actual writing.

18. What best describes Amal?

- A. He was overly self-confident, and this got him in trouble.
- B. He was a dishonest classmate throughout the story.
- C. In the end, he was a follower of his conscience.

19. Who was Amal most concerned about when he read his story to the class?

- A. Mrs. Jackson.
- B. Himself.
- C. His classmates.

20. What will Amal probably do since he can't turn in the copied story in the end?

- A. He'll ask Kim to help him with a new story and finish it before school ends.
- B. He won't be able to write a story in one night and will go to summer school.
- C. He'll write a story quickly on his own because he wants to pass his class.

Appendix H: Reader's Theater Intervention Protocol

Monday: Background information about author, story, and significant vocabulary. First reading of short story.

Tuesday: Read Reader's Theater script as a whole class with teacher modeling fluent reading. Distribute scripts and discuss characters. Students take turns reading various parts of the script.

Wednesday: Writing prompt related to story, essential questions, and character. Assign roles of characters. Practice in groups.

Thursday: Students practice reading scripts. Teacher monitors improvement and makes suggestions to really bring out the characters' voices.

Friday: Performance of all groups and reflection of the performances.

Appendix I: Control Group Protocol

Monday: Background information about author, story, and significant vocabulary. First reading of short story.

Tuesday: Discussion of key elements: characters, plot, tone, etc.

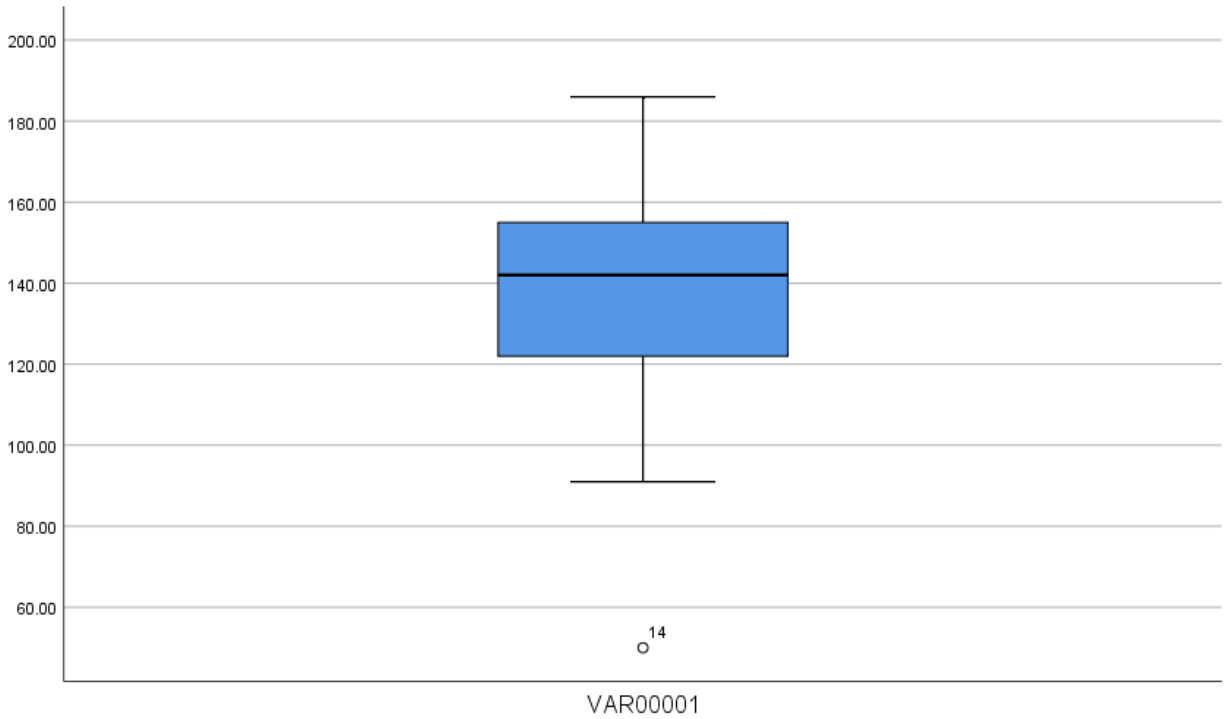
Wednesday: Writing prompt related to short story, essential questions, and character. Comprehension quiz.

Thursday: Re-read short story; comprehension strategy

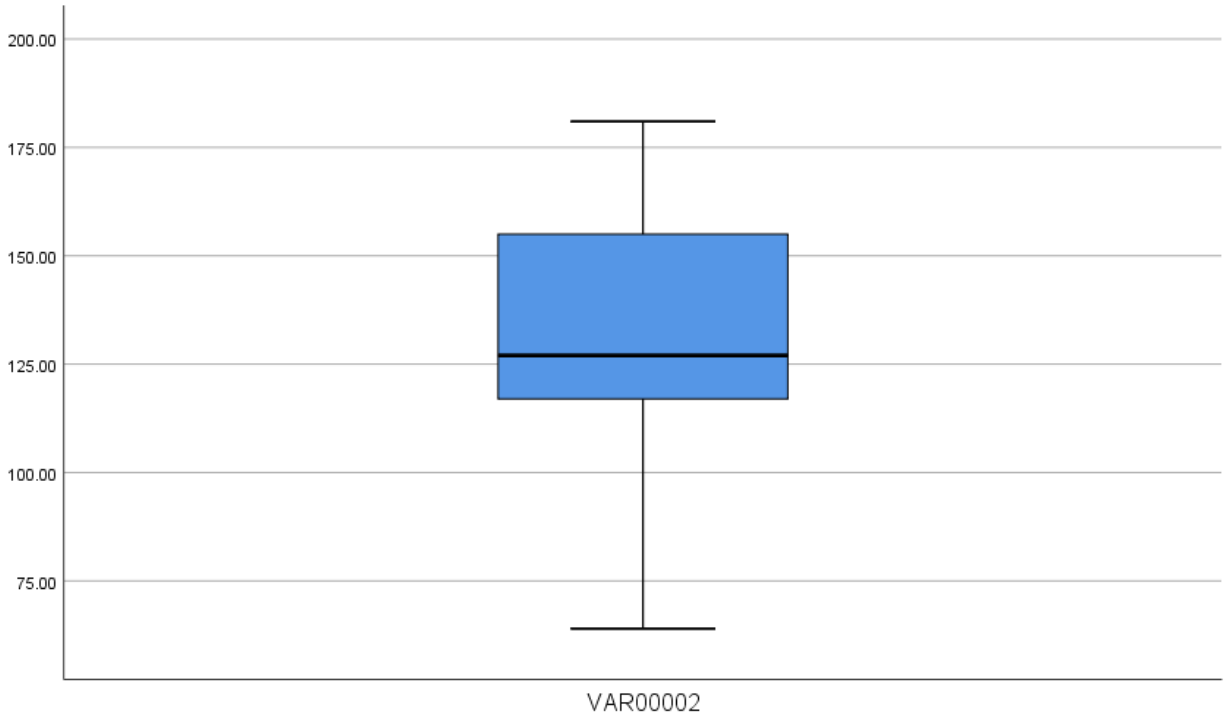
Friday: Comprehension Test for the short story.

Appendix J: Box Plot of Outliers for Fluency Pretest

Control Group

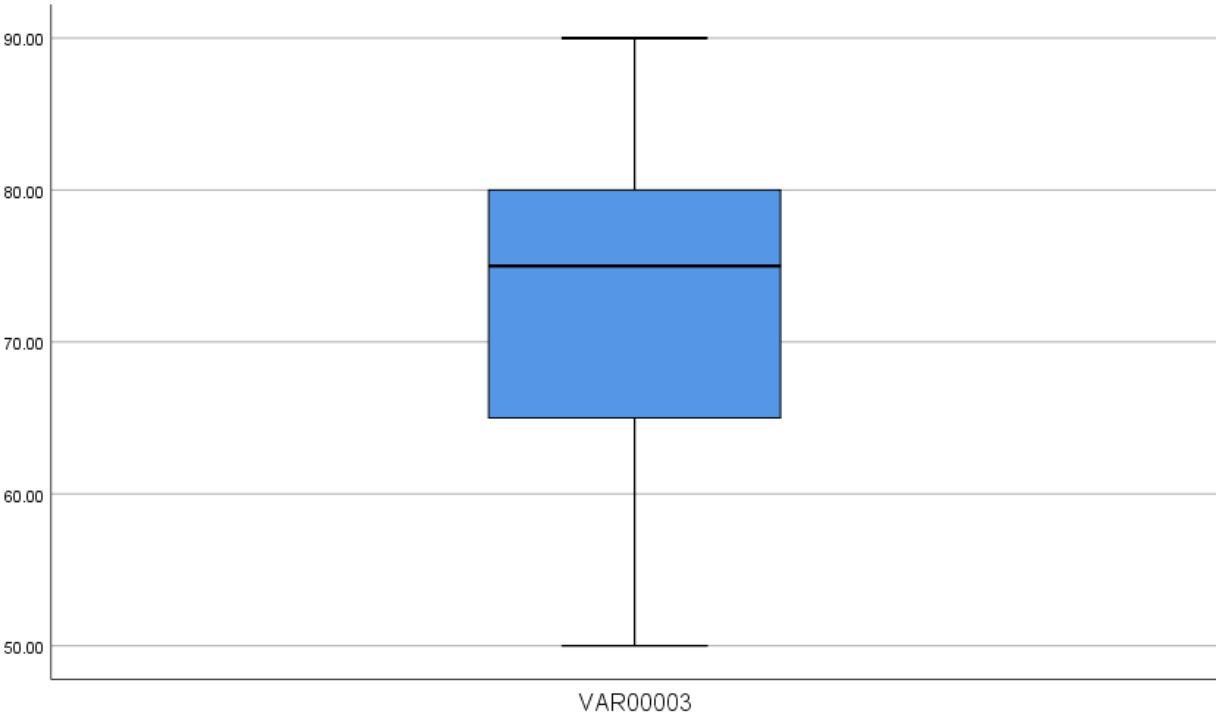


Experimental Group

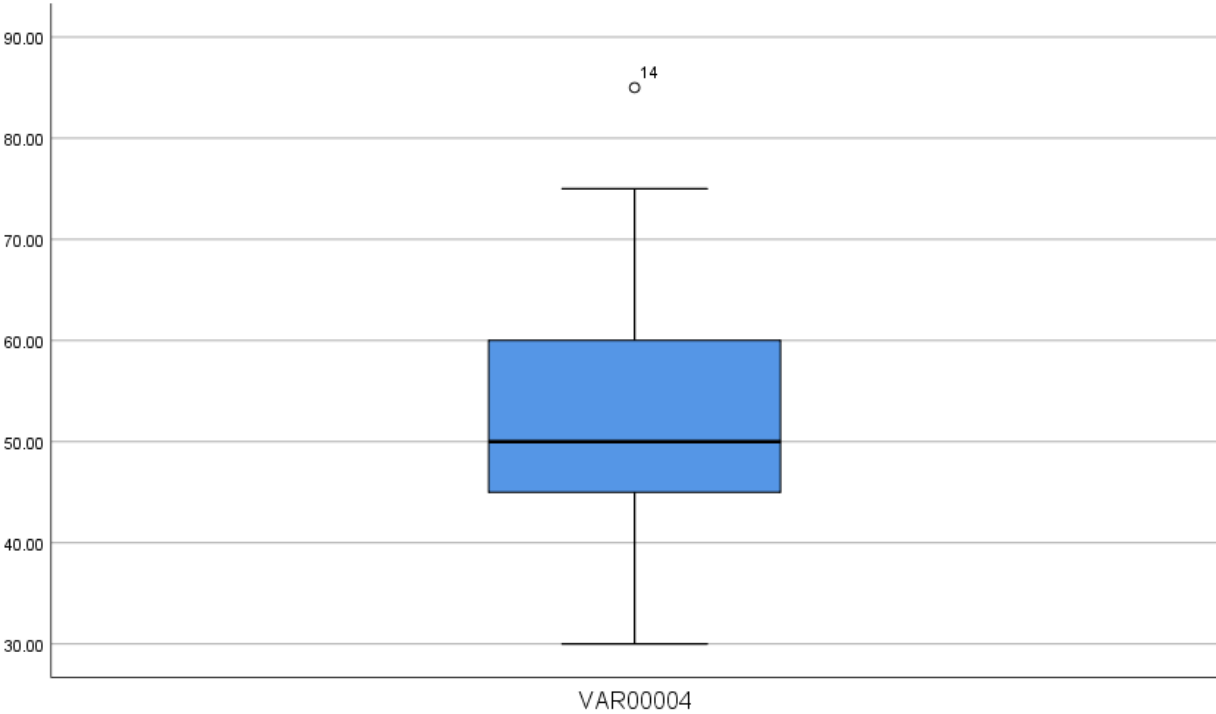


Appendix K: Box Plot of Outliers for Comprehension Pretest

Control Group



Experimental Group



Appendix L: Normal Distribution Tables

Normal Distribution for Fluency

Group	Pretest P Value	Posttest P Value
Control	.88012	.91706
Experimental	.88311	.97988

Normal Distribution for Comprehension

Group	Pretest P Value	Posttest P Value
Control	.21609	.65273
Experimental	.8819	.41717

Appendix M: Group Data Tables

Control Group Data

Student Number	Pretest Fluency	Posttest Fluency	Pretest Comprehension/ questions correct/ percent	Posttest Comprehension/ questions correct/ percent
1	156	145	75	14/70
2	99	105	75	14/70
3	122	104	80	12/60
4	115	144	85	16/80
5	186	181	75	12/60
6	122	125	80	13/65
7	169	147	75	16/80
8	138	116	70	14/70
9	155	161	60	18/90
10	127	127	85	10/50
11	110	113	80	16/80
12	142	135	80	17/85
13	170	177	75	14/70
14	50	43	50	14/70
15	142	126	80	12/60
16	154	140	60	10/50
17	149	142	55	8/40
18	184	180	70	16/80
19	126	120	65	13/65
20	142	127	55	14/70
21	124	122	75	14/70
22	150	157	90	13/65
23	91	103	65	15/75
24	148	143	85	17/85
25	180	173	60	12/60

Experimental Group Data

Student Number	Pretest Fluency	Posttest Fluency	Pretest Comprehension/ questions correct/ percent	Posttest Comprehension/ questions correct/ percent
1	157	162	45	13/65
2	181	177	60	13/65
3	131	160	50	13/65
4	169	147	60	11/55
5	123	126	35	11/55
6	116	138	45	11/55
7	155	163	65	17/85
8	115	113	55	16/80
9	127	128	55	9/45
10	157	156	70	17/85
11	64	79	40	12/60
12	113	124	45	8/40
13	136	123	40	9/45
14	117	142	85	15/75
15	127	146	35	10/50
16	126	124	55	13/65
17	157	165	30	9/45
18	103	117	60	13/65
19	152	154	55	14/70
20	155	144	65	16/80
21	181	189	50	10/50
22	148	143	50	13/65
23	84	105	75	13/65
24	121	149	45	12/60
25	118	134	50	13/65

Appendix N: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously- researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University—Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

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Digital Signature

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Name (Typed)

February 21, 2020

Date