

Improving Reading Scores  
with Performance Assessments

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An Action Research Project

Presented to

Dr. Steve Morelan

Heritage University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters in Education

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Spring 2008

FACULTY APPROVAL

Improving Reading Scores  
with Performance Assessments

Approved for the Faculty

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to determine the effectiveness of Performance Assessments on students reading abilities. This project included a sample group of 107 first grade students from the 2006-2007 school year and a second sample group of 110 first grade students from the 2007-2008 school year. Both groups attended Washington Elementary School in Sunnyside, Washington. The data was collected from the Oral Reading Fluency scores from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills test. When data was analyzed, students that received every other day Performance Assessment testing did not make greater than expected gains with their reading abilities.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Background for the Project

Low reading abilities that interfere with students' academic success has caused great concern among the educational population. National leaders declared illiteracy an emergency in need of immediate attention (Mithers, 2001). According to Kean (2008), as the nation searched for ways to improve student achievement, educators and policy makers continued to evaluate and reform their education systems.

Educators dealt with some type of educational reform in a variety of ways over the last twenty years. Educational reforms like former President G.H.W. Bush's *Goals 2000*, shifted schools in the United States to a standards-based system. Tougher standards meant increased scores from high stakes testing and a competitiveness to compare student performance among schools and districts. Kean (2008) further stated that educational testing, or assessment, was a key component of all education systems, but no single test did everything.

In 1996, former President Clinton acknowledged in his State of the Union Address that "a significant goal of his administration was to ensure that all children could read by the end of grade 3" (Vaughn, 2001, p. 2). President Clinton then launched the America Reads Challenge (Walker, Scherry & Morrow,

1999). The goal was that all children were able to read independently by the end of third grade. After the third grade, studies show that children who cannot read at their grade level show a diminished chance of future success, increased chance of dropping out of school, reduced job opportunities, and an increase in derelict activities.

President Bush continued the educational reform with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, which was signed into law in 2002. Since NCLB, there has been an even greater push in education in the area of high-stakes testing. Schools scores determined the funding the school would receive. Educators spent every available minute preparing students to take the test. According to Gene R. Carter (2005), Executive Director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) the focus has shifted from educating the whole child to educating the child to pass the test.

There was no question that educators were asked to do more with less time. In first grade classrooms, teachers were challenged to provide effective literacy instruction while faced with overwhelming diversity in terms of student readiness. Students that were at risk, needed to be identified early so interventions could take place.

### Statement of the Problem

Washington Elementary School in Sunnyside, Washington was a Reading First School. In order to receive federal funds, each year a certain percentage of students had to meet reading benchmarks at each grade level. Reading First defined benchmark for students in the first grade as reading 40 words correct per minute as measured by the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment. These same students needed to read at 53 words correct per minute upon entering second grade. If students left first grade below benchmark, many would enter second grade below benchmark. There was a possibility this pattern would have continued into the higher-grade levels, leaving more students behind grade level, if nothing was done. There was a strong need for an intervention program in the primary grades.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if implementing an every other day Performance Assessment test would increase students' scores on the DIBELS assessment. First grade staff at Washington Elementary wanted to know if the assessments and re-teaching that was taking place with paraprofessionals had any impact on the reading benchmark scores.

#### Delimitations

This project included students from six first grade classrooms at Washington Elementary School in the Sunnyside School District. The study was conducted during the 2007-2008 school year. Participants ranged in age from six to eight years old. The population of Washington Elementary School is primarily low-income Hispanic students.

Students that were in Special Education programs were not included in the study because they received instruction from a different reading curriculum. Students that were in the Spanish strand of two Dual-Language classrooms were not included as well. These students did not receive instruction in English and were not tested with DIBELS.

### Assumptions

The researcher assumed instruction was given in a consistent manner and that all students had a similar motivation to learn the content. Since students were part of a Walk to Read program, the researcher also assumed the learning environment was steady in the other classrooms. It was also assumed that all students were taught under comparable circumstances. Assumptions were made that all students were willing to try their best with the assessments. Additionally, it was assumed that all students had similar abilities.

### Hypothesis

Elementary students need to leave first grade reading at benchmark as defined by Reading First. Students that receive every other day Performance Assessment testing will make greater than expected growth in Reading as measured by the oral reading fluency portion of the DIBELS assessment than students who do not receive the instruction.

#### Null Hypothesis

Students that receive every other day Performance Assessment testing will not make greater than expected growth in Reading as measured by the oral reading fluency portion of the DIBELS assessment than students who do not receive the instruction. Significance was determined for  $p \geq .05, .01, .001$ .

#### Significance of the Project

The purpose of this project was to provide a factual base of information regarding the use of every other day Performance Assessment tests in an elementary school setting. The author conducted the project to answer the following question: Was the time spent on every other day Performance Assessment testing worthwhile? If data could be documented that supported the use of the testing, then the first grade staff would continue to use the testing. If the testing was found to have no significant impact on the Reading scores, then the first grade staff would re-evaluate to determine the best way to use paraprofessionals during the reading block.

## Procedure

In the project, 107 students from the 2006-2007 school year met the qualifications for being part of the control group. For the 2007-2008 school year, 110 students met the qualifications for treatment. The students were pre-tested in the winter and posted in the spring of their respective school years. The students were tested using DIBELS. Only the Oral Reading Fluency portion of the test was used for this project. During the course of the school year, the students were given instruction in a Walk to Read format using Open Court curriculum. Additionally, students were tested every other day using the Performance Assessments from the Open Court curriculum.

## Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following words were defined:

• Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. A set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development.

Nonsense Word Fluency. Unfamiliar nonsense words used to assess a child's knowledge of letter-sound correspondences as well their ability to blend letters together.

Oral Reading Fluency. Assesses a child's skill of reading connected text in grade-level material.

Word Use Fluency. Assessment of a student's vocabulary and oral language usage.

Phoneme Segmentation Fluency. Assesses student's ability to identify individual sounds within a given word.

Acronym

ASCD. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

DIBELS. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills.

GOM. General Outcome Measures

NCLB. No Child Left Behind

NWF. Nonsense Word Fluency

NRP. National Reading Panel

ORF. Oral Reading Fluency

PSF. Phoneme Segmentation Fluency

RTF. Retell Fluency

WUF. Word Use Fluency



## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Selected Literature

#### Introduction

There was an abundance of literature in the area of increasing reading ability because it was such a common issue in education. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy information sheet, titled A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the percentage of illiterate adults in the U.S. has stayed more or less the same since 1992. The review of literature supported many different ways to approach the issue of illiteracy, with the most common being that educators needed to start interventions in the primary grades.

This chapter addressed the impact that the No Child Left Behind Act and the role of the Reading First program that was a result of the act. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the process of DIBELS testing in identifying students that were at risk for reading failure and the effects of waiting to intervene.

#### No Child Left Behind and Reading First

The No Child Left Behind Act had many different parts to it. According to President G.W. Bush (2002), “. . . when we say no child is left behind, the cornerstone of that is accountability, coupled with consequences in the accountability system.” States were held accountable for all students that were

enrolled. Accountability was measured in the form of bonuses and sanctions. Schools that met their adequate yearly progress and improved achievement of disadvantaged students received bonuses. Schools that did not meet their goals were sanctioned and federal funds were taken away.

One of the main parts of No Child Left Behind was an initiative called Reading First. There were five clearly stated purposes of the Reading First legislation, which included providing assistance to state and local educational agencies in a variety of areas. Reading First was a federally funded grant program that gave states money to implement scientifically based reading programs. In order to receive part of the \$900 million that was allotted to this fund, states submitted an application to the government. The funds were then allocated to the states in a two-step process. The first step was that each state received an amount based on the number of low-income children, ages five to seventeen, which lived in the state. Once the state received the funds, it was up to each state to divide the money among the different districts. This was done on a competitive basis, with districts that had the highest reading failure and poverty rate receiving top priority.

This funding was to be used on scientifically based research reading programs. The National Reading Panel (NRP) identified five specific areas in their 2000 report that were critical to the success of reading. These five main

areas were Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Text Comprehension. There was conflicting evidence regarding the National Reading Panel's report (2000) which indicated "The Nation Reading Panel reviewed 100,000 studies" (Summary Booklet, p. 4). Unfortunately, this number was grossly misrepresented. According Yatvin (2003), the number of studies that were actually examined by the NRP was a total of 438 combined. The number of 100,000 was an estimate of published studies since 1966. "Of the 438 studies, only 38 were examined regarding phonics and from this conclusions regarding the importance of phonics were drawn" (Yatvin, 2003, p. 1).

There were many flaws in the National Reading Panel report. It was from this report that many of the requirements of the Reading First program were based upon. The NRP did not gather data or define any commercial programs to teach the five skills. Yet, there were certain programs that were promoted by the government. The results from the National Reading Panel were misconstrued about the teaching of phonics. The discrepancy was regarding the effectiveness of teaching phonics systematically. While test scores improved slightly with comprehension, they quickly faded away after first grade.

Despite these issues, one of the first skills that Reading First encouraged was phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness referred to the thinking about the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. Students could demonstrate

phonemic awareness in four main ways. The first was by recognizing the beginning sounds (dog, dad, doll all started with /d/). The second way was by isolating sounds at the beginning or end of words (dog begins with /d/, win ends with /in/). The third way was by blending sounds together (/j/ /a/ /m/ was jam). Finally, students demonstrated phonemic awareness by breaking up sounds (big was /b/ /i/ /g/). The findings supporting phonemic awareness were based on students that have phonemic awareness skills have an easier time when learning to read and write (Armbruster, 2001).

Studies suggested that phonemic awareness instruction be taught through a number of different activities. These activities included identifying and categorize phonemes, blending phonemes to form words, segmenting words into phonemes, and using phonemes to form new words. Research has found that teaching phonemic awareness was most effective when teaching to a small group of children and teaching a couple of main strategies.

There was a difference between phonemic awareness and phonics. The misunderstanding stemmed from the fact that many used the two concepts interchangeably. Phonics had to do with written words (graphemes) while phonemic awareness had to do with spoken words (phonemes).

The teaching of phonics was an age-old debate. Many believe that the English language was too irregular for proper phonics instruction. While this

debate raged on, it was still a skill that lawmakers said all students needed to learn.

Many educators were familiar with several types of phonic instruction. The two main instructional strategies the panel was advocating for was explicit and systematic instruction. The idea behind both was the understanding that certain letters make certain sounds when put in a relationship with one another. This is also called the alphabet principle. Children learn to decode words using this letter-sound technique (Armbruster, 2001).

Both phonemic awareness and phonic instruction needed to be taught early to be most effective for children. There were many programs available that helped with the instruction of these techniques, but many were boring to students. The key was to remember that this was not an entire program for readers. In order to meet the needs of every student, educators needed the freedom to be able to differentiate instruction. “One size instruction has never fit anyone” (Ivey, 2000, p. 42).

Fluency was the next skill on the list of five that the government promoted. Fluency was the connection between word recognition and comprehension. While students were able to accurately decode a word, it wasn't until they read with expression and meaning that they were considered fluent readers (Armbruster, 2001). According to the pamphlet “Put Reading

First”(2001), 44% of the nation’s fourth graders were low in the area of fluency.

In order to improve student’s fluency, the scientific based models that the government was recommending were repeated reading and silent reading.

Vocabulary and comprehension go hand in hand. If students did not understand the meaning of the word they were reading, how were they to comprehend what was being read? Researchers have defined four types of vocabulary. They were reading vocabulary, writing vocabulary, listening vocabulary and speaking vocabulary (Armbruster, 2001). Each referred to the words needed for doing the specific activity.

Readers could have all the skills but lack understanding and comprehending what those words on the paper meant. The final skill of the Reading First program was to teach text comprehension. There were six strategies of text comprehension that were scientifically research based. They were monitoring comprehension, graphic organizers, answering questions, generating questions, recognizing story structure, and summarizing (Armbruster, 2001). When student were taught how to use these strategies effectively, their level of comprehension increased.

#### Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

One of the assessments used to predict reading success at Washington Elementary are the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS).

These early literacy skills are a set of standardized, individually administered assessments that measure three of the five areas of early literacy development. Those three areas were Phonological Awareness, Alphabetic Principle, and Fluency with Connected Text. The assessments were a quick and reliable way to provide immediate results. Since the screenings took just minutes to administer, individualized and small group instruction could begin immediately the following day.

Typically, students from kindergarten through third grade were given Benchmark Assessments three times a year that measured the critical areas of early reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Students in fourth through sixth grade were assessed in the areas of fluency and comprehension. Based on results students are then classified into three subgroups: intensive, strategic, and meeting benchmark.

For those with reading difficulties, Progress Monitoring Assessments were given as often as necessary to determine an intervention's effectiveness. Schools could determine their own schedule for monitoring students. An example of this would be students in the intensive category monitored weekly, strategic students monitored bi-weekly, and meeting benchmark students monitored monthly.

Since the results of DIBELS were indicators of reading success, this assessment was different than the assessments that were part of curriculum used

by general education teachers. The DIBELS were part of an assessment class called General Outcome Measures (GOM). In most general education classes teachers teach skills and then test for mastery of the skills just taught. This cycle was then repeated. This was often called mastery measurement. An example of this was end of unit tests. Since the skills assessed change from test to test, the scores from different times in the school year cannot be compared. Teachers use these assessments to determine if students have learned the content. In contrast, GOMs were designed to determine if the student was learning and making progress toward the long-term goal.

In first grade there were four areas in which students were assessed. The first area was Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), which assessed student's ability to identify individual sounds within a given word. The second area was Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF). These are words that are made up of different sounds, but have no meaning. The third area assessed was Word Use Fluency (WUF). The WUF test assessed children's ability to accurately use a provided word in the context of a sentence. Finally students were assessed on their Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and Retell Fluency (RTF). Students were given unfamiliar passages to read aloud for one minute. Students then have one minute to retell what they remember from the passage.



### The Cost of Waiting to Intervene

Often schools adopt a policy of waiting until a child was one full year behind grade level before initiating testing (Halls & Moats, 1999). This point is further illustrated by Slavin (1996) when he stated:

When students fail in the early grades, they begin a cycle of poor-self esteem, poor expectations, poor motivation and further poor performance that all too often leads to despair, delinquency and drop out in the later grades . . . Children who have failed hate school, hate reading, and are anxious and unmotivated. Research and common sense tell us that prevention and early intervention make more sense than remediation and special education (p. 6).

As schools continued to wait to identify students, students fell further behind. Dr. Reid Lyon (Lyons as cited in Rubin, 1997) stated:

It is particularly distressing that government research shows that children can be identified as poor readers when they're as young as 4 or 5, based merely on how they hear, remember and repeat the subtle sounds found in everyday speech. Yet schools often don't jump on the problem until children are 8 or 9. If a youngster does not receive special help until age 9, it takes four times as long to move the same skill the same distance.

That means what could be addressed in 30 minutes a day in kindergarten now can take two hours a day by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade (C1).

Literature supported that early intervention assisted poor readers in eventually become average readers. However, if interventions were not started by age nine, there was a seventy-five percent chance the child would have reading difficulties throughout high school (Mithers, 2001). Considering that “reading is the backbone of education”(Mithers,2001, p. 3), finding and correcting deficiencies early was critical.

### Summary

The focus of this chapter was to address the available literature related to the topic of No Child Left Behind legislation and the Reading First initiative. States were being held accountable for student performance at even higher levels than before. Reading First was an initiative aimed at scientifically based reading programs. There were five main areas identified for success in the teaching of reading. They were Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Text Comprehension. Literature was reviewed in regards to DIBELS and the use within schools. Finally, the cost of waiting to intervene in identifying and assisting students with reading difficulties was examined.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology and Treatment of the Data

#### Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine the effectiveness of every other day testing by paraprofessionals at the first grade level. This project included a sample group of first grade school students from the 2006-2007 school year and a second sample group from the 2007-2008 school year. Both groups attended Washington Elementary School in Sunnyside, Washington. The researcher wanted to determine if the testing that started during the 2007-2008 school year was a good use of paraprofessional time in increasing the reading scores of first grade students.

This chapter is organized around seven topics. The seven topics include the following: (a) Methodology, (b) Participants, (c) Instruments, (d) Design, (e) Procedure, (f) Treatment of Data, and (g) Summary.

#### Methodology

This study addressed the effectiveness of every other day testing through an quasi-experimental design. Students were given every other day test from the Open Court Reading Curriculum for a duration of nine months. The results of the DIBELS winter and spring tests were used to determine effectiveness of

instruction. Specifically, the subset Oral Reading Fluency of the DIBELS test was used to determine effectiveness.

### Participants

This project included students from six first grade classrooms at Washington Elementary School in the Sunnyside School District. The study was conducted during the 2007-2008 school year. Participants in both groups ranged in age from six to eight years old. Students that were identified as Special Education students were not included in this project since they did not receive instruction using the Open Court Material.

This project included a sample group of 110 first grade students from the 2006-2007 school year and a second sample group of 107 students from the 2007-2008 school year. The demographics of the 2006-2007 students consisted of 83.8 percent Hispanic, 14.6 percent Caucasian, 0.8 percent Asian and 0.8 percent multi-racial. The demographics for the 2007-2008 students consisted of 86.2 percent Hispanic, 12.3 percent Caucasian, 0.75 percent black and 0.75 percent American Indian. Females accounted for 49 percent of the population in the 2006-2007 group and 53 percent in the 2007-2008 group.

### Instruments

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. The test measured the critical areas of early reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Alternating forms of the test were given to avoid maturation to the test.

Additionally, students were tested every other day using the Performance Assessments from the Open Court Reading series. This test was administered individually. The students were required to correctly answer three out of four subsets in order to move on to the next test.

### Design

The study addressed the effectiveness of every other day Performance Assessment testing through a quasi-experimental design. Students were assessed with the Performance Assessments for the duration of nine months. Scores from the DIBELS were then used to determine effectiveness of instruction. Possible threats affecting the internal validity included differences due to regression and selection interactions. The issue of reliability was minor because reporting of scores was mandatory for Washington Elementary due to rules of the Reading First grant.

### Procedure

In August before the start of the 2007-2008 school year, first grade staff and the reading coach held a one- day training with paraprofessionals on how to administer Performance Assessments. These assessments were a subset of skills from the previous days instruction. Using Open Court materials the skills were presented using a direct instruction approach. For every task modeling, guided practice and independent practice took place. Starting in September, the paraprofessionals began the every other day Performance Assessments. Students were pulled out of their regular reading group block to be assessed. Staff documented student progress on Student Assessment Record Sheet. From the assessments, staff identified students that need additional instruction with paraprofessionals. Unfortunately due to the testing schedule, paraprofessionals were not able to spend meaningful time re-teaching students that had not passed the previous days test. Paraprofessionals reviewed the test and then retested. In some cases, students passed three of the four subsets, allowing them to be tested on the next assessment. In January, students were tested using the DIBELS test. Students were classified into three groups, intensive, strategic, and benchmark. Students in the strategic category received additional time with paraprofessionals reviewing skills. In March, the staff met and decided to start sending home the performance assessments of students that had not passed three of the four subsets. Parents were asked to review the test with their child at home. In May, students

were tested again using the DIBELS test. The passage that students read was unfamiliar to them, in order to receive a reliable result of reading ability.

Students were tested using DIBELS in the Winter and Spring of their respective school year. The researcher gathered DIBELS scores from first grade students from the 2006-2007 and the 2007-2008 school years. For the purpose of this study only the Oral Reading Fluency strand of the test was used.

### Treatment of Data

The DIBELS was given to the students in a one-on-one setting. The students were given one minute to read a passage to the instructor. Additionally students were given every other day Performance Assessments by paraprofessionals. These assessments checked for vocabulary, comprehension, and overall grade level improvements. Students had to complete three of the four subsets successfully in order to move on to the next assessment.

The experimenter entered all scores from the DIBELS into a program called STATPAK. Statistical Analysis was performed on the data using the *t*-test function of the STATPAK program to determine significance. The data was reported using graphs, tables, and discussion.

### Summary

In summary, this chapter was designed to review the methodology and treatment of data related to impact of the every other day Performance

Assessment on DIBELS scores. The first grade staff at Washington Elementary School implemented every other day Performance Assessments with the help of paraprofessionals starting in September of 2007 school year. The analysis of data and findings from this study are reported in Chapter 4.



## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis of the Data

#### Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine the effectiveness of every other day testing by paraprofessionals at the first grade level. This project included a sample group of first grade school students from the 2006-2007 school year and a second sample group from the 2007-2008 school year. Both groups attended Washington Elementary School in Sunnyside, Washington. The researcher wanted to determine if the testing that started during the 2007-2008 school year was a good use of paraprofessional time. Specifically the study was to determine if there was a significant change in the reading scores of first grade students, as measured by the DIBELS ORF test.

#### Description of the Environment

The teacher who implemented this program was certified to teach elementary education and had a degree in Elementary Education in Washington State. The teacher was a third year teacher and was in the second year of teaching the grade level tested.

This project included a sample group of first grade school students from the 2006-2007 school year and a second sample group from the 2007-2008 school year. There were four qualifications to be eligible for the project: One, the

students must have received instruction in the content area reading within the general education classroom and in no other setting. Two, the students must have been present for the duration of the school year, out for no more than 20 continuous days at a time. Third, the students must have been present on the pre- and post-test days, and fourth, the students had to receive instruction in English.

### Hypothesis

Elementary students need to leave first grade at benchmark as defined by Reading First. Students that receive every other day Performance Assessment testing will make greater than expected growth in Reading as measured by the fluency portion of the DIBELS test than students who do not receive the instruction.

### Null Hypothesis

Students that receive every other day Performance Assessment testing will not make greater than expected growth in Reading as measured by the Oral Reading Fluency portion of the DIBELS assessment than students who do not receive the instruction. Significance was determined for  $p \geq .05, .01, .001$ .

### Results and Discussion

The data was analyzed using the STAT-PAK program and interpreted. In order to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups, a *t*-test was used to ensure that groups were similar in reading abilities. The *t* score

was 0.83, which was not significant. This indicated that the one group was not higher in reading ability prior to any treatment.

The project was conducted to determine if first grade students reading scores would improve after staff implemented an every other day Performance Testing schedule. Benefits of the testing were measured by comparing pre-test and post-test scores of the students on the Oral Reading Fluency portion of the DIBELS test.

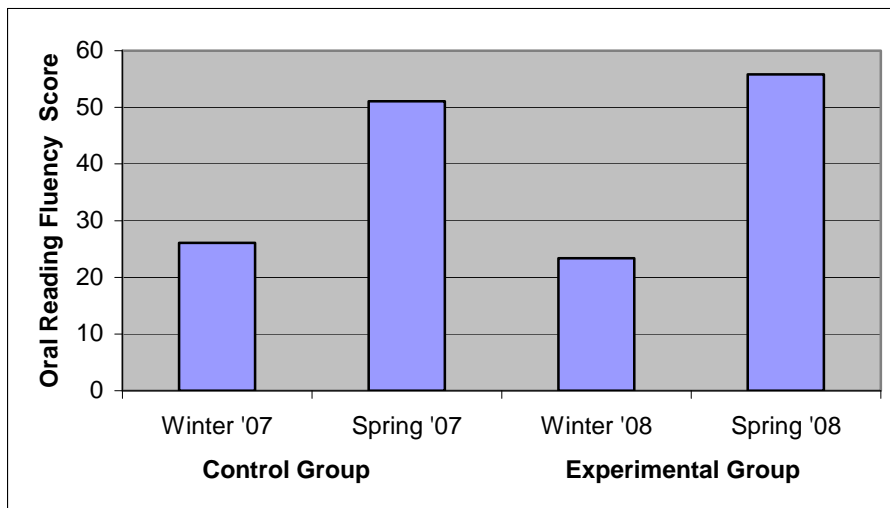


Figure 1. Oral Reading Fluency Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Students in the experimental groups did not make made significant gains in their reading abilities as measured by the DIBELS test when compared to the control group. Both groups exhibited improvement. The students did not make greater than expected gains when given every other day Performance Assessment tests.

**Table 1**

Mean scores for experimental and control group

Group	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
Control	26.10	51.06	24.96
Experimental	28.38	55.81	27.42

The effects of the testing schedule did not show any major gains by students in the experimental group. A second test was performed using the gain scores. Outcomes of that test resulted in a *t* score of 1.15, which was not significant. With regard to gain scores as seen in table one, the difference between the two groups was 2.46 word per minute. Considering that the experimental group started at 2.28 words per minute faster than the control group, this difference was not significant. Post-test outcomes did not confirm that testing was effective for students in the experimental group. While students did make gains, the gains were not significant. The hypothesis was rejected. The null hypothesis was accepted.

Summary

This chapter was designed to analyze the data and identify the findings. From the data, the hypothesis was not supported and the null hypothesis was accepted. The project was to determine the effectiveness of the use of every other day Performance Assessment tests in an elementary school setting.

The information was gathered and analyzed to establish if there was a significant difference in the gain scores for students using a pre-test and post test design. The project results did not find significance in students' test scores. The students that received every other day testing did not make significant progress in overall reading ability when compared to the control group.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary

One of the great concerns in education was the effect of low reading abilities that interfered with students' academic success. Illiteracy was a problem that needed immediate attention. As educators and policymakers continued to evaluate and reform our education systems the need to improve student achievement intensified.

The purpose of this project was to provide a factual base of information regarding the use of every other day Performance Assessment tests in an elementary school setting. The project consisted of two groups of first grade elementary students from Washington Elementary School. The majority of the students were Hispanic and from low-income homes. The population was also fairly evenly split between males and females.

The students were given an every day Performance Assessment from the Open Court curriculum for a period of nine months. The students were given a pre-test and post-test to measure any increase in overall reading ability.

During the course of the school year, the students were taught in reading groups following the Walk to Read model. Students were taught using a direct instruction approach. Paraprofessionals pulled students one-on-one to give the

every other day test from the Open Court Curriculum. This test was a review of the previous days material taught by the general education reading teacher.

The students were pre-tested and post-tested using the Oral Reading Fluency portion of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills test. The students were tested in a one-on-one setting.

The data was gathered and analyzed to establish if there were significant differences in the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The project found there was no significant growth in the students' test scores. The students that received every other day Performance Assessment testing did not make significant progress in overall reading ability.

### Conclusions

The best possible outcome was that students that received every other day testing would make significant gains, therefore validating the time and effort put into testing students. Unfortunately, the hypothesis was not supported and the Null hypothesis was accepted. Every other day testing for a period of nine months did not significantly increase students' overall reading ability as measured by the ORF of DIBELS.

### Recommendations

The research has shown that every other day testing using Performance Assessments did not increase students overall reading ability based on the ORF portion of the DIBELS test. Based on these results, the researcher suggests paraprofessionals time would be better spent doing phonemic awareness activities with struggling students. Activities such as sight word review, non-sense word practice and use of leveled reading books might have a greater impact on student success. Once students have been identified as intensive, additional instructional time must be spent with these students. Testing every other day is not a substitute for teaching reading skills.



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