

SPECIAL PROJECT COMPONENTS)

Increasing Third Grade DIBELS Scores Using Walk-to-Read
and the Open Court Reading Program

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FACULTY APPROVAL

Increasing Third Grade DIBELS Scores Using Walk-to-Read
and the Open Court Reading Program

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

The researcher conducted a study on a group of third grade students in a rural town. The purpose of the study was to determine if third grade students' oral reading fluency scores would increase if the Open Court Reading and walk-to-read programs were used by the students. Students participated in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read 90 minutes a day five days a week. The Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment was used to assess students' oral reading fluency scores in the fall, winter, and spring. The pre-test and post-test results were compared to find that Open Court Reading and walk-to-read increased oral reading fluency scores as measured by the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background for the Project

The focus on oral reading fluency began with No Child Left Behind. The country's scores in reading were becoming lower every year, therefore the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 was partly created to help improve reading scores across the country. Reading First was a result from No Child Left Behind. The job of Reading First was to give grant money to schools to help improve reading achievement in children by using scientifically proven methods of instruction (Reading First, 2008). Students in grades K-3 benefited from the grant. Open Court Reading and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills were researched programs that Reading First approved.

The National Reading Panel was constructed when Congress asked the Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to consult with the Secretary of Education to develop a panel to look at researched-based information dealing with the teaching of reading to children (National Reading Panel, 2000). The panel found there were five main components were needed in a reading curriculum which included: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. The panel found fluency was a component that was too often neglected in classrooms (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Fluency scores of third grade students were below grade level according to the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills oral reading fluency assessment in the fall of 2008 in the school where the study took place. A reading program was needed to help third grade students reach third grade fluency levels by the spring of 2009. The researcher wanted to know if using walk-to-read and Open Court Reading would increase the fluency scores of third grade students to benchmark as measured by Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills oral reading fluency assessment.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to determine if third grade students involved in walk-to-read and Open Court Reading would increase oral reading fluency scores and meet benchmark at winter Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills testing. All students were tested in the fall and winter using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills oral reading fluency assessment.

Delimitations

The population of the third grade students was culturally diverse as was the population of the school district. The population for the whole district, k-12, was 494. The district was a very small rural district in Eastern Washington. The white population of the district was at 67.6% (Washington State Report Card,

2008). The percentage also included the high Ukrainian population of the district. The Hispanic population was 29.1%. The district's free and reduced lunch rate was 95%. Many teachers from the district commuted from nearby towns. Many parents of the students commuted out of town for work while some parents worked on agricultural farms surrounding the town. Other parents were employed by businesses in town such as a nursing home facility, school, grocery store, or restaurants.

The group of students used for the study were in third grade and came from two separate third grade classrooms. Students were grouped based on Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores from the beginning of September 2008. The students were placed in three groups. The groups were benchmark, strategic, and intensive. The intensive students received instruction in a room with other students at the same level and used a different curriculum than the other two groups of third graders. The strategic and benchmark groups were taught by two teachers who had been trained in using the Open Court Reading program. The researcher taught the strategic group of third graders. Data for the study was collected from the benchmark and strategic groups.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed all teachers working with the third grade students were highly qualified. All professionals working with the students, including para-professionals and reading coaches, were assumed to have had proper training

using Open Court Reading and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. The researcher assumed all students were treated equally. The writer assumed all materials were provided to use the programs accurately and with fidelity. The reading block was 90 minutes each day, and Open Court Reading was aligned to the Grade Level Expectations.

Hypotheses

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will make greater than expected progress from fall to winter as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a *t*-test.

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will make greater than expected progress from fall to spring as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a *t*-test.

Null Hypotheses

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will not make greater than expected progress from fall to winter as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a non-independent *t*-test with a significance level of $p < .05$.

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will not make greater than expected progress from fall to spring as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a non-independent *t*-test with a significance level of $p < .05$.

Significance of the Project

The researcher wanted to confirm using walk-to-read and the Open Court Reading program to improve the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores from the beginning of the year to the middle and end of the year. Positive results meant that walk-to-read and Open Court Reading programs were valid and that the school remained on the right track in reading instruction. Negative results meant students' scores were not affected positively and changes needed to be made in reading instruction throughout the school.

Procedure

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills testing of all third grade students took place September 2-17, 2008. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test was administered by the school reading coach and trained paraprofessionals. Directions for the test were strictly followed. The researcher began using walk-to-read and Open Court Reading September 8, 2008. Walk-to-read and Open Court Reading programs were run Monday through Friday. The program was run everyday from 8:40 am to 10:10 am. Third grade students went to one of three classrooms. One classroom was for third grade students at or above grade level or benchmark level. The second classroom was for students in third grade but at one reading level below third grade level or at the

strategic level. The third room was for third grade students two or more grade levels below in reading or intensive level. Students in the third room were not included in the study because a different reading program was used for instruction. A 90 minute reading block was enforced in all rooms. The third grade students received 20 minutes of fluency practice daily during the reading block. Third grade students' progress was monitored weekly with each student being individually tested. Students graphed fluency scores each week and were aware of individual gains. DIBELS post-test scores were collected in January of 2009 and May of 2009.

The reading coach and para-professionals gave the students the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test and were trained on how to give the test. The test was given in an empty classroom or in the hallways of the school. After the data was collected in the fall, winter, and spring, the researcher used a statpak to conduct the t-tests.

Definition of Terms

benchmark. Benchmark was the beginning and end of year goals for fluency for each grade level.

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was the assessment used to test students' early literacy skills.

fluency. Fluency was the ability to read a text with accuracy and speed (Fluency Instruction, n.d.).

intensive level. Students in this level of reading needed explicit instruction in all reading areas with reading interventions.

Open Court Reading. Open Court Reading was the scientifically researched-based reading program used in the school.

progress monitoring. Progress monitoring was a way to determine if students were making efficient progress in reading at the current grade level or to determine if other interventions needed to be in place to reach benchmark. Progress monitoring was done using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills.

Reading First. This Federal Grant was given to low performing schools to increase reading proficiency.

strategic level. Students in this level of reading needed specific instruction in certain reading areas with interventions.

walk-to-read. Walk-to-read was a leveled reading program where students attend instructional reading groups to receive reading instruction at individual levels.

Acronyms

DIBELS. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills.

ESEA. Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

ISF. Initial Sound Fluency.

LNF. Letter Naming Fluency.

NICHD. Director of National Institute of Child and Human Development.

NCLB. No Child Left Behind.

NWF. Nonsense Word Fluency.

NRP. National Reading Panel.

ORF. Oral Reading Fluency.

OSPI. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

PSF. Phoneme Segmentation Fluency.

RTF. Retell Fluency.

WUF. Word Use Fluency.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

One major component of reading comprehension was fluency. Students struggling with reading comprehension often times have had a problem with reading fluency also. The National Reading Panel report found fluency was one of the five main components in reading successfully and was often neglected in classrooms. Open Court Reading and DIBELS were on the list of approved reading programs and assessments put out by Reading First. Walk to Read was a system used by many schools with the Reading First grant. Each child walked to a reading group that supplied instruction at each student's level. Each reading group used a reading program approved by Reading First (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Importance of Reading

Reading was identified as one of the most important skills children learned in school. Children across the country have struggled with reading more than mathematics or writing. Failure in reading impacted children's self-confidence and motivation to learn. Reading ability in younger grades affected children's school performance in later grades (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). According to Armbuster, Lehr, and Osborn, forty percent of fourth grade students

did not read at grade level, and non-proficient readers had more difficulty in other subject areas (2001).

The National Reading Panel report identified five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). Phonemic awareness was defined “as the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words” (National Institute for Literacy, 2003, p. 2). Children understood words were made up of phonemes, or speech sounds. Students showed ability in phonemic awareness by recognizing words with the same beginning sound, recognizing the beginning and ending sounds in words, blending separate sounds to form a word, and breaking a word into separate sounds (National Institute for Literacy, 2003).

Phonics was defined in a number of ways. One source defined phonics as the understanding of “the relationships between the letters of written language and the individual sounds of spoken language” (National Institute for Literacy, 2003, p. 12). Students with strong phonics skills recognized familiar words automatically and accurately. Strong phonics skills contributed to students’ ability to read in isolation and connected text.

Fluency was defined as “the ability to read a text accurately and quickly” (Fluency Instruction, n.d. p. 1). Fluent readers wasted no time concentrating on decoding words. Fluent readers focused on the meaning of the text (Fluency

Instruction, n.d.). Fluency freed students to focus on what was read and not individual words (National Institute for Literacy, 2003).

Vocabulary referred to “the words we must know to communicate effectively” (National Institute for Literacy, 2003, p. 34). Oral vocabulary referred to spoken words or words heard by listening. Reading vocabulary referred to words used in print. Readers used vocabulary to find meaning in printed words and understood text.

Comprehension was defined as understanding what was read. Students read to comprehend the text. Unskilled readers without comprehension did not really read. Students without comprehension had no purpose to read and couldn’t think actively (National Institute for Literacy, 2003).

No Child Left Behind

All schools across the state were subject to the No Child Left Behind Act. The No Child Left Behind Act was signed by President George Bush on January 8, 2002. No Child Left Behind was born from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The purpose of NCLB was to “provide all children with a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education” (No Child Left Behind, n.d., p. 1).

The NCLB act had four important pillars written into the bill: stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents. School accountability was a

strong pillar. States made sure to get all students meeting standards and to close the achievement gap. The schools that didn't meet the goals and make progress, received corrective reprimands. If schools did not meet the goals five years running, the school received dramatic changes by the government (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

States and school districts gained more freedom and flexibility by moving federal education funds around to meet the needs of the individual district. Federal education funds were used as each district saw fit to improve student achievement within the district. School districts were allowed to transfer up to fifty percent of federal funds received. Districts used the money to hire new teachers, increase teacher pay, improve teacher training, and professional development (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

Under NCLB, districts used scientifically research-based programs and instruction to meet student needs. The scientifically research-based programs were especially seen in the area of reading under Reading First (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

Parents received more choices under NCLB. Parents of children that attended schools which did not meet achievement standards for two years, had the choice to relocate children to a higher performing school within the same district. Low-income students that attended schools that did not meet standards for three consecutive years, had the opportunity to receive supplemental educational

services such as tutoring, after-school services, and summer school (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

Reading First

The Reading First program stemmed from the NCLB Act. The main purpose of Reading First was to make sure all children were at or above grade level in reading by the end of third grade. Reading First did this by giving out grants to states and schools that filled out an application to receive the federal grant. Schools that received the grant used only programs that were researched and used instructional strategies and assessment tools that coincided with the research (Reading First Program Description, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Education, there was no approved list of Reading First programs to be used. The only requirement was the program used had to be scientifically researched (Reading First Resources, 2008). The amount of funding a school received depended on the amount of children from families with incomes below the poverty line that attended the school. The more low-income students that attended the school the higher the funding the school received (Reading First Program Description, 2008).

The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance conducted an impact study on Reading First. The interim report included data from 18 study sites. The report stated that Reading First had a positive impact on the amount of time the five essential components of reading instruction was used

in the classroom. The study did conclude that Reading First did not have significant impacts on reading comprehension scores for grades 1-3 (Reading First Impact Study: Interim Report, 2008).

Ability Grouping and Walk-to-Read

Ability grouping was defined by one source as “the practice of dividing students for instruction on the basis of their perceived capacities for learning” (Ability Grouping, 2002, p. 1). Ability grouping increased the achievement of students by reducing the gap in ability levels. Teachers were able to provide instruction at a specific level depending on the group’s needs. Teachers used ability grouping to increase instruction pace for high achievers and provide individual attention, repetition, and review for lower-level learners (Hollifield, 1987). Studies showed ability grouping caused low-achieving students to feel more comfortable with other students of the same achievement level. Low-achieving students participated more in class. High-achieving showed more interest in learning (Ability Grouping, 2002).

There were two main types of ability grouping. The first was called within-class grouping. Grouping occurred when teachers divided students according to ability into small groups within the same classroom. Within-class grouping usually took place during reading and mathematics instruction. The second type of ability grouping was between-class grouping. Schools practiced separating students throughout the school into different classes based on

achievement usually in mathematics and reading. Students placed in the same group were called homogeneously grouped.

Within-class ability grouping and between-class ability grouping occurred frequently in elementary schools across the country. Within-class ability grouping was most common in reading instruction. The average number of groups was two to three. Each group worked on materials suited for the group's instructional level. Between-class ability grouping was common in both mathematics and reading instruction. Students from the same grade level or across several grade levels were grouped by ability (Ability Grouping, 2002).

The walk-to-read model was a form of the between-class ability grouping. Students were organized into small groups across grades based on individual instructional levels. At a specific time during the day, students walked to the class that delivered instruction at the appropriate reading level. When the reading block of time ended, students returned to homeroom classes (Reed, 2004). According to Janet Wheaton, principal of Roosevelt Elementary in Granger, Washington, "In walk-to-read, with the leveled instruction, you can truly target kids where they are and then move them- they're not just stuck there" (Reed, 2004, pg. 4).

Open Court Reading

The Open Court Reading Program was a basal program designed by SRA/McGraw-Hill for elementary grades K-6. The program focused on teaching

decoding, comprehension, inquiry and investigation, and writing in logical progression. There were three main parts to the Open Court Reading Program. The Preparing to Read section taught phonemic awareness, sounds and letters, fluency, phonics and word knowledge. The Reading and Responding section taught understanding of literature, comprehension, inquiry, and practical reading applications. Third, the Language Arts section taught communication skills, writing process strategies, English language conventions, and basic computer skills (Open Court Reading, 2008).

In primary grades, Open Court focused on phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness instruction began in kindergarten. Students listened for environmental sounds, manipulated words, compared word length, clapped syllables, and worked with rhymes. Students developed the ability to correspond sounds and spelling. In first through third grades, dictation helped students to cement the skill of sound spelling correspondence. Phonics used as a tool for spelling enhanced the reading proficiency of the students.

Open Court focused on comprehension instruction. Students were taught how to use research-based reading strategies to help understanding of read materials. The reading strategies taught were predicting, asking questions, making connections, monitoring and clarifying, summarizing, visualizing, and monitoring and adjusting reading speed. The strategies helped students to monitor understanding, resolve problems, and make sense of what was read.

Open Court Reading also focused on vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary was taught through direct and indirect instruction in kindergarten through sixth grade. Previous to reading a story, students developed definitions of given words. While reading, students clarified the meaning of the unfamiliar words while reading the story. On the completion of reading the story, students learned more about vocabulary through instruction in synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, roots, affixes, and inflectional endings (McRae, 2002).

A study conducted on schools using Open Court Reading in California came up with substantial findings. The report showed Open Court schools outgained Non-Open Court schools by 50 to 75 percent over a three year period. The schools with the largest difference had a large population of students that came from low Socio-Economic Status backgrounds or minority backgrounds. The results of the study concluded that students who attended schools using the Open Court Reading Program acquired basic reading skills quicker than students who attended demographically similar schools that did not use the Open Court Reading Program (McRae, 2002).

No official validity and reliability scores were found for the Open Court Reading Program. A field study conducted by the University of Wisconsin came up with results for a selected treatment group. According to Borman, Dowling, and Schneck (n.d.):

The Open Court effect sizes were $d=0.16$ for the Reading Composite, $d=0.19$ for Vocabulary, and $d=0.12$ for Reading Comprehension. These effects achieved across this diverse group of classrooms and schools from across the nation demonstrate the potential for large-scale improvement of literacy outcomes through the scale-up of Open Court Reading (p. 2).

Fluency

Fluency was defined in many ways. One source defined fluency as “the ability to read a text accurately and quickly” (National Institute for Literacy, 2003, p. 22). Fluent readers recognized words instantly and grouped words to gain meaning from text. Fluent readers read with expression and with automaticity. Non-fluent readers read slowly and word-by-word. The lack of fluency inhibited comprehension of the text.

Fluency was a very important part of reading instruction. Fluency affected the comprehension of the students. Fluent readers did not have to concentrate on each word but focused on what the text meant. Fluent readers focused on the meaning of the text and the connection with background knowledge. Fluent readers’ word recognition and comprehension were simultaneous. Less fluent readers struggled over the words and lost the meaning of the text.

Scientific research on fluency has led to two instructional approaches. The first approach required students to read aloud a sample text repeatedly. Students were monitored by an educator while reading aloud. The second

approach required students to read silently and independently. (National Institute for Literacy, 2003).

DIBELS

DIBELS, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, was an assessment tool developed to measure a student's skills in reading and success of progression in reading (Hall, 2006). DIBELS was developed by Deno and colleagues in the 1970's-80's. Development was conducted at the Institute for Research and Learning Disabilities at the University of Minnesota. Research on DIBELS began in the late 1980's at the University of Oregon. The authors of DIBELS were motivated to help students' improve educational outcomes in reading. The authors especially focused on children from diverse or poor backgrounds (General Information, 2008).

Each word in DIBELS was significant. Dynamic meant the test measured change over time in progression of early literacy skills. Skills were assessed at each grade level based on which skills predicted reading success or failure. Indicators referred to the subtests within DIBELS that provided an indication of a student's performance quickly and efficiently. Basic referred to the skills used to determine fluent reading and comprehension. Early referred to DIBELS only testing skills important in early reading. Literacy indicated that the assessment only tested skills in reading and not mathematics or writing. Skills referred to the underlying skills important in learning to read (Hall, 2006).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was used in three primary ways. The first way was as a screening instrument. The assessment looked to see if the student had all the skills in place to read at the current grade level. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was used as a form of progress monitoring to determine if reading instruction was effective. DIBELS was also used as an outcome assessment to determine the effectiveness of the school's overall reading programs (Hall, 2006).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was conducted in a systematic way. The assessment consisted of one-minute fluency timings that measured the development of early reading skills (Hintze, Ryan, and Stoner, 2003). Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills predicted if a student was at risk for reading success or failure by the speed student accurately completed the reading tasks. The early reading skills measured were initial sound fluency (ISF), letter naming fluency (LNF), phoneme segmentation fluency (PSF), nonsense word fluency (NWF), oral reading fluency (ORF), retell fluency (RTF), and word use fluency (WUF). Initial sound fluency referred to production and recognition of initial sounds in words. Letter naming fluency referred to recognition and naming of uppercase and lowercase letters on a page in different fonts. Phoneme segmentation fluency was segmentation of spoken words into individual sounds. Nonsense word fluency referred to the ability to read nonsense words with two or three letters. Oral reading fluency measured words read

correctly in one minute from a grade level passage. Retell fluency measured the ability to retell passage information that was just read. Word use fluency measured vocabulary by tallied numbers of words spoken in response to target words (Hall, 2006).

Many studies have been done to determine the validity and reliability of DIBELS. According to Hall (2006):

Alternate form reliability of the DIBELS measures is generally considered adequate, ranging from .72 to .94 for the various indicators. The lowest reliability measure is for the ISF at .72. By repeating this measure five times on five days using multiple alternative forms, the resulting average score would have a reliability of above .90 (p. 283).

According to James Eck (n.d.), the reliability of DIBELS ranged from .92 to .97, and the validity ranged from .52-.91.

Summary

Research informed the author students across the country struggled in reading more than any other subject. Fluency was one of the most important parts of reading instruction. Fluency directly affected the comprehension of students.

The No Child Left Behind Act was created to provide all children with the opportunity to gain a high-quality education. No Child Left Behind had four important pillars written into the Act which included: stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven education methods, and

increased choices for parents. Reading First stemmed from the NCLB Act.

Reading First gave out grants to schools using research-based reading programs with students.

Ability grouping grouped students according to ability level in the classroom and across grade levels. Grouping helped teachers focus on the needs of individual students. The walk-to-read model had children go to the classroom teacher providing appropriate level instruction. Walk-to-read went between grades or across grade levels.

Open Court Reading was a scientifically-researched reading program that proved to work well with low-socioeconomic and minority students. Open Court focused on phonemic awareness, comprehension, vocabulary, and writing.

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was an assessment used to assess student reading fluency. Extensive research was conducted by the University of Oregon on DIBELS.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Treatment of Data

Introduction

The researcher wanted to compare oral reading fluency scores of third grade students using DIBELS and Open Court Reading programs using a walk-to-read model. For the study, the author used the oral reading fluency scores of 18 third grade students. The third grade students were taught from the Open Court Reading program and used the walk-to-read model for 90 minutes a day, five days a week. The group of third grade students were tested in the September of 2008, January of 2009, and May of 2009 using the DIBELS oral fluency assessment. The pre and post scores were compared by the researcher.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to see if walk-to-read and Open Court Reading helped students make greater than expected growth on DIBELS scores. The study was conducted using quantitative research. The study was considered quasi-experimental since a control group was not used. Fall, winter, and spring DIBELS scores were collected as data. The data was put into a non-independent t-test where data was compared and analyzed. The StatPak program was used for computation of the data.

Participants

The population of the third grade students was culturally diverse as was the population of the school district. The population for the whole district, k-12, was 494. The district was a very small rural district in Eastern Washington. The white population of the district was at 67.6%. The percentage also included the high Ukrainian population of the district. The Hispanic population was 29.1%. The district's free and reduced lunch rate was 95% (Washington State Report Card, 2008).

The group of students used for the study were in third grade and came from two separate third grade classrooms. Students were grouped based on Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores from the beginning of September 2008. The students were placed in three groups. The groups were benchmark, strategic, and intensive. The intensive students received instruction in a room with other students at the same level and used a different curriculum than the other two groups of third graders. The strategic and benchmark groups were taught by two teachers who had been trained in using the Open Court Reading program. The researcher taught the strategic group of third graders. Of the third grade students included in the study, seven students were in the strategic group and 11 students were in the benchmark group.

Data for the study was collected from the benchmark and strategic groups.

The researcher chose to conduct the study during the 2008-2009 school year.

Student oral reading fluency growth was compared from the fall of 2008 to the winter of 2009, and then again from the fall of 2008 to the spring of 2009.

Instruments

The assessment used to assess the third grade students' oral reading fluency scores was the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. The assessment was administered by a trained reading coach or trained paraprofessional. Each student read three reading passages. The students were given one minute to read each passage. Each student's middle score was used for the oral reading fluency score. A booklet, timer, and pencil were needed to conduct the DIBELS testing.

DIBELS, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, was an assessment tool developed to measure a student's skills in reading and success of progression in reading (Hall, 2006). DIBELS was developed by Deno and colleagues in the 1970's-80's. Development was conducted at the Institute for Research and Learning Disabilities at the University of Minnesota. Research on DIBELS began in the late 1980's at the University of Oregon. The authors of DIBELS were motivated to help students' improve educational outcomes in reading. The authors especially focused on children from diverse or poor backgrounds (General Information, 2008).

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Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was used in three primary ways. The first way was as a screening instrument. The assessment looked to see if the student had all the skills in place to read at the current grade level. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was used as a form of progress monitoring to determine if reading instruction was effective. DIBELS was also used as an outcome assessment to determine the effectiveness of the school's overall reading programs (Hall, 2006).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills was conducted in a systematic way. The assessment consisted of one-minute fluency timings that measured the development of early reading skills (Hintze, Ryan, and Stoner, 2003). Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills predicted if a student

was at risk for reading success or failure by the speed student accurately completed the reading tasks. The early reading skills measured were initial sound fluency (ISF), letter naming fluency (LNF), phoneme segmentation fluency (PSF), nonsense word fluency (NWF), oral reading fluency (ORF), retell fluency (RTF), and word use fluency (WUF). Initial sound fluency referred to production and recognition of initial sounds in words. Letter naming fluency referred to recognition and naming of uppercase and lowercase letters on a page in different fonts. Phoneme segmentation fluency was segmentation of spoken words into individual sounds. Nonsense word fluency referred to the ability to read nonsense words with two or three letters. Oral reading fluency measured words read correctly in one minute from a grade level passage. Retell fluency measured the ability to retell passage information that was just read. Word use fluency measured vocabulary by tallied numbers of words spoken in response to target words (Hall, 2006).

Many studies have been done to determine the validity and reliability of DIBELS. According to Hall (2006):

Alternate form reliability of the DIBELS measures is generally considered adequate, ranging from .72 to .94 for the various indicators. The lowest reliability measure is for the ISF at .72. By repeating this measure five times on five days using multiple alternative forms, the

resulting average score would have a reliability of above .90 (p. 283).

According to James Eck (n.d.), the reliability of DIBELS ranged from .92 to .97, and the validity ranged from .52-.91.

Design

The researcher studied the benchmark and strategic students in third grade during the 2008-2009 school year. The students received 90 minutes of reading instruction from the Open Court Reading program five days a week using the walk-to-read model.

The study was conducted using quantitative research and was considered quasi-experimental since a control group was not used. Fall, winter, and spring DIBELS scores were collected as data. Pre-test scores were collected in September of 2008 and were compared to post-test scores that were collected in January of 2009. The pre-test scores from September 2008 were then compared to another set of post-test scores gathered in May 2009. The comparison of pre-test scores in September of 2009 with both scores in January 2009 and May 2009 allowed for the review of the entire academic year.

Procedure

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills testing of all third grade students took place September 2-17, 2008. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test was administered by the school reading coach and

trained paraprofessionals. Directions for the test were strictly followed. The researcher began using walk-to-read and Open Court Reading September 8, 2008. Walk-to-read and Open Court Reading programs were run Monday through Friday. The program was run everyday from 8:40 am to 10:10 am. Third grade students went to one of three classrooms. One classroom was for third grade students at or above grade level or benchmark level. The second classroom was for students in third grade but at one reading level below third grade level or at the strategic level. The third room was for third grade students two or more grade levels below in reading or intensive level. Students in the third room were not included in the study because a different reading program was used for instruction. A 90 minute reading block was enforced in all rooms. The third grade students received 20 minutes of fluency practice daily during the reading block. Third grade students' progress was monitored weekly with each student being individually tested. Students graphed fluency scores each week and were aware of individual gains. DIBELS post-test scores were collected in January of 2009 and May of 2009.

The reading coach and para-professionals gave the students the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test and were trained on how to give the test. The test was given in an empty classroom or in the hallways of the school.

After the data was collected in the fall, winter, and spring, the researcher used a program called StatPak to conduct the t-tests.

Treatment of the Data

The author collected fall, winter, and spring DIBELS oral reading fluency scores for 18 third grade students during the 2008-2009 school year. The data was treated by conducting a non-independent *t*-test from the program StatPak to determine the significance of the scores. The DIBELS pre-test scores were compared to the post-test scores collected in January 2009 and May 2009.

Summary

The researcher studied the benchmark and strategic students in third grade during the 2008-2009 school year. The students received 90 minutes of reading instruction from the Open Court Reading program five days a week using the walk-to-read model.

The study was conducted using quantitative research and was considered quasi-experimental since a control group was not used. Fall, winter, and spring DIBELS scores were collected as data. Pre-test scores were collected in September of 2008 and were compared to post-test scores that were collected in January of 2009. The pre-test scores from September 2008 were then compared to another set of post-test scores gathered in May 2009. The comparison of pre-test scores in September of 2009 with both scores in January 2009 and May 2009

allowed for the review of the entire academic year. The data was treated by conducting a non-independent t -test from the program StatPak to determine the significance of the scores.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The researcher conducted the study to determine whether using walk-to-read and the Open Court Reading Program would increase third grade DIBELS scores. Third grade students in the benchmark and strategic group were included in the study. Third grade students in the intensive group used another reading program other than Open Court Reading and were not included in the study. The third grade students participated in the Open Court Reading Program five days a week for 90 minutes a day. The students were tested using the DIBELS oral reading fluency assessment in September 2008 to collect pretest scores. Post-tests were conducted using DIBELS in January and May of 2009. September scores were compared to January and May scores using a non-independent *t*-test.

Description of the Environment

The population of the third grade students was culturally diverse as was the population of the school district. The population for the whole district, k-12, was 494. The district was a very small rural district in Eastern Washington. The white population of the district was at 67.6% (Washington State Report Card, 2008). The percentage also included the high Ukrainian population of the district. The Hispanic population was 29.1%. The district's free and reduced lunch rate

was 95%. Many teachers from the district commuted from nearby towns. Many parents of the students commuted out of town for work while some parents worked on agricultural farms surrounding the town. Other parents were employed by businesses in town such as a nursing home facility, school, grocery store, or restaurants.

The group of students used for the study were in third grade and came from two separate third grade classrooms. Students were grouped based on Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores from the beginning of September 2008. The students were placed in three groups. The groups were benchmark, strategic, and intensive. The intensive students received instruction in a room with other students at the same level and used a different curriculum than the other two groups of third graders. The strategic and benchmark groups were taught by two teachers who had been trained in using the Open Court Reading program. The researcher taught the strategic group of third graders. Data for the study was collected from the benchmark and strategic groups.

Hypothesis/Research Question

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will make greater than expected progress from fall to winter as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a *t*-test.

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will make greater than expected progress from fall to spring as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a *t*-test.

Null Hypothesis

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will not make greater than expected progress from fall to winter as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a non-independent *t*-test with a significance level of $p < .05$.

Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read will not make greater than expected progress from fall to spring as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a non-independent *t*-test with a significance level of $p < .05$.

Results of the Study

Table 1.

t-test for Pre-Post Fall to Winter DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Scores for Benchmark and Strategic Students in Third Grade

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre	18	79.06	21.36
Post	18	100.83	24.19

df= 17 *t* = 6.79 $p < .001$

The study conducted by the researcher was significant according to Table 1. The students demonstrated greater than average growth from the pre-test given in September of 2008 to the post-test given in January of 2009 after using the Open Court Reading Program and participating in the walk-to-read model. When the researcher conducted a non-independent *t*-test for the benchmark and strategic students, the *t*-value was 6.79 and the degree of freedom was 17. The *t*-value was significant beyond the .001 probability level.

The null hypothesis was rejected. Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read did make greater than expected progress from fall to winter as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a *t*-test.

Table 2.

t-test for Pre-Post Fall to Spring DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Scores for Benchmark and Strategic Students in Third Grade

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre	18	79.06	21.36
Post	18	112.94	20.30
<hr/>			
df= 17	<i>t</i> =	10.40	p < .001

The study conducted by the researcher was significant according to Table 2. The students demonstrated greater than average growth from the pre-test given in September of 2008 to the post-test given in May of 2009 after using the Open Court Reading Program and participating in the walk-to-read model. When the researcher conducted a non-independent *t*-test for the benchmark and strategic students, the *t*-value was 10.40 and the degree of freedom was 17. The *t*-value was significant beyond the .001 probability level.

The null hypothesis was rejected. Third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read did make greater than expected progress from fall to spring as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a *t*-test.

Findings

After the researcher analyzed the data from the *t*-tests, the researcher found third grade students that participated in the Open Court Reading Program and walk-to-read made greater than expected growth as measured by the DIBELS oral reading fluency assessment. The pre-test demonstrated a mean oral reading fluency score of 79.06 per minute for the study group. The post-test conducted in January demonstrated a mean oral reading fluency score of 100.83 per minute for the study group. The post-test conducted in May demonstrated a mean oral reading fluency score of 112.94 per minute for the study group. The findings

supported the use of Open Court Reading and walk-to-read for future third grade students in the benchmark and strategic groups.

Discussion

The results from the study indicate that third grade students increased their oral reading fluency scores by participating in the Open Court Reading Program and the walk-to-read model. The *t*-tests conducted on the pre-test and post-test scores showed a significance beyond the .001 probability level.

The results of the study also supported the findings of McRae (2002). McRae's research found that the schools with the largest difference in gaining early reading skills quickly using the Open Court Reading Program had a large population of students that came from low Socio-Economic Status backgrounds or minority backgrounds. The school the researcher's study was conducted had a free and reduced lunch rate of 95% and a large minority percentage.

Summary

The third grade students were tested using the DIBELS oral reading fluency assessment in the fall, winter, and spring. The author gave the description of the environment at the beginning of the chapter. The hypotheses and null hypotheses were restated. The two hypotheses were supported. The results of the study concluded that third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and

walk-to- read did make greater than expected progress from fall to winter and fall to spring as measured by a pre-post DIBELS test using a *t*-test.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The focus on oral reading fluency began with No Child Left Behind. The country's scores in reading became lower every year, therefore the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 was partly created to help improve reading scores across the country. Reading First was a result from No Child Left Behind. The job of Reading First was to give grant money to schools to help improve reading achievement in children by using scientifically proven methods of instruction (Reading First, 2008). Students in grades K-3 benefited from the grant. Open Court Reading and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills were researched programs that Reading First approved.

The researcher taught at a Reading First school who received grant money to improve achievement. The researcher wanted to know if using Open Court Reading and walk-to-read would increase third grade DIBELS oral reading fluency scores during the 2008-2009 school year. The third grade students were tested in September, January, and May using the DIBELS oral reading fluency assessment. September scores were compared with January and May scores. The results showed that third grade students participating in Open Court Reading and walk-to-read did make greater than expected growth in reading fluency.

Summary

The author investigated increased third grade DIBELS scores using walk-to-read and the Open Court Reading Program. Students in the benchmark and strategic groups participated in walk-to-read and the Open Court Reading Program five days a week for 90 minutes a day during the 2008-2009 school year. Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills scores were collected in September, January, and May. The September scores were compared to the January and May scores to find the growth of third grade students in the area of fluency. The researcher predicted that third grade students would make greater than expected growth from fall to winter and from fall to spring on oral reading fluency scores.

The author researched the areas of the importance of reading, No Child Left Behind, Reading First, Open Court Reading, DIBELS, ability grouping and walk-to-read, and fluency. Key findings were reading was identified as one of the most important skills children learned in school. Children across the country have struggled with reading more than mathematics or writing. Failure in reading impacted children's self-confidence and motivation to learn. Reading ability in younger grades affected children's school performance in later grades (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). According to Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn, forty percent of fourth grade students did not read at grade level, and non-proficient readers had more difficulty in other subject areas (2001). One of the most important components of reading was fluency. Fluency was defined as "the

ability to read a text accurately and quickly” (Fluency Instruction, n.d. p. 1). Fluent readers wasted no time concentrating on decoding words. Fluent readers focused on the meaning of the text (Fluency Instruction, n.d.). Fluency freed students to focus on what was read and not individual words (National Institute for Literacy, 2003). The research conducted by the author convinced the author of the importance of reading instruction, especially fluency. Fluency was the foundation of the study conducted by the author.

The study was conducted using quantitative research and was considered quasi-experimental since a control group was not used. Fall, winter, and spring DIBELS scores were collected as data. Pretest scores were collected in September of 2008 and were compared to post test scores that were collected in January of 2009. The pre-test scores from September 2008 were then compared to another set of post-test scores gathered in May 2009. The comparison of pre-test scores in September of 2009 with both scores in January 2009 and May 2009 allowed for the review of the entire academic year. The scores were compared using a non-independent *t*-test.

After the researcher analyzed the data from the *t*-tests, the researcher found third grade students participating in the Open Court Reading Program and walk-to-read made greater than expected growth as measured by the DIBELS oral reading fluency assessment.

Conclusions

In conclusion, third grade students in the benchmark and strategic groups made better than expected growth in oral reading fluency by participating in walk-to-read and using the Open Court Reading Program. The two hypotheses were supported by the study. Students participated in 90 minutes of reading using the Open Court Reading program five days a week. The reading program along with walk-to-read contributed to the increase in oral reading fluency scores in third grade students during the 2008-2009 school year.

Other conclusions made by the researcher were that students' confidence improved as the fluency scores improved. Students graphed the scores in an assessment notebook and were proud of the gains made. Students were able to show graphed scores at conferences to parents. Students received praise from parents which led to more increases in confidence levels. Failure in reading had impacted students' confidence in the past, but the success in reading fluency experienced during the 2008-2009 school year impacted students' confidence positively. Students showed excitement for reading.

Recommendations

Based upon the conclusions, the researcher suggests that using Open Court Reading and walk-to-read are valid programs to use in reading instruction. The author also believes that the school should continue to use the Open Court

Reading program as the core reading program for third grade and the walk-to-read model for ability grouping for reading groups. The DIBELS oral reading fluency assessment was beneficial in assessing students' oral reading fluency progress. Students gained confidence in oral reading fluency skills by graphing progress. The researcher recommends continued graphing in the future.

The author suggests future studies be conducted using Open Court Reading and walk-to-read and the effect on oral reading fluency scores. The future studies should be conducted over a longer period of time, three to five years, using the Open Court Reading and walk-to-read programs. Similar studies should be conducted in second and fourth grades also using the Open Court Reading Program and walk-to-read. The researcher also feels that the Open Court Reading Program should be used with the students in the intensive reading group in third grade. Open Court Reading was successful with the benchmark and strategic groups, and the author feels it would be successful with the intensive group also. Studies should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of Open Court Reading and walk-to-read with increasing intensive students' fluency scores.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1

DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Assessment Scores for Benchmark and Strategic Third Grade Students for the 2008-2009 School Year.

Student	September 2008	January 2009	May 2009
A	54	70	106
B	81	96	117
C	71	89	99
D	71	80	87
E	59	83	95
F	31	65	81
G	108	141	134
H	86	102	99
I	54	83	112
J	104	128	138
K	60	57	78
L	87	118	130
M	89	99	111
N	83	122	116
O	96	102	119
P	117	124	156
Q	75	124	132
R	97	132	123