Is Guided Reading within a Balanced Literacy program an effective and reliable reading program that helps English Language Learners make significant gains in reading that monitors comprehension and fluency.

A Special Project

Presented to

Dr. Robert Smart

Heritage University

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of the Requirement for the Degree of

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Armando Castrellon

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FACULTY APPROVAL

Is Guided Reading within a Balanced Literacy program an effective and reliable reading program that helps English Language Learners make significant gains in reading that monitors comprehension and fluency.

Approved for the Faculty

_____, Faculty Advisor

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ABSTRACT

The author of the Project prepared an abstract to describe the effects of bilingual students receiving guided reading 4 to 5 times a week, focusing on comprehension and fluency of their readings. Students were assessed at a minimum of one time a month using a Running Record, as well as weekly anecdotal notes focusing on strengths and weaknesses. Through monthly Running Records and anecdotal notes we can see the progression and the increase of reading levels through the time. The author believed that focusing on meaning, structure, and visual of the text in a guided reading group it can increase comprehension and improve student's fluency.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

The National Association of Bilingual Education [NABE] 2009, suggests that throughout many schools, districts, and states bilingual students have been consistent with language acquisition, when bilingual programs are implemented with fidelity. NABE echoes that since the Bilingual Education Act was passed in 1968 there have been great strides in understanding how language is acquired, how it impacts academics, and how best to assist English Language Learners (ELL). Research supports that a well-designed and well-implemented bilingual program can make a critical difference for students who must master academic content and a new language simultaneously (NABE, 2009). Ramirez (1991) suggests, in a study that traced more than 2,000 ELL students in nine school districts in five states over a time period of four years, that programs "which featured a gradual transition to English-significantly outperformed their counterparts in quick-exit and in all-English immersion programs when all three groups were tested in English (p. 3-4)."

Extensive research suggests that the student's primary language is the main resource to help develop the student's literacy skills and acquire academic knowledge (NABE, 2009). Programs included in the NABE report were Dual Language, Late-Exit and Early-Exit; the Late-Exit transitional bilingual model is by the study school district to develop literacy and academic skills in the students' primary language. This model provides bilingual instruction for 5 to 6 years of schooling. This consists of primarily Spanish instruction in kindergarten and gradually decreasing Spanish each grade after that up to about seventy-percent in fifth and sixth grade.

Districts that implement the Late-exit Transitional Model are mandated and held accountable to the same standards using state assessments in their non-native language.

The study school district's reading curriculum that is in place is Guided Reading within Balanced Literacy program to help enable and strengthen students' abilities. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1997) "guided reading is a context in which a teacher supports each reader's developmental of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty (p. 12)."

Statement of the Problem

Students who are part of the Late-Exit Bilingual model, like all ELL students, are mandated to take the English State Assessment in all academic areas, after most of their instruction has been primarily in their primary language. Students who score lower on the state assessment are often unfairly misdiagnosed as being low achieving and many make the assumption that they are less intelligent. This observation is created not from a lack of caring but from a lack of understanding the language acquisition process and research proven programs. Studies have suggested that students who are fully literate in their native language have an easier and more successful transition into their second language (NABE, 2009).

Purpose of the Project

The teacher assessed first grade bilingual students monthly to determine if being very specific and intentional during the instruction in a guided reading group increased student's reading levels. Monitoring progress and documentation of the assessments, along with anecdotal notes were used as informational data points to see when students were making the appropriate gains in order to move reading levels. This also includes a 15 to 20 minute small grouping that provided detailed, focused book introductions and delivered intentional student support.

Delimitations

The study was conducted at a southeastern Washington elementary school, which is located in a highly agricultural community. The students participate in a Late-Exit bilingual 1st grade classroom. In this elementary school 65.2% of the students participated in the Transitional Bilingual model. The classroom was composed of 21 students (11 boys and 10 girls) and all have parents of Hispanic origin. The classroom teacher has 6 years of experience, 5 years of teaching 2nd grade Late-Exit bilingual program and one year of teaching 1st grade.

According to the report card provided by Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI, 2012) at the beginning of the academic year enrollment as of October 2011 was 526 students, and by May 2012 enrollment had increased to 564 students. Of those students 15.1% were considered to be as follows, Migrant students and 94.9% of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch. The ethnicity of the school break down:

Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	94.3%
White	2.7%
Black	1.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	.8%
Two or more Races	1.5%

Table 1. Race/Ethnicity (OSPI, 2012)

During the school year 2011-12, the school employed 34 classroom teachers with an average experience of 13 years, 64.7% having a Masters Degree, and 10 teachers who teach in Spanish.

Research Question

Is the Guided Reading component within a Balanced Literacy program an effective and reliable reading program that helps first grade students English Language Learners make significant gains in reading?

Significance of the Project

According to Cloud (2007), "language minority students, the single most important predictor of success in second language learning was the level of proficiency in the students primary language" (p. 53). Students of whom Spanish is their first language are often categorized for consistently having and scoring lower in different assessments (e.g., Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), Measurement of Student Progress (MSP), and Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA). The teacher as a researcher wondered that if students were taught in their native language and provided with the instruction that helped them, they would be more successful. Monitoring the student's progress on a monthly basis was a way of showing that guided reading within a balanced literacy program could be an effective intervention for ELL (English Language Learners) students. Having qualified and trained literacy teachers is an essential part of providing an effective guided reading program (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997). In addition to being knowledgeable of the language acquisition process fidelity to the program also is essential. The significance of the Late-exit transitional program is being an effective model that provides ELL students the much-needed instruction in their native language with gradual transition into their second language. Thus transitioning into English, students transitioned easier and more effectively (NABE, 2009).

Procedure

During the academic year of 2011-12, five students were randomly selected from a Bilingual classroom that consisted of 21 students. Those five students were closely monitored in a case study model and assessed once a month to see the progression in reading levels monthly. This data was often and closely monitored in order to evaluate the growth of reading levels while

maintaining comprehension and fluency. After the data was collected, each student's progression was recorded into a table form to demonstrate the findings.

Definition of Terms

Guided Reading. Teacher works with a small group of students that are at a similar in reading abilities. Teacher selects and introduces a new book to the group at their instructional level, then supports students individually. The readers' problem solves new text mostly independently and with support as needed.

ELL. English Language Learners are those students whose first language is not English.

Running Record. A running record is an informal assessment in which the teacher analyzes the student's reading behaviors and is used to drive instruction to help the child succeed. This assessment is done one-on-one and requires the teacher to sit next to the student while he/she is reading a previously read book aloud.

Developmental Reading Assessment. The DRA is a research-based assessment used to conclude the child's independent reading level. It assists teachers to systematically observe, record, and evaluate change in student reading performance and to plan for and teach what each student needs to learn next. The DRA helps teachers determine the students' strengths and reading abilities in a one on one conference.

Balanced Literacy. This is a comprehensive program of language arts acquisition. It contains all of the components necessary for students to master written and oral communication. The components that are part of the program consist of shared reading, guided reading, and read aloud. It includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening. A DRA/EDL is administered during a one on one assessment that documents student progress over time, and usually administered at

the end of each trimester. It's a diagnostic type of assessment that is used to gain information and pre-assess students' strengths, needs and helps determine the reader's instructional level.

Acronyms.

ELL- English Language Learners

OSPI- Office of School practice and Instruction

RR- Running Record

DRA- Developmental Reading Assessment

EDL- Evaluación del Desarrollo de la Lectura

GR- Guided Reading

Chapter 2

Review of Selected Literature

I.   Introduction:

The author researched this topic with the intention of finding out if guided reading was an

effective technique to teach ELL students how to read effectively. The goal of this chapter is to

better understand guided reading, its key components, importance of matching books to readers,

monitoring through running records, and selecting and introducing books. Guided Reading is an

effective approach to develop the skills and provide guidance to both good and struggling reader

(Fountas & Pinnell, 1997, p. 1). The teacher is able to address a problem, provide feedback in a

non-threatening manner on specific skills the student needs to acquire.

II.   What is Guided Reading?

There will be a range of rates of learning for students and, just like everything else, some

children will like reading more than others and be more skilled at it (Fountas and Pinnell, 1997,

p. 1). Learning how to apply it to reading and writing is where guided reading plays a role.

Guided reading is a strategy-based program that allows flexible, small groupings of students to

ensure that they are applying skills, knowledge, and strategies while reading. The purpose of

guided reading is to help support and develop strategies for a student to become a more effective

and independent reader. Students reading abilities are noted through observation of the progress

and application of their skills and strategies determine groups. According to Fountas and Pinnell

the goal of guided reading is to help children learn how to successfully read and comprehend text

using effective reading strategies. Guided reading helps provide the appropriate amount of

support and gradually shift responsibility for students to become independent readers (p. 2).

Learning to read is a complex learning endeavor and requires many strategies to be used simultaneously, readers use the following cuing systems: meaning, structure, and visual (Fountas and Pinnell, 1997, p. 5). According to Clay (1993) some strategies a student can apply in guided reading are: meaning cues, structure and visual information. Meaning cues use illustrations, story sense, and prior knowledge/experiences (p. 56). This cue can aid help the reader to make better sense of what they are reading by applying their prior experience to the text that they are reading. Structure helps the student identify when a sentence is not well put together or does not make sense. The student uses structure as a strategy by questioning whether the sentence sounds right. In addition, they use their knowledge of grammatical patterns and language structure. Visual information provides the student with the ability to recognize letters and associate with what sound and know the distinction of the letter. Also, the ability to visualize the pictures that come along with the text allows the student to relate the subject to the story.

Guided reading takes the initiative of individual students; peers and teachers are able to work together to support strengthening application of strategies. Student peers play a big role in supporting and encouraging use of strategies and forms of application. Grouping students by progress through observations and assessments, allows students to be placed with other students at their reading level. The flexibility of grouping students strengthens this program as groups can change based on observation of student progress. In a small guided reading group one can find students guiding other students on strategies which is not only encouraging team work but also giving the individual a better understanding of the strategies they are using and building (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997).

The teacher's role in small-guided reading groups is to provide guidance and support in order to help the students gain reading competence. The teacher begins the small group instruction by

introducing the text, and selects one or two teaching points after the reading. The goal of the session is help make the text comprehensible by language support, connect student interest, provide structure, language support all which encourage the students ability to problem solve (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997, p. 6). Pictures are often used as a reference point for teachers to show correlation to the topic of the story and are often used as a strategy in identifying sentence meaning, structure and difficult words.

III.   Key Elements of Guided Reading

The essential elements to provide an effective and successful guided reading program consist of the following components: Oral Language Development, Phonemic awareness, letter knowledge and concepts of print, Phonics and Decoding, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension.

Oral Language is a key component that children acquire at a young age that allows them to make connections, statements, ask questions, elaborate, explain, listen, respond to and expand on others ideas (Fountas and Pinnell, 1997, p. 21). Oral language development is the main foundation in which children explore concepts and construct meaning by talking with their peers and adults. It involves speaking and listening, which is a natural process for children and doesn't take much effort. Their oral language is the main source for anticipating and predicting what might happen next in a story. "In every component of the framework, children use language to learn and teachers use language to extend children's language and demonstrate new ways of using it" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997, p. 25).

Phonemic awareness (PA) is a critical pre-reading skill and the intention of this particular ability is to help kids understand that words are made up of sounds and that sounds can be manipulated to create various words. Phonemic awareness is not the same as phonics or

phonological awareness, but a foundation to understanding phonics. PA is the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds (Yopp, 1992). Without PA; phonics will be difficult and make very little sense. PA is an important component that improves students' word reading, comprehension, and it helps students learn to spell. Some activities that help develop PA are to identify and categorize sounds, blend sounds to form words, add or delete parts of words to create new words, and or substitute sounds to make new words.

Phonics instruction is an essential part of balanced reading programs in the early grades. Phonics is the relationship between sounds and spellings in print. Phonics is the link between graphemes (letter symbols) and sounds. The objective of phonics instruction is to quickly help readers determine the sounds of an unfamiliar word. Instruction must be explicit and direct. According to Pikulski (1998), phonics instruction can and must be meaningful, lively, and engaging; phonics should not be equated with repetitious drill or the mindless completion of worksheets. Effective decoding occurs when a student uses his or her knowledge of letter-sound relationships to accurately read and decode a word (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997, p. 164-165).

Reading experts have long held that there is a direct correlation and connection between fluency and comprehension, many of these directly been linked to memory capacity, specifically when it comes to holding larger amounts of meaningful information (Dorn & Soffos, 2005). Reading fluency is the ability to read phrases and sentences smoothly, quickly, and with the intended expression. In fact a lack of fluency is often used as a good predictor of a poor reader or a child that will struggle, reasoning that the lack of good fluency may negatively affect the student's comprehension.

Dorn and Soffos (2005) explained the following:

"Fluency consists of three interrelated elements: speed, rhythm, and flexibility. Speed relates to retrieval rate, while rhythm relates to phrasing and orchestration. Flexibility implies that the reader understands how to self-regulate, or pace, his or her reading according to changing purposes and needs (p. 39)."

The National Assessment of Education Progress [NAE] 2005, created a fluency scale that is very helpful when looking at the change of fluency over time (see appendix).

An understanding of vocabulary is a crucial component to a student's reading comprehension. When students do not understand the meaning of the vocabulary, the reading becomes meaningless to the student. The ability to understand a wide variety of vocabulary gives the student a reference when reading a non-familiar word. Fountas and Pinnell (1997) observed, "we all sometimes have the feeling that an unfamiliar word has something to do with a word or concept with which we are familiar" (p. 165). When encountering an unfamiliar word, meaningful vocabulary comprehension provides a student with the capability of connecting familiar words with unfamiliar words. The more exposure a student has to vocabulary repetitively, the text builds a fabric of meaning that makes it easier to learn new words (p. 166).

Historically students were taught vocabulary by memorization of words and definitions; however, this technique has shown to be ineffective and impractical. "Students must learn about three thousand words a year to keep up with demand" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997, p. 166). What this means is, as an instructor, it is critical to provide the students with exposure and a good comprehension of thousands of words a year, so they are able to keep up with the demand. While students do learn words and meanings from context, students need to have enough background knowledge to give the context and vocabulary meaning. "Some effective ways to vocabulary instruction are: integrating new words with familiar concepts, experiencing words in

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repeated meaningful encounters and should engage students in active processing of word meanings" (Fountas and Pinnell, 1997, p. 166).

Comprehension is a vital component in reading and for life in general. Comprehension involves extracting meaning from reading traditional text in print form from listening to others read or from viewing text in one of the many media sources available in society today. According to Dorn and Soffos (2005) the mind processes information on two levels of comprehension: surface and deep level. These two levels are controlled by memory functions and personal reading goals. Surface level comprehension refers to having the ability to recall and retell information from a text. This process requires the use of student's short-term memory and working at the surface level of comprehension can constrain the minds possible growth. Retelling a story immediately can give teachers valuable insight about the child's instructional reading level. Deep level comprehension is when the reader has the ability to think beyond the text, and having the abilities of discussing and responding to the author's point of view. At this level you can have children think more critically and deeper. Deep comprehension is more difficult to assess, because the students interpretation are a direct cause of their background experiences. In order to assess deep comprehension teachers have to observe and chat with the students about their thinking.

IV. <u>Guided Reading within the Balanced Reading Program</u>

Guided Reading is an important element to the balanced literacy program, which has eight components, which consists of both reading and writing. There are four different types or reading and four kinds of writing each requiring different levels of support. In order for the program to function to it's highest capacity all the eight components must work closely together. A balanced reading program will incorporate some whole group, small group and individual

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reading and writing activities throughout the day. According to the Fountas & Pinnell (1997) research showed that "It is important to recognize that components are not separate elements but are linked together in two powerful ways: (1) through the oral language that surrounds, supports, and extends all activities and (2) by the content or topic focus." (p. 21)

V.   Components within the Balanced Literacy Program

According to Fountas and Pinnell (1997) some of the key components of a Balanced Literacy program include; read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. Read Aloud is where the teacher selects a variety of text that is rich in meaning and/or language. During read aloud there is an individual book for the teacher, which is reread over and over and done whole group. During read aloud the teacher provides full support with the text, children respond to pictures, meaning, and language. Some valuable aspects of read aloud are that it Involves children in reading for enjoyment, provides an adult demonstration of phrased, fluent reading, develops a sense of story, increases vocabulary, and promotes oral language development (p. 22).

With shared reading the teacher provides high-level support while reading big books with enlarged text or small text of which then every child has a book. Shared reading involves children following along as the teacher points with the pointer at the words. At this point kids are reading together, with a lot of conversation about the meaning of the story, and retelling. Some of the valuable aspects of shared reading is that it explicitly demonstrates early strategies like word-by-word matching, builds sense of story and ability to predict, demonstrates the processes of reading extended text, like reading aloud, involves children in an enjoyable and purposeful way and creates body of known texts that children can use for independent reading and as resources for writing and word study (Fountas and Pinnell, 1997, p. 22).

Dorn, French, and Jones (1998) suggest that teacher works with a small group of kids that are similar in reading levels during guided reading session. Teacher selects and introduces a new book to the group, then supports students individually while they are reading their new text. Readers problem-solve new text mostly independently. "The teacher uses languages techniques such as modeling, coaching, scaffolding, articulating, and reflecting to enable the children to experience successful interactions with the text" (p. 55). Some of the valuable aspects of guided reading is that it provides the opportunity to read many texts and a wide variety of texts, provides opportunity to problem-solve while reading for meaning reading work, provides opportunity to use strategies on extended text, provides opportunity to attend to words in text, and teacher selection of text, guidance, demonstration, and explanation is available to the reader (Fountas and Pinnell, p. 22).

During the independent reading component children read to themselves or with partners with little or no support. Children read a wide range of text and some kids read from their own collection of books at their level. Some valuable components of independent reading are that it provides an opportunity to apply reading strategies independently, time to sustain reading behaviors, it challenges the reader to work on his/her own and to use strategies on a variety of texts, it challenges the reader to solve words independently while reading texts well within his/her control and promotes fluency through rereading (Fountas and Pinnell, p. 23).

VI.   Matching the Readers to books

It is vital that the text match the reader to ensure that the text is not too difficult or too easy that will limit growth. "Matching books to readers is critical for children who are beginning to build a reading process; and it is also important to use a gradient of text to be sure that older readers have the support and challenge they need to expand their reading powers as they engage

with more complex text over time (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 1). These are three important considerations when matching books with the students depends on three different understandings that work within each other; knowing the reader, knowing the text and understanding the reading process (p. 1). Throughout the day there are many opportunities for students to choose their own books and an example is independent reading. The purpose of guided reading, then, is to expand what the reader already knows.

Matching books to readers depends on the child's strengths, interest, and needs. A critical factor to help a child read a book successfully depends on the teacher's point of intervention and understanding the reading processes (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006, p. 8). Fountas and Pinnell (2006) provide a text gradient, which is a tool to help support teachers select the most appropriate text for instruction. It's a guide for making good instructional decisions when choosing books that helps support the teacher as they work with readers. "The level is an approximation of its difficulty, and within a level there is some variation. The challenges are not the same in every text in a level (p. 9)." Fountas and Pinnell continue their explanation noting that "our list is not exhaustive; it is a general heuristic for teacher's observations of complex behaviors (p. 117)." Just because the text gradient is categorized by grade and level, does not mean that students are not allowed to move up or down on levels. The decision for what level corresponds appropriately to each student should be considered through assessments of the students strengths and weaknesses.
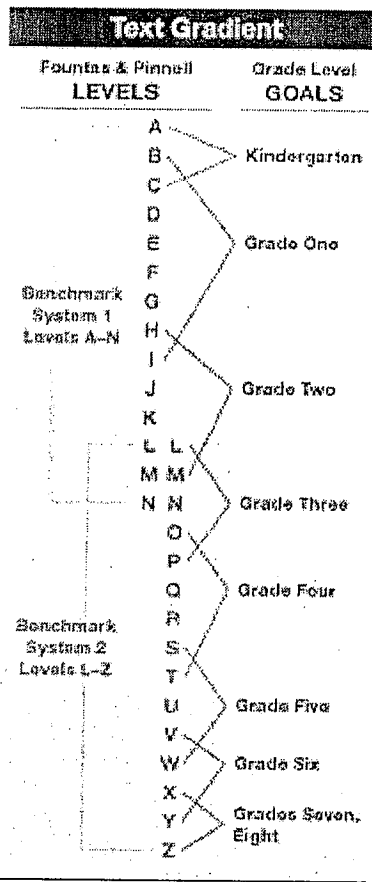
Text Gradient

Fountas & Pinnell
LEVELS

Grade Level
GOALS

Level	Grade
A	
B	Kindergarten
C	
D	
E	Grade One
F	
G	
H	
I	
J	Grade Two
K	
L L	
M M	
N N	Grade Three
O	
P	
Q	Grade Four
R	
S	
T	
U	Grade Five
V	
W	Grade Six
X	
Y	Grades Seven, Eight
Z	

Benchmark System 1 Levels A–N

Benchmark System 2 Levels L–Z

Figure 1. Book Levels Gradient (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 9)

VII.   Running Records

Running records is a form of assessment in which the teacher analyzes the student's behaviors and is a basis of focus to help the child succeed. This assessment is performed one-on-one and requires the teacher to sit next to the student while he/she is reading a previously read book out loud. Running records require a lot of practice in order to administer it efficient, consistent and effective, but once it has been learned it's a quick, practical, and a highly informative tool. The teacher's role is to pay close attention as the student reads out loud, and refrain from intervening (Fountas and Pinnell, 1997, p. 89-90). When the student is seeking

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assistance the most neutral thing to do is to just tell them the word. Through a thoughtful running records analysis the teacher gains a lot of knowledge of each child's strength and weakness.

On a separate sheet of paper the teacher is recording the students behaviors. What you are looking for is to see what the child can and can't do on his/her own. There are two major components on running records you are looking at, quantitative and qualitative observations (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006, p. 90-93). Things to look for in a quantitative analysis are accurate reading, substitution, appeal, told, omission, insertion, repetition, and self-correction. While doing a quantitative analysis it's also important to indicate whether the text they read is to easy, instructional, or hard. The codes and symbols for the significant behaviors are on table 2 in the appendix which where provided by Clay (1991). When a child reads below 90% accuracy it becomes very difficult, 90-94% would be the instructional level, and 95-100% would be too easy (p. 90-91).

According to Fountas and Pinnell (1997) a qualitative analysis looks at behaviors and thinking about how the reading sounds. The teacher looks for evidence, which consists of three cues/categories that are the main source of information; meaning, structure and visual. Meaning analysis is if it makes sense. Meaning is part of the cueing system in which the child takes their cue to make sense of text by thinking about the stories background, information from pictures, or the meaning of a sentence (p. 92). The structure is analyzing if the reading made sense. Structure refers to the structure of language and is often referred to as syntax. Implicit knowledge of structure helps the reader know if what he or she reads sounds correct (p. 92). The visual refers to if it looks right. Visual information is related to the look of the letter in a word

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and the word itself. A reader uses visual information when they study the beginning sound, word length, familiar word chunks, and other things that they can see to assist them (p. 93).

VIII.   Selecting and Introducing Books

Selecting and introducing guided reading books is an essential part of guided reading. Selecting books that are at the appropriate reading levels and still challenge the student's current abilities is not an easy task. Teachers, according to Holdaway (1979); are encouraged to select books that are going to appeal to the student's interest. The key to getting students to read is done through the introduction of the text. As described by Holdaway "a brief and lively discussion in which the teacher interests the children in the story and produces an appropriate set for reading it (p. 142)." Many times teachers are worried about discussing and talking too much about the text that does not give the students much to work on while reading. Teacher are encouraged to keep in mind the reader's prior knowledge and provide some type of scenario and introduction to give the student, some type of background that is related to the story. "This is not a case of telling the children what to expect. It is a process of drawing the children into the activity before passing control to the children and pushing them gently toward problem solving the whole first reading of the story for themselves" (Clay, 1991, p. 265).

Balanced literacy has been suggested to be an effective reading tool that works on areas where the students are weak and focuses on strategies that each child lacks as an individual. In order for a program to show its full effectiveness all of the components need to be intertwined and work within each other to maximize its full potential. The intent of balanced literacy is to provide an adult model of fluent reading, develop a sense of story, enrich concept and vocabulary development, encourages prediction, and fosters a love and enthusiasm for reading. Guided reading being one of the components of balanced literacy is where the child gets more

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attention either in a small group or individually. Through careful observations and critical analysis the teacher can move the students into higher-level guided reading groups as they become more knowledgeable and proficient at their current level (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997).

Chapter 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

The methodology chosen is an action research approach that features both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The teacher-researcher examined data in both paradigms in order to extract all the meaningful data that is pertinent to each student. As for the quantitative data the teacher will be looking at accuracy, substitutions, told, appeals, omissions, insertions, repetition and self-corrections. When analyzing qualitative data the teacher looked for evidence that looked to see if the reading made sense, sounded right, and if it looked right.

The author administered at least one Running Record each month to each student in the class and collected many anecdotal notes that helped create goals for each individual student. This is a common process, as teachers throughout the district are required to administer Running Records and take anecdotal notes on one student per group each day. After administering a Running Record, teachers evaluate the assessment and look at what the student can control and strategies that are being used. This data assist teachers to measure students' progress and plan for future instruction. Evaluating a running record is a tool to assist and help the teacher recognize the things a student can and can't control while reading new or unfamiliar text. In this project the teacher administered running records on all 21 students; of those students five were randomly selected, to evaluate more closely and see the progression, focusing on comprehension and fluency. The five students that were selected participated in two separate guided reading groups. Each of these students were administered a Running Record at least once a month, and on occasion more than one was administered. The intention was to show that if we focus on the

meaning, the structure, and the visual clues the student should make considerable gains that would enhance his/her comprehension and fluency.

Methodology

Running Records are designed to serve as an ongoing assessment that is done at a minimum of once a month. These assessments are very valuable, they provide the teacher with diagnostic data relative to reading performance. In this research the teacher administered a running record with students on a one on one basis. The benefits of administering to only one student at a time is that you can do an assessment chat with the student after the running record is complete. This also allows the teacher to focus on the student without interruptions of other students and as an individual instead of a member of a group.

The running record consists of a text that has been read once the day before the assessment. The reason this is important is so the student does not have the opportunity to memorize the text by reading the same book multiple times. The text is at the level of instruction that the student has been working on throughout the academic year.

After the running record is completed the teacher will then discuss with the student the results of the assessment. The discussion will focus on what the student controls and the next step they will need to work on. The purpose of this assessment chat is so that students understand what they are doing well and know what they need to focus on.

At the end of the day the teacher analyzes the running record more closely and carefully to see what the student is using during the assessment. The teacher will analyze if the student is using the meaning, the structure or the visual context of the story in order to decode unfamiliar words. This information will show the teacher if the student is focusing too much on one

particular strategy over the others allowing the teacher to develop ways to guide the student to use all three (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006).

Participants

All the participants in this study were bilingual 1st grade students from a low-income community in Southeastern, Washington. The school in which the study took place has a total enrollment of 528 students, 496 of which are students of Hispanic decent. A large percent (94.3%) of the students are English language learners and 68% of the students qualify as ELL by the state. The participants for this study are five students who where randomly selected from a classroom of 21 first grade bilingual Hispanic students. Each of the five students will be assessed through a running record and anecdotal notes to evaluate their progression.

Instruments

The particular instrument that will be used to measure student's growth will be through a running record that will be given to each of the five students at least once a month to show growth and gains, and will also be taking ongoing anecdotal notes. In this particular school district teachers are required to administer Running Records to each of the students. After the assessment is administered the teacher will analyze the Running Record, looking at the meaning, structure, and visual components.

Design

There were five students who will be participating in a guided reading group four to five times a week. Each of the students will be given a running record within the first month of school, and then assessed at a minimum of once a month after that to monitor the progression through time. After the assessment is administered they will be analyzed to look for areas of

difficulty for the student and to monitor that particular misconception that the student might have.

Procedure

Each of these five students were in a guided reading group four to five times a week, with each session lasting 15 to 20 minutes long. The same teacher will be working with the students in a guided reading group as well as administering the running record at the end of the month. Not all five students will work in the same-guided reading group since they are all currently functioning at different levels.

Treatment of the Data

After analyzing the assessments it facilitates the tracking of the students progression and gains in reading levels throughout the academic year. Keeping in mind the accuracy, meaning, structure and visual aspects of the while analyzing. One part of the analysis consists of looking at their accuracy, substitution, and appeal and told, omission, insertion, repetition, and self-correction. While also looking at behaviors and thinking about how the reading sounds. The teacher looks for evidence, which consists of three cues/categories that are the main source of information.

The information in this chapter was intended to review the methodology and receive additional information of how the study was conducted. By conducting this study it gave the teacher valuable information of the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student. Since not all students have the same styles of learning, it is important to focus on individual students to better serve each of their needs. The design, procedure and analysis of the data were important components to conducting an accurate and successful study. The specific limitations of this research stem from the small n size (n=5), with conducting the research on such a small group,

even though they were selected randomly, no data was used to select students, nor was there a control group where the same treatment was not given to see if gains could be made using another type of Reading instruction delivery method. In addition, the researcher used their understanding of what Guided Reading is to instruct the students, without feedback to the to the fidelity of this teaching method. While generalization to larger groups isn't appropriate, there are results of the research that all students could benefit from this type of instruction, the assumption must be put on hold without having a greater number of students showing the same types of results. The background and instructional method used to conduct this research was based on students who were instructed in English and this research was conducted on students learning to read in Spanish.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of Data

<u>Introduction</u>

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact and effectiveness of guided reading

for English Language Learners (ELL), and how often students increased their reading levels. A

running record was administered to five different students and focused on comprehension,

fluency, vocabulary, and phonics and decoding. During a guided reading group the teacher did a

detailed book introduction, which consisted of discussing the pictures, important vocabulary, and

high frequency words before allowing the students to read the new text. After the introduction

each of the students was allowed to read the new book a few times before leaving the group. The

student who was set to be administered a running record the following time the group met with

the teacher was not allowed to take the newly introduced book from the group until the

assessment was complete. The following data will show how the students progressed throughout

the school year looking at strengths and weaknesses.

<u>Description of the Environment</u>

The teacher as a researcher conducted the study during the 2011-12 academic school

year. The participants for this study were selected from a 1st grade classroom that consisted of

21 students who are native Spanish speakers. All students are ELL and they are part of the Late-

exit Bilingual Model. In the Late-exit Bilingual Model 1st graders are instructed in Spanish 80%

of their school day and the other 20% percent is English. Reading, Writing and Math are all

taught in their native language and Science and Social Studies in English.

While a guided reading group is in session (15-20 minutes) the other students were

involved in practicing other reading related activities. The options available to the other students

were reading independently, reading with a partner, word work, listening center and or reading with a Para-professional in which they were expected to read books and practice their books at their level. From the first day of school the students began building their stamina to 20-minute intervals to work independently, while focusing on specific strategies to help improve their reading while a guided reading group is in session. While a guided reading group is in session there are low level of noise (other kids practicing their reading), and kids up and walking around.

Research Question

Is the Guided Reading component within a Balanced Literacy program an effective and reliable reading program that helps first grade students English Language Learners make significant gains in reading?

Results of the Study

The following table shows how students progressed monthly and increased their reading levels. During the December and January time many students seemed to stay stagnant due to our two-week winter break. The students were categorized as Student 1-5 and were tracked each month. The results of the study show that providing guided reading lessons that are done accurately, ELL students can succeed in reading and have good comprehension and fluency. Analyzing the running records gave the teacher valuable information in order to instruct the students in the correct path that each required. All children can learn to read when the teacher has taken the time to see where each student is defaulting or stumbling. Granted that all five students made multiple level jumps in reading, but throughout the process each required more background with vocabulary that presented itself in the text and deeper conversations during the book introduction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1997).

	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March
Student 1	E	G	I	J	J	K	L
Student 2	C	D	F	G	G	H	I
Student 3	C	D	F	G	G	H	I
Student 4	B	D	E	F	F	G	H
Student 5	C	D	F	G	H	I	K

Figure 2. Table showing Student levels each month.

In table 3 in the appendix it will explain and show the description of each level and student behaviors that each student must possess before moving on to the next level. In order for the students to move to the next level in reading the teacher looked for 80-100% of the behaviors to be demonstrated by the student.

Outcomes Noted by Teacher-Researcher

When being purposeful and methodical while doing a book introduction in a Guided Reading group the students were increasing their reading levels while maintaining good comprehension and fluency. In order to be purposeful and methodical the teacher had to closely analyze each of the student running records in order to guide them in the right direction. Both Guided Reading and running records require a lot of practice, and with time they are quicker and easier to analyze. Also, in order for the levels to increase, the students must meet with the teacher 3-5 times a week in a guided reading group. In September 4 out of the 5 students were reading slightly below grade level, and at this point in time all 5 of the students are now on level or above.

Discussion of Data

As a bilingual teacher the author understood the importance of being purposeful and methodical during the book introduction and focusing on vocabulary. The results that were the final outcome were the ones that the author expected. For an educator who has little

understanding or practice with Guided Reading and running records it can be a very overwhelming reading program, and requires patience and practice. Guided Reading is one component within a balanced literacy program, and all the components feed off of each other.

Summary

The analysis included the results of 5 different students in reading over an academic school year. By being very purposeful and thoroughly analyzing the students running records the findings were the ones that were expected. By closely monitoring the student's strengths, weaknesses, and monitoring the behaviors that they each controlled was a great way to help raise the students reading level.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

  This topic was researched in order to see if Guided Reading was a reasonable program to teach English Language Learners (ELL) how to read effectively while maintaining good comprehension and fluency. Many schools throughout the country have been in search of a good reading program that allows ELL students to succeed and progress an adequate rate. The author's goal was to gain valuable and confirming information of the progression of the students. Many teachers often find themselves frustrated and at a loss of how to help ELL students. Many teachers lack the knowledge of what and how to conduct an effective Balanced Literacy program. Guided Reading is a component of Balanced Literacy, which requires the teacher to be very focused while introducing a new text, and scaffolding. Student's focus on the meaning of the story and application of various reading strategies to problem solve when they do hit a roadblock in their knowledge or reading ability. This is where knowledge and training come into practice so that the teacher can help the student. Fountas and Pinnell (1997) suggest that students need a rich and very focused book introduction and tools in order to adequately increase reading levels (p. 30).

Summary

  When the teacher has the knowledge and professional development in Guided Reading it can be an effective reading program for ELL students. Guided reading provides the opportunity to match reading instruction to individual students. Small group instruction allows for the teacher to model and prompt the student to think about the reading process supported by independent reading strategies and scaffolding. The instruction is guided by the student's needs

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through careful assessment (running records and DRA/EDL) and observations. Teachers tap into the student's prior knowledge and then build from there in order to scaffold. The objective is for teacher to work in small groups, to have children in the group that are similar in their development of a reading process and are able to read about the same level of text. Teachers who introduce the stories and assist children's reading in ways that help develop independent reading strategies, the goal is for children to read independently and silently. Emphasis is on reading increasingly challenging books over time, and children are grouped and regrouped in a dynamic process that involves ongoing observation and assessments (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996).

Conclusion

One of the outcomes of this study is that a teacher has to have a strong background and the knowledge in Guided Reading, this reading program can be a very strong program that helps ELL students gradually increase their reading abilities while maintaining good comprehension and fluency. Many times a student's success depends on the teacher's knowledge of how to work with student's strengths and weakness. The results that were shown in the previous chapter suggests how each student gradually improved each month after having Guided Reading instruction. The teacher providing the student with the right guidance and practice can assist the student to become a more successful reader that will comprehend and read fluently. This small action research project suggests that this might deserve future study. Both the teacher's knowledge and good understanding are necessary for the teacher to better instruct the students. The reading program, subject to the limitations, suggests that it may be positive for ELL students.

Recommendations

From conducting this action research project, the teacher researcher is convinced that it is important for teachers to have a clear understanding and the knowledge of how to facilitate a guided reading group and administer and analyze a running record. Teachers having the necessary resources and the professional development will aide the teacher of how to better work with each student's strengths and weaknesses in order to assist the students to make gains. A recommendation would be to discuss the topic of Guided Reading with administration to provide the resources and professional development necessary for teachers to be able to facilitate a guided reading group. A suggestion would be to have fully detailed staff training and then refreshers throughout the academic year for veteran teachers.

A second recommendation would be to provide teachers with an opportunity to observe other teachers conducting a guided reading group where they are administering and analyzing a running record. The reason for this recommendation is because it is a great way for teachers to see what they have learned in action, and becomes a visual of how to conduct a guided reading group and how to administer and analyze a running record.

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Appendices

Fluent	**Level 4**	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
	Level 3	Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
Non-fluent	**Level 2**	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.
	Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur—but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.

Table 1: Skills of Fluent and non-fluent readers.

Table 2: Coding a Running Record

Coding a Running Record

Behavior	Code	Description
Accurate Reading	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Record a check for each word read accurately. The line of checks matches the layout of print.
Substitution	attempt / text	The reader's attempt is placed over the accurate word on a line. When the child makes multiple attempts, each is recorded above the line with a vertical line in between.
Try	─── / text T	When the reader makes no attempt, he is instructed to try it. If there is no attempt, the word is told and a T is written below the line.
Appeal and Told	═A═ / text ─	The reader's appeal, either verbal or nonverbal, is recorded with an A above the line. If the child reads correctly, a check is made. If the child makes an attempt it is recorded above the line; if he doesn't or it is incorrect a "told" is recorded.
Omission	─── / text	A dash is placed on a line above the word in the text.
Insertion	word / ─	The word inserted by the reader is placed above the line and a dash is placed below.
Repetition		Place an R after a single word repeated; for a phrase or more of text repeated draw a line to the point to which the child returned. The number indicates number of repetitions.
Self-Correction	✓ ✓ attempt |SC / text	The symbol SC following the child's corrected attempt indicates SC at point of error. A small arrow can be used to indicate that the SC was made on the repetition.

FIGURE 7-1 Coding a running record

Table 3: Description of Guided Reading levels and Student Behaviors.

Description of the Level Sources: *Leveled Books for Readers Grades 3-6* (Fountas & Pinnell) and *Matching Books to Readers: Using Leveled Books in Guided Reading, K-3* (Fountas & Pinnell)	Student Behaviors *Fountas and Pinnell*
Level A • One line of text (focus on print, directionality) • Large spaces between words • Sentence structure is similar to students' language Repeated pattern • Includes basic sight words • Punctuation includes periods, question marks, and exclamation marks • Pictures are highly supportive • Topics are familiar to children • Focus on a single idea	**Level A—Emergent Behaviors** • Moves through text front to back • Turns pages • Left page before right page • Controls left to right movement • Remembers and uses language patterns • Matches word to word • Notices and interprets details in pictures • Uses oral language in relation to text • Predicts what makes sense • Locates familiar and new words
Level B • Two lines of text (return sweep) • Large spaces between words • Sentences increase in length • Sentence structure is similar to students' language Repeated words or pattern • Includes more basic sight words • Includes some word endings (e.g., s, ed, ing) Punctuation includes periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and some commas • Simple dialogue • Pictures are highly supportive • Topics are familiar to children • Focus on a single idea • Setting is present, but seldom a plot	**Level B—Emergent Behaviors** • Pays close attention to print noticing some features of letters and words • Uses knowledge of language syntax as a source of information • Matches voice with words on the page • Notices unknown words in text • Notices mismatches in meaning • Notices mismatches in language.
Level C • Increased number of words and lines of text • Large spaces between words • Sentences increase in length and may include some embedded clauses • Sentence structure is similar to students' language Some books have repeated words or pattern • Most books are about eight pages • Pictures are highly supportive (Students cannot rely on patterns and pictures to read with • Accuracy.) • Includes more basic sight words and some compound words • Includes word endings (e.g., s, ed, ing)	**Level C—Early Behaviors** • Uses visual information to predict • Uses visual information to check • Uses visual information to confirm • Controls word-by-word matching of voice with print • Uses illustrations to predict meaning • Uses illustrations to predict words • Checks illustration with print • Uses known words as anchors • Moves through the text fluently while reading for meaning • Solves some unfamiliar words independently

• Opportunities for decoding simple words • Punctuation includes periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and commas • Dialogue is frequently included • Topics are familiar to children • Characters and story plots are straightforward Experiential books – events and artifacts of everyday life	
Level D • Longer, more complex stories • Some compound sentences conjoined by "and" • Simple plot but may include several elaborate episodes • Topics are familiar, but may include abstract or unfamiliar ideas • Text layout is easy to follow, but font size may vary Texts range from ten to twenty pages • Pictures begin to extend meaning of text • New punctuation may be included (i.e., dashes, ellipses) • Larger number of high frequency words/greater variety • Includes more word endings, compound words, and multisyllable words • More opportunities for decoding words with familiar patterns	**Level D—Early Behaviors** • Controls early stages • Moves away from finger pointing as eyes take over the process • Uses patterns and language syntax to read with phrasing • Checks on one's reading using letter-sound relationship, words, parts of words • Rereads to confirm problem-solve • Checks one source of information against another to confirm, make another attempt, or self-control • Moves more fluently through the text • Actively reads fro meaning
Level E • Sentences include more embedded phrases and clauses • More variety in language including some literary language • Topics range beyond the familiar • Genres include realistic fiction, fantasy, and nonfiction (simple informational books) • Font size may vary • Texts range from ten to twenty pages • Text structure is more complex, often with several simple episodes • More characters, but not very developed • Picture support is moderate • Increase number of words and lines of print • Greater variety of high frequency words • Frequent dialogue and full range of punctuation • More multisyllable words and less common spelling patterns	**Level E—Early Behaviors** • Tracks print with eyes except at point of difficulty or on novel text • Uses Knowledge of language syntax and meaning to read with phrasing • Reads fluently • Solves new words with maintaining a focus on meaning • Rereads to check, confirm, or search • Self-corrects using multiple sources of information • Predicts what will happen next and reads to confirm • Uses known words to get to words not yet known • Relates one text to another • Uses more information from print to construct meaning
Level F • Language reflects patterns that are more characteristic of written language than spoken language • Concepts are more distant from local knowledge or the everyday world • Some texts have abstract ideas which require discussion	**Level F—Early Behaviors** • Is aware of punctuation and uses it for phrasing and fluency • Searches for visual information to figure out new words while reading • Uses the syntax of written language to predict, then checks the accuracy of the prediction • Analyzes new words and checks them against what

	makes sense or sounds right
• Themes emerge • Genres include realistic fiction, human and animal fantasy, simple folktales, and nonfiction (Informational texts) • Text range from ten to thirty pages • Full range of punctuation to enhance meaning • Longer texts may have longer sentences and/or more lines of text per page and shorter texts • may have unusual language patterns or technical words • Greater variety in vocabulary	• Controls early strategies even on novel text • Reads with fluent phrasing and attention to meaning • Moves quickly through text • Uses known words and parts of words as well as letter-sound relationships to get new words, and checks against other information such as meaning • Uses multiple sources of information to self-correct

Level G	Level G—Transitional Behaviors
• Sentences are longer with many embedded clauses • Several high frequency words which increase in difficulty • Large number of decodable words with regular and irregular patterns • Several episodes with a variety of characters • Ideas and vocabulary are more challenging with some specialized vocabulary • Story line is carried by the text • Pictures support and extend meaning • Readers are expected to remember information and action over a longer reading time	• Moves through text using pictures and print in an integrated way while attending to meaning • Solves new words by using words analysis, then checks words with meaning • Monitors own meaning • Self-corrects close to print of error • Discusses ideas from the story in a way that indicates understanding • Discusses characters in a way that indicates understanding and interpretation • Effectively manages a variety of texts, including fiction and non-fiction • Connects text to other text

Level H	Level H—Transitional Behaviors
• Language is not repetitious • Full range of high frequency words • Size and placement of print varies widely • Some repeated episodes • Content moves away from familiar experiences • Genres include realistic fiction, fantasy, folktales and nonfiction (informational texts) • Characters tend to learn and change • Picture support is used to enhance and extend meaning as well as arouse interest • Story events require interpretation	• Moves through text using pictures and print in an integrated way while attending to meaning • Solves new words by using words analysis, then checks words with meaning • Monitors own meaning • Self-corrects close to print of error • Discusses ideas from the story in a way that indicates understanding • Discusses characters in a way that indicates understanding and interpretation • Effectively manages a variety of texts, including fiction and non-fiction • Connects text to other text

Level I	Level I—Transitional Behaviors
• Multiple episodes are highly elaborated • Most text lengths are about the same as G and H (ten to thirty pages) but have smaller print size • Some longer texts thirty to forty pages • Texts use a great deal of dialogue • Pictures enhance meaning but provide little support for precise word solving and meaning • Complex word solving is required with multi-syllable words	• Fluent and phrased reading • Competent problem solving of new words on initial reading • Flexibility checks own reading against meaning • Uses information sources (M, S, V) in an integrated way while focusing on meaning • Demonstrates an understanding of and empathy with characters through discussion, art or writing • Moves toward easy, fluent, reading even of unfamiliar

	and difficult texts
	• Self-corrects at the point of error with fewer returns to the beginning of sentences or phrases
• Paragraphs and sentences are longer	• Copes with unfamiliar concepts
• Readers transition to texts that my call for sustaining interest and meaning over several reading periods	• Gains momentum while moving through text because knowledge is being constructed about how the text works and what is likely to say
• Some chapter-like books	
• Most books are narrative (realistic fiction, fantasy, and folktales) with a plot and solution	
• Informational books are shorter with more difficult content	
• Characters and story events require interpretation	

Level J	**Level J—Transitional Behaviors**
• Stories have similar characteristics to level I but are generally longer (some over fifty pages)	• Uses skills and strategies effectively on a variety of texts
• First chapter books	• Sustains interest and fluency through longer text
• Characters in series books will expand reading interest in reading, increasing the amount of time reading	• Easily comes back to a text if it requires more than one sitting
• Large amount of dialogue	• Solves unfamiliar words or concepts "on the run" without detracting from the meaning
• Full range of punctuation within longer, more complex sentences with many adjectives and adverbs	• Self-corrects when necessary to support meaning, but showing a general forward thrust (checking and self-correcting become more internal)
• Texts have one main plot with several episodes over a period of time – chapter books may only cover a period of one day	• Reads silently much of the time
	• Demonstrates an understanding of the story through other mediums
• Requires more interpretation on the part of the reader	• Moves flexibly from non-fiction to fiction and vise versa
• Requires quick solving of new words, including three or four syllables.	• Uses ideas from reading n their writing
	• Summarizes or extends a given text.

Level K	**Level K—Transitional Behaviors**
• Includes longer, slightly more complex chapter books with more characters	• Uses multiple sources of information in an integrated way
• Books have one plot, but many episodes are carried over a period of time	• Reads silently
	• Effectively and efficiently analyzes longer words
• Shorter books have more difficult vocabulary (not often used in speech by children), Challenging content, or more complex themes	• Uses a variety of words analysis strategies without losing meaning or fluency
• Genres include realistic fiction, fantasy, and nonfiction (informational texts)	• Reads in a phrased, fluent way over longer stretches of text
• Some fables or legends and historical fiction may be include (not requiring extensive background knowledge to understand)	• Demonstrates an understanding and the ability to interpret the stories from different perspectives and empathizes with characters through a variety of different mediums
• Large amount of dialogue used to determine what is going on in the plot	• Uses text structures to predict a likely sequence of events or to analyze and critique the text
• Characters show various perspectives	• Sustains characters and plot over several days
• Illustrations are placed throughout the text and are used to enhance enjoyment and helps students visualize	
• Readers explore the various connotations of words	

Level L	**Level L—Transitional Behaviors**
• Includes chapter books with fewer illustrations and complex picture books	Same behaviors as in Level K, but they are exhibited in connection with:
• Texts contain many multisyllable and technical words	

• Words are used for a range of connotative meanings • Print size is varied but often much smaller • Most sentences end in the middle of lines and continue from one line to the next • Includes a full range of genres from realistic fiction to biography • More characters are speaking with dialogue not always assigned • Plots and characters are more sophisticated • Characters develop and change in response to events in the story • Events in chapters build on each other requiring the reader to recall and keep track of information	• Longer stretches of text • More difficult vocabulary, ideas and languages structures • More complex ideas and topics • A grater range of genre