Running head: READERS' WORKSHOP AND READING ACHIEVEMENT

The Effect of the Implementation of the Readers' Workshop on Reading Achievement

in a First Grade Mixed-Ability Classroom

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The Effect of the Implementation of the Readers' Workshop on Reading

Achievement in a First Grade Mixed-Ability Classroom

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my work to my parents who are the most special people to me. It is because of their continuous support and understanding that I was able to achieve my goal in obtaining a graduate degree. My parents have played a major role in my life by always motivating me to learn more and accomplish my dreams academically and professionally. They worked hard to support me by keeping my morals up and helping me in times when I felt too stressed.

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ABSTRACT

The importance of differentiating reading instruction to meet the needs of students who have various abilities and interests has been given a lot of attention lately. Researchers have been trying to use the readers' workshop as an instructional approach that would differentiate reading instruction to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, this research study aims to analyze the effects of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading levels and comprehension skills in a first grade mixed-ability classroom. The instruments used in this study are running records and reading continuums that are used at the beginning and at the end of the academic year, teacher's professional notebook and notes from the guided reading sessions and teacher-student conferences. The results of the study showed that the readers' workshop that was used as a differentiated reading approach improved students' reading levels and comprehension skills. Further longitudinal studies that would determine the long-term results of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading achievement should be conducted in Lebanese schools.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Most educators expect their students to learn how to read and become proficient and confident readers. Research studies were conducted in different places to study the best instructional practices that enable students to achieve the goal of becoming effective readers. However, the findings of these studies reveal to us that, in general, attitudes towards reading and writing become negative in both the elementary and higher classes. One of the reasons behind these findings is that children learn to read in different ways and various levels of speed. Pettig (2000) noted that literacy teachers are facing overwhelming concerns to meet the needs of students who have different individual needs. Therefore, faced with the challenge to motivate a diverse student population, good teachers need innovative instructional approaches appropriate to different needs. Tomlinson (1999) suggested that literacy teachers need to slowly change from the one-size-fits-all model and create a differentiated reading approach to provide quality reading opportunities to fit different students' needs. Therefore, to find a solution to this problem and provide readers with appropriate and meaningful opportunities for literacy learning, Miller (2002), Nesheim and Taylor (2001) and Taberski (2000) proposed the implementation of the readers' workshop in the classrooms.

The readers' workshop is a student-centered approach to teaching reading. It allows learners to be actively involved in the process of learning how to read at their own levels. The readers' workshop uses various teaching methods to achieve the objectives of preparing self-disciplined readers who use various reading strategies to understand the texts. In a readers' workshop, students learn techniques that the teacher has modeled and apply these techniques in their own reading to achieve their reading goals. This way, students recognize that all of them are

valued as readers in this nurturing environment of a readers' workshop, regardless of their reading levels. In this study, the researcher explored the effects of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading achievement in a first grade mixed-ability classroom in a private school in Beirut.

Statement of the Problem

One of the most challenging questions in the field of education is how to improve the reading performance of elementary students. The use of basal readers and other traditional methods of teaching reading has failed to prepare proficient readers (Herron, 2008; Lause, 2004; Taberski, 2000; Weaver, 2000). As a result, there is a need to find a new reading approach that will enhance students' reading levels as well as their comprehension skills.

Research Topic and Questions

The topic of this research is the effect of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading achievement in a first grade mixed-ability classroom in a private school in Beirut. The research questions that the researcher is investigating are the following:

1) How does the implementation of the readers' workshop improve students' reading levels in a first grade mixed-ability classroom?

2) How does the implementation of the readers' workshop enhance students' comprehension skills in a first grade mixed-ability classroom?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading levels and comprehension skills in a first grade mixed-ability classroom.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

This research study aims at revealing to educators and principals the influence of implementing the readers' workshop on elementary students with various academic abilities and readiness levels. Therefore, the results should guide educators to determine how the use of a differentiated reading approach, which is the reader's workshop, helps students with different levels achieve improved reading skills at the end of the academic year.

Hypothesis

The use of the readers' workshop in a first grade mixed-ability classroom will result in improving students' reading levels and comprehension skills as measured by running records and reading continuums.

Dependent and Independent Variables

The independent variable in this study is the use of the readers' workshop with first grade elementary students. The dependent variables are the students' reading levels and comprehension skills.

Operational Definitions

Readers' workshop- is a student-centered approach for reading instruction, in which students learn reading strategies through short minilessons and apply them in their own reading time (Nesheim & Taylor, 2000)

Differentiated instruction- is a teaching approach that caters for the different needs of diverse students. Taking into consideration students' interests, readiness and learning profiles, teachers differentiate three instructional elements: content, process and product (Tomlinson, 1999).

Reading level- refers to a gradient of difficulty in reading that is associated with alphabet letters (from A to Z). Books at level A are the easiest in terms of content and length of the sentences. Every succeeding alphabet letter implies increasing difficulty. At more advanced levels (M – Z), there is additional variety of genre and format (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999).

Reading strategy- is a selection of decoding strategies that assist the reader in tackling difficult words while reading a text and include using picture cues, chunking a word into smaller units, sounding out a word and noting patterns in a text (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997; Taberski, 2000).

Comprehension strategy- refers to the critical thinking strategies that readers use while reading and include building schema, inferring, synthesizing, using mental images and predicting (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002)

Reading continuum- is a visual interpretation of students' literacy growth using descriptors to show the developmental stages of reading. It focuses on what readers can do by positively stating the reading behaviors. It also shows that the act of reading is a complex process that evolves with time in a developmental progression (Campbell Hill, 2001).

Running record- represents a written form of a book that is used for assessment purposes. It allows the teacher to monitor the student's reading performance while he/she is reading from a book (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999).

Summary

The purpose of this research study was to analyze the effect of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading levels and comprehension skills in a first grade mixed-ability classroom. The following chapter will report the literature related to the reading process in general and a detailed description of the structure of the readers' workshop.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter examines related literature that discusses the role of the readers' workshop in helping students improve their reading achievement. The first section explores the reading process, the historical background on reading instruction and the needs for a differentiated reading approach that would cater for the diverse needs and abilities of different students in elementary classrooms. The second section of the chapter explores the structure and the elements of the readers' workshop which presents a differentiated approach in teaching reading. Finally, the chapter ends by suggesting a list of reading and comprehension strategies and exploring the different assessment tools that are used to measure students' growth in their reading and comprehension levels.

The Reading Process

Although there is not a common agreed-upon definition of reading, Rubin (1993) offered a general definition of the process of reading that includes the reader with the text: "Reading is a complex, dynamic process that involves the bringing of meaning to and the getting of meaning from the printed page" (p.5). In other words, readers use their background knowledge and experiences to decode words and make meaning from the text. According to Tankersley (2003), the process of reading is an integrated whole that includes several skills such as phonics and decoding, fluency, word recognition, comprehension and higher-order thinking. She explained that "the sum of these pieces is a tapestry that good readers use on a day-to-day basis to process text in their world" (p. 2). Baskwill & Whitman (1997) added that reading is an extremely complex problem-solving experience. It involves students being engaged in what they read and able to use prior knowledge and background in order to construct meaning from the text. They

are active agents who are willing to learn and assume responsibility for their own growth in learning (Taberski, 2000).

Educational research proves that a child who does not master the reading basics at an early age is unlikely to learn it later on and will probably not succeed in other school subjects. Actually, the main cause of low-performing schools in general is the low reading achievement that leads to the loss of the parents' confidence in schools (Moats, 1999). Therefore, the most important role of primary grades at the elementary level is to teach students how to become proficient readers.

Historical Background on Teaching Reading

According to Weaver (2000), teaching reading has dramatically evolved during the past 15 years. It began first with the phonics approach in which students learn how to sound out and spell the letters in the words. Although this alphabetic approach has become out of fashion, it still has several supporters who believe it is the best sensible approach in teaching reading (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Rubin, 1993; Tankersley, 2003).

A second commonly used approach is the basal readers approach (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Rubin, 1993; Weaver, 2000). These basal readers are based on the belief that readers need to learn words first before starting to read with fluency and comprehension (Herron, 2008). They include stories of gradually increasing difficulty and emphasize the role of the teacher in leading the reading instruction (Allington & Cunningham, 1996).

A third approach which has been popular in the U.S. in the late eighties is the language experience/writing approach. It stresses on the belief that the best materials for teaching children to read are their own writings and their friends' writings. In other words, the stories that students

write are selected as the materials needed to teach them reading (Allington & Cunningham, 1996).

Although these three approaches were successful in teaching readers how to decode words quickly, students usually did not understand what they read (Kilgore, Griffin, Sindelar & Webb; 2002). Keene & Zimmerman (1997) also added that several teachers used to believe that reading instruction involved working with the visible or audible rather than the cognitive and comprehensive aspects of reading. Unfortunately, this is prohibiting students from becoming proficient, engaged and critical readers. Taberski (2000) compared teaching a student to rely on visual cues only without making meaning to asking him "to read with one hand tied behind his back" (p. 63). Fortunately, with the efforts of various educators including Vygotsky and Clay, teachers started to perceive that the act of reading is highly complex and includes other strategies to derive meaning from print (Weaver, 2000).

Need for Differentiation

According to Herron (2008), students start school eager to learn and excited about the fact that they will become good readers. However, most of them struggle with reading. Since reading is an important element to succeed in school, poor readers lose their motivation and fail various subjects (Pettig, 2000; Shevin 2008). Herron (2008) noted that "Students who are not at least moderately fluent in reading by third grade are unlikely to graduate from high school" (p. 77). Lause (2004) pointed out that 65% of students do not see themselves as readers and have stopped reading for pleasure. Statistics in some research studies pointed out that 20% of elementary students have severe reading problems nationwide from one hand and do not have enough fluency in reading to enjoy reading independently from another hand (Moats, 1999). All of these problems at school have made educators think about alternative methods to meet the

needs of all learners with differences in backgrounds, personalities and interests. One of these methods, according to Tomlinson (1999), is differentiated instruction.

As the primary researcher in this field, Tomlinson (1999) noted that differentiated instruction was the most practical strategy to meet the diverse needs of students in a heterogeneous classroom. Tomlinson (1999) defined the term differentiation as "A way of thinking about teaching and learning that advocates beginning where individuals are rather than with a prescribed plan of action, which ignores students' readiness, interest and learning profile" (p. 108). She explained that educators should reevaluate their teaching practices. Students in general have a broad range of personalities, interests, skills and educational experiences. Therefore, instead of assuming that these diverse children must fit into the school's agenda, teachers have to adjust the curriculum and instruction to meet all students' needs (Tomlinson, 1999, 2000). Moreover, Pettig (2000) stated that differentiated classrooms cater for the different needs of students more than the one-size-fits-all classrooms in which all students learn the same material at the same level of complexity.

In her books, Tomlinson (1999, 2000) listed the drawbacks of traditional instruction and the benefits of differentiation. In a traditional classroom, the teacher expects that all students have the same levels and abilities and that they will meet the instructional objectives at the same time and with the same process. Unfortunately, this will result in a class full of puzzled struggling students and bored advanced learners. This way, the advanced learners who are not well challenged in classes might turn into mentally lazy people. Differentiated instruction challenges these students' abilities by enabling them to work at higher levels of learning. Struggling students, who are usually neglected in traditional classrooms, benefit largely from differentiation. These students become more motivated to achieve because they are given the

opportunity to learn progressively new things that they used to think were too hard (Tomlinson, 2001).

One specific differentiation strategy that was proven to be extremely effective in literacy classrooms was the readers' workshop (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Lause, 2004; Miller, 2002; Nesheim & Taylor, 2000, 2001; Taberski, 2000).

The Readers' Workshop Approach

According to Nesheim and Taylor (2000), the readers' workshop is considered to be a student-centered approach rather than a teacher-centered approach to teaching reading. They also added that within the safe classroom environment in a readers' workshop, students perceive that all readers are valued regardless of their levels of reading. Taberski (2000) explained that the readers' workshop evolved as a reaction to the enormous amount of time that students spent on reading books that were either too easy or too difficult. The readers' workshop uses teaching techniques that prepare self-disciplined readers who are motivated to read because of a real interest (Lause, 2004). Nesheim and Taylor (2001) explained that a readers' workshop presents a structured literacy community where students are given choices and individual time to read and opportunities to react to what they read.

The Structure of the Readers' Workshop

The readers' workshop is an essential element of a balanced literacy program. The daily structure of the reader's workshop includes four parts which are a first independent self-selected reading time, a short whole group minilesson, a second independent reading time with guided reading and/or reading conferences, and a reading share (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Nesheim & Taylor, 2000, 2001; Taberski, 2000).

First Independent Self-Selected Reading Time

The readers' workshop begins with the first ten minutes of independent self-selected reading time in which students are given the freedom to read books from any reading level and from any genre (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Rubin, 1993; Taberski, 2000). They can select books that are either at, above or below their independent reading levels. On one hand, when children choose books beyond their reading levels, they just enjoy the illustrations and read whatever they can. On the other hand, several children choose books that are below their reading levels because these easy books would be rhyming or predictable books, poem books or even books with capturing illustrations. It is as if they take advantage of this first independent reading time to warm-up for the more challenging books that they will read during the second independent reading time (Taberski, 2000). The reason behind this freedom of choice in selecting books is to allow readers to browse and savor different types of books and enjoy reading them even if they are too difficult or too easy (Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000).

Minilessons

The second part in a readers' workshop starts with students gathering around the teacher for a ten minutes whole-group short minilesson (Miller, 2002; Nesheim & Taylor, 2000, 2001; Taberski, 2000). At the beginning of the minilesson, the teacher explicitly presents the teaching point or strategy to be learned and then models clearly what he/she wants students to do as strategic readers. According to Nesheim and Taylor (2000), minilessons are usually short, specific and presented in a manner that is meaningful to readers' needs. They give students an opportunity to observe how readers take risks, tackle difficult words and use strategies when needed. Atwell (1987) suggested that minilessons can be divided into three areas: procedures (e.g. doing a small group share, learning how to read aloud for listeners), literary (e.g., learning

about characteristics of different book genres, analyzing both characters' traits and feelings in the text) and strategy and skill (e.g., making inferences, predicting and tackling difficult words). At the end, the teacher connects the minilesson to other ones from previous days and to students' lives as developing readers. This way, he/she will make sure that some students will apply the minilesson in their independent reading time and that it will stay in all students' ongoing reading repertoire (Miller, 2002).

According to Taberski (2000), reading books aloud can sometimes serve as a foundation for the reading minilesson. Teachers can choose read-aloud books to model the use of reading and comprehension strategies that demonstrate proficient and engaged reading behaviors. Moreover, Miller (2002) added that, besides enabling the teacher to demonstrate fluency and reading strategies in front of students, the read-aloud also helps children to learn how to create meaning through think-alouds. Also, Taberski (2000) explained that in addition to creating a chance for teachers to model fluent reading behaviors, the read-aloud exposes students to vocabulary, text structures and comprehension strategies that they can use during their second independent reading time. Readers learn how to observe a book's cover and illustrations, how to add dramatic voice effects to the reading and how to think aloud (Nesheim & Taylor, 2001). The read-aloud is also a time when students receive instruction that helps them talk well about books with a partner and within whole class conversations. Therefore, in addition to modeling the work of proficient, fluent and engaged readers during the read-aloud time, the teacher also models to children how to have accountable conversations about books (Lause, 2004; Miller, 2002).

Second Independent Reading Time with Guided Reading and/or Reading Conferences

After the minilesson, students read quietly for 30 minutes just-right books that correspond to their reading levels while the teacher moves around the classroom, conferring with

individuals (Keene & Zimmermenn, 1997; Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000). Based on students'

reading readiness levels, students are given leveled books that range from A to Z and that they

can read with 96% of accuracy, fluency and comprehension (Teachers College Reading and

Writing Project). Fountas and Pinnell (1999) explained that teaching students to become

effective readers requires matching them with texts that present the exact level of support and

challenge because they will be engaged in successful processing in reading. Actually, teachers

must work hard to match students with just-right books that continually challenge them during

their independent reading time (Taberski, 2000; Tankersley, 2003). In fact, when children are not

given the right books to read, then their reading time will be less effective. During the second

independent reading time, readers are supposed to use all the reading and comprehension

strategies that they have been exposed to in previous minilessons to tackle difficult words and

comprehend the texts in their hands.

To monitor students' improvement in reading and learn more about them as readers, the

teacher confers with readers individually and takes notes of his/her observations as part of the

ongoing assessment (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000). Conferences

allow teachers to have a chance to meet with individuals to assess the reading progress, offer

guidance if needed, and match them with new books (Taberski, 2000). The teacher also evaluates

the strategies that the student is using when facing difficult words, evaluates his/her reading

fluency in decoding and asks comprehension strategies to assess his/her comprehension level

(Keene, 2008; Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000). It is important for teachers to focus on the student

and the reading strategies that he/she is using rather than on the text during a reading conference.

In other words, the aim is to instruct the reader and not the reading by directing students to use

reading and comprehension strategies that can be applied in other different texts (Taberski, 2000).

The teacher can also conduct a guided reading group during students' second independent reading time (Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne; 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Pinnell, 1999; Taberski, 2000). He/she groups three to six readers who are reading books at the same levels of difficulty and have similar reading needs to work on one specific strategy. Usually, the book that the teacher chooses for guided reading is at the student's instructional reading level. In other words, the student's level of accuracy, fluency and comprehension when reading this book is less than 96% (Teachers College Reading and Writing Project). At the beginning of the guided reading lesson, the teacher introduces the book to students with a picture walk. The teacher then sets a purpose for the session by directly teaching the specific strategy that students will use during the lesson. When students start reading their books quietly on their own, the teacher moves from one child to another to check fluency and error patterns and to coach them in using different reading strategies when they encounter difficulties. The teacher also writes down his/her anecdotal notes on each student at this time. When students finish reading their books, they reflect as a group on their feedback concerning the difficulties that they found in the books and review the reading strategy of the session. Usually, a guided reading lesson takes 15 to 20 minutes (Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne, 2000; Taberski, 2000).

Reading Share

At the end of the workshop, the students gather around the meeting area again to share for the last five minutes different ways that they used the minilesson into their reading time and their new discoveries or questions (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000). The students usually reveal first what they learned about themselves as readers on that day and

second the reading and comprehension strategies that worked well with them (Taberski, 2000). The children answer these questions either as a whole group or in pairs. This daily reading share almost operates as a separate and shorter minilesson. It enables students to hear what strategies worked well with their classmates and to learn from each other (Taberski, 2000). The teacher might also highlight a specific conference in which he/she observed a certain student performing an effective reading work that deserves to be shared with the other students. (Nesheim & Taylor, 2000).

The sequence of the readers' workshop from the first independent self-selected reading to the minilesson and/or read-aloud, to the second independent reading time with guided reading and reading conferences to the reading share at the end offers a meaningful daily structure that gives students time to practice reading and chances for reflection and response.

Reading and Comprehension Strategies

Reading and comprehension strategies help students become effective readers. According to Tankersley (2003), effective readers are able to use decoding skills to quickly identify difficult words that they find while reading. Moreover, effective readers use their background knowledge to make logical inferences from the text and also apply both comprehension monitoring strategies and their awareness of spelling patterns to pronounce words in their texts to increase comprehension. In other words, effective readers analyze and think about what they read while decoding and pronouncing the words in the text. Therefore, it is important for students to possess a repertoire of reading and comprehension strategies to figure out unfamiliar words, understand and construct meaning from the text (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997).

The following represents a list of reading strategies that can be taught to students to help them in decoding difficult words that they might encounter in their reading.

1. use picture cues to predict the story and words (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997; Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000).

2. sound out the word (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997)

3. point and slide (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002)

4. note patterns in text (Taberski, 2000)

5. note small familiar words in a big word (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997; Miller, 2002)

6. attend to graphophonic cues, especially the initial and end letters (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Taberski, 2000)

7. look through the word to the end (Taberski, 2000)

8. make connections between word families (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997)

9. look for a familiar spelling pattern (Taberski, 2000)

10. use meaning, structure and graphophonic cues in combination to see if the word makes sense, if letters match and if it sounds like language (Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne, 2000; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000).

11. chunk the word into phrases (Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000)

12. take the ending (e.g., "ing" or "ed") off and try the word (Taberski, 2000)

13. reread (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997)

14. skip and come back (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997; Miller, 2002; Taberski, 2000)

15. monitor, cross-check and self-correct (Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne, 2000; Taberski, 2000; Tankersley, 2003).

According to Baskwill & Whitman (1997), decoding difficult words is only the tip of the reading process. Actually, the deep understanding of the text is the most essential component because it turns reading into a meaningful experience for readers. Tankersley (2003) added that

readers should understand that reading involves not only decoding unfamiliar words but also making meaning from these words. Therefore, teaching comprehension strategies empowers young students with the skills needed to be proficient readers.

The following presents a list of suggested comprehension strategies that could be taught in the primary grades.

1. brainstorm (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997)

2. make and confirm predictions (Baskwill & Whitman, 1997; Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne, 2000; Tankersley, 2003; Taberski, 2000).

3. stop to think (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Taberski, 2000)

4. reread to clarify meaning (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Taberski, 2000)

5. use graphic organizers such as story maps, character maps, Venn diagrams, "What I knew/ What I know now" and "before and after" charts (Miller, 2002; Nesheim & Taylor, 2000, 2001; Rubin, 1993; Taberski, 2000; Tankersley, 2003)

6. use relevant prior knowledge or schema to make text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world connections (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005; Keene, 2008; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Tankersley, 2003)

7. create mental images during and after reading (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005; Keene, 2008; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Tankersley, 2003)

8. research, take notes and make data charts (Taberski, 2000)

9. make inferences (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005; Keene, 2008; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Rubin, 1993; Tankersley, 2003)

10. ask questions to clarify meaning (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005; Keene, 2008; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Rubin, 1993; Tankersley, 2003)

11. determine importance in text (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005; Keene, 2008; Miller, 2002)

12. synthesize information (Cunningham & Shagoury, 2005; Keene, 2008; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Miller, 2002; Tankersley, 2003)

13. summarize, sequence and retell story events (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; Tankersley, 2003)

Reading Assessments

With the increase heterogeneity of students' populations in today's classrooms, traditional assessments needed to be adjusted (Tomlinson, 1999). In other words, since students are learning differently based on their own readiness levels and abilities, end-of-unit quizzes and summative tests are no longer effective tools that would continuously measure students' growth (Pettig, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999, 2000). Therefore, differentiated reading assessments are extremely important to be used in mixed-ability classrooms.

Running Records

One of the most successful tools to assess students' reading levels is the running record (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Taberski, 2000; Teachers College Reading and Writing Project). A running record of a child's reading behavior is a fundamental instrument for recording what the child does while reading. In other words, the teacher writes down everything the child says or does while reading a text to interpret the reading strategies that the child uses successfully and those that he/she needs help with (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Taberski, 2000). According to Campbell Hill (2001), the most important change in teaching reading for the last five years is the increase use of running records in primary classes.

Taberski (2000) points out that there are three advantages for recording and analyzing numerous running records of students' reading during the year. First, a running record becomes an instrument for teaching rather than just a tool to communicate students' rank in class. Actually, when running records are administered constantly, they permit teachers to understand a student's pattern of errors. Second, taking different samples of students' running records allows the teacher to get an accurate idea of a student's reading. Third, counting errors on a student's running records and judging their level of accuracy will enable teachers to find appropriate books for students at their current levels of reading.

While reading, students need to think about what makes sense (meaning cues), whether words are pronounced like the standard English (structural cues) and whether their sound decoding matches the letters in the words (visual cues). By taking a close look at the errors that students have made and the nature of cues for self-correction, teachers will understand the student's success or need for help in using the cueing systems while reading. This will allow teachers to have a clear perception on how to teach the student different ways to turn into a strategic reader (Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne, 2000; Campbell Hill, 2001; Taberski, 2000).

Observational Notes

Another effective assessment tool that teachers use to monitor students' behaviors and progress while reading is writing down observational notes (Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne, 2000; Campbell Hill, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 1999; Taberski, 2000). The teacher can record on his/her notebook brief comments about students that he/she is observing either during students' independent reading time or during reading conferences.

Recording observational notes as a tool to assess readers' growth has several advantages. From one hand, it allows the teacher to examine if students stay engaged while reading and to check if they are able to select independently just-right books that correspond to their reading levels. From another hand, it helps the teacher to keep track of students' meaning, structural and visual miscues during reading conferences in order to analyze their patterns and to check if the reader self-corrects himself/herself (Taberski, 2000). It also enables the teacher to check if the student is using the reading and comprehension strategies that were taught in previous minilessons effectively while reading. With time, these observational notes will present an informative profile of each student that will help the teacher to plan the next instructional actions accordingly (Browning Schulman & Dacruz Payne, 2000).

Reading Continuums

According to Campbell Hill (2001), a reading continuum is best defined as "a visual representation of literacy development using descriptors to depict the developmental stages of learning" (p. 3). It illustrates the typical process that readers go through from kindergarten to middle school. Campbell Hill (2001) added that continuums offer a practical method to connect standards, curriculum and daily instructional lessons based on a constructivist approach of teaching and learning. The reading continuum includes ten developmental stages which are preconventional, emerging, developing, beginning, expanding, bridging, fluent, proficient, connecting and independent stages. Each of these stages has seven to 15 descriptors that assess specifically the students' reading behaviors.

The reading continuum represents four essential concepts. First, it stresses what students can do by reporting the descriptors positively. Second, it emphasizes what students learn and not what is taught, which puts the student in the center of the learning process. Third, the reading

stages are mainly estimations because although students' reading behaviors might fall mostly into one stage, they can still be strengthening one or two skills from the previous stage and demonstrating evidence of other skills at the following stage. Finally, the continuum obviously reflects that reading is a complex process. Literacy skills expand with time and extend on each other in a developmental sequence. Therefore, the reason of using a continuum is to focus on progress and growth that will enhance further learning (Campbell Hill, 2001).

Summary

Due to the diverse abilities and backgrounds of students' populations in today's classrooms, teachers are acknowledging the need to respond appropriately by differentiating their instruction. One example that illustrates a differentiated approach in teaching reading is the readers' workshop. The structure of the readers' workshop that includes a first independent self-selected reading, a minilesson, a second independent reading time with guided reading and/or reading conferences and a reading share at the end offers two advantages. First, it allows the teachers to model explicitly to students the use of reading and comprehension strategies while reading that help readers in decoding words and making meaning from the text. Second, it enables students to read books at their own independent reading levels in which they can apply these strategies to improve their reading achievement. The next chapter explores the design of this action research including the setting, the participants and the instruments used to collect data. It also presents the procedures that are taken to analyze the results of the study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This chapter presents the design of a qualitative action research study that analyzes the effects of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading levels and comprehension skills in a first grade mixed-ability classroom. The chapter introduces the setting, the participants, the instruments used in the study and the actions followed to guarantee the reliability and validity of the instruments. The chapter also explores the procedures taken to collect data about the students and a descriptive explanation of the data analysis.

Setting

The study is conducted in a private school in Beirut. This private school offers an American curriculum for Lebanese and international children and implements various differentiation strategies in instruction to address the needs of different learners in all grade levels. The school includes a pre-school, elementary, middle and high school departments with almost 900 students in all. The reason for choosing this school in particular is because the researcher is a teacher there.

Participants

Based on the research problem, the participants in this study are the 18 students in a first grade mixed-ability classroom. These students have different nationalities: Lebanese, Japanese, Malaysian and British. Therefore, it was extremely necessary to differentiate the instructional practices in all subject matters to meet the needs of these students who come from diverse backgrounds. Two sampling methods are used in order to select a representative sample for this study.

The first sampling technique used in this study is the stratified sampling (Burns, 2000). In mid September 2008, the researcher assessed every student's reading levels and comprehension skills using the running records of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (Appendices B, D and F). Based on his/her fluency, accuracy and understanding of the text, every student obtained a letter that represents his/her reading level at that time of the year (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999). The running records of the 18 students were divided into three different stratas. This division of students is based on the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project benchmarks for independent reading levels (Appendix A) that group students according to four criteria: (1) needs support, (2) approaches standards, (3) meets standards and (4) exceeds standards. However, for time and convenience purposes, the researcher decided to choose a sample from three categories only. Therefore, as a result of the reading assessment, 12 students were in the first group (needs support), five students were in the second group (meets standards) and one student was in the third group (exceeds standards).

The second technique is the random sampling which is used to ensure that every student of the 18 members in the first grade classroom had an equal opportunity to be part of this research study (Burns, 2000). The technique used to draw the random sample consisted of writing each student's name on a paper and putting it in one of the three containers that represent the three categories. The first container included 12 names, the second container included five names and the third container included only one name. Then, one paper is selected at random from every container. The student's name selected from the first container was Participant A, the second student's name selected from the second container was Participant B and the third student's name selected from the fourth container was Participant C. The use of these two sampling methods helped the researcher decrease the sampling error.

All the 18 students in this first grade mixed-ability classroom were taught reading through the readers' workshop and had an equal chance to participate in the study. However, only three participants were chosen by the researcher to represent the sample in this study.

Design of the Study

This research study is an action research following a qualitative research design. The nature of the study is to analyze the implementation of the readers' workshop in a first grade mixed-ability classroom to help students improve both their reading levels and comprehension skills.

Qualitative Research Design

According to Burns (2000), typical qualitative studies in most social science research topics use observations and interviews as the main tools when conducting surveys and action research. Moreover, Wallace (1998) referred to a specific approach that can be used within qualitative research to conduct studies related to language teaching. Wallace's approach, the action research, aimed at allowing teachers to improve their expertise in the field of teaching while continuing in their profession by continuously gathering data on their daily practices and reflecting on them to enhance their future practices.

McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996) explained that action research is a type of practitioner research used by the researchers to help them enhance their professional practices in various workplaces. They added that the major objective of action research is to result in an advancement of the practice that is linked with an advancement of knowledge. Wallace (1998) also described action research as an empowering method that assists teachers in looking for professional growth within their research.

Burns (2000) explained that in action research, the problem is identified, remedial measures are designed and applied and the results are examined. In the same way, Wallace (1998) defined action research as a reflective method in which the researcher investigates the problem, gathers data and analyzes the outcomes until he/she reaches a solution.

Reliability Issues

According to Burns (2000), researchers should pay special attention to the reliability and validity of their research studies in order to enhance their professional practices. Merriam (1998) explained that reliability in a research study assumes that a study will generate the same results even when studied repeatedly. Fraenkel & Wallen (2006) added that qualitative researchers "emphasize the honesty, believability, expertise, and integrity of the researcher" (p. 164). Therefore, they back up their use of an instrument by reliable and appropriate evidence. Moreover, Wallace (1998) suggested that in order to prove to others the reliability of his/her research, an action researcher has to be open about the data collected and the results and publicize his/her findings.

In this study, the researcher ensured to gather reliable data by using notes from the teacher-student conferences and guided reading sessions, keeping a professional notebook to examine the students' reading achievement and looking at students' running records as an evidence of their reading growth. Moreover, the researcher will be extremely open about the study results and make it public to other teachers at school in order to maximize the reliability of the study.

Validity Issues

In traditional research, validity can be guaranteed when researchers make sure to describe and analyze the results of the studies objectively (McNiff, et al., 1996). However, this

assumption is ineffective in action research because of the significance of the researcher's interpretation of the findings. McNiff et al. (1996) explained that an individual experience could be a reliable source for determining validity in an action research when it is significantly shared by others. This can happen when researchers talk about their work with other critical colleagues or friends.

The following measures were taken to guarantee the internal validity of this research study:

1. Triangulation- according to Burns (2000), triangulation is defined as collecting data about an instructional question from three different sources. Triangulation allows the researcher to use these three sources as a support to confirm the results of the study (McNiff et al.; 1996). Therefore, in this study, various sources were used to confirm the results, including notes from classroom's observations, data collected from the guided reading and teacher-student conferences' notes and results of the running records and reading continuums of the participants at the beginning and at the end of the academic year.

2. Using a professional notebook- the teacher-researcher reflected in this notebook on her instructional practices and experiences when implementing the readers' workshop in the classroom. Also, the teacher-researcher used this notebook to record her observations of her students while reading independently and during the guided reading and conferences sessions. In other words, this professional notebook represented a description of the factual data the teacher-researcher collected during the readers' workshop sessions throughout the academic year.

Procedures

At the beginning of the school year in September 2008, the researcher formally assessed all first grade students' reading levels and comprehension skills by using the running records of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project assessment kit (see Appendices B, E and H), which have been considered as an official assessment tool by the elementary department of the school. This type of assessment helps the researcher in determining students' reading readiness levels and evaluating their weaknesses in reading. Each student obtained a letter that describes his/her reading ability at that time of the year. Moreover, reading continuums (see Appendices D, G and J) were also used in September 2008 as another tool to formally assess all students' reading behaviors at the beginning of the year. In June 2009, new running records (Appendices C, F and I) were administered again with the same group of students to assess their growth in reading. Also, the reading continuums (Appendices D, G and J) were used again in June 2009 as a tool to demonstrate students' improved reading skills.

In October 2008, the readers' workshop began to be implemented for 60 minutes in the daily literacy schedule in the first grade classroom. During the readers' workshop block, the researcher observed students while reading during their first and second independent reading time. In addition, the guided reading sessions, which are an important part of the readers' workshop, allowed the researcher to respond to each student's reading problems and find individual strategies to tackle these problems. Moreover, during the conferring time, the researcher was able to respond to every student's needs in reading and recorded her observations of the student's usage of the different reading and comprehension strategies and his/her areas of growth. All students in this first grade classroom had the chance to benefit from the independent reading times, minilessons, teacher-student conferences and guided reading sessions. However,

only the results of the three participants representing the sample of this study will be reported and analyzed at the end of the study.

In summary, the notes of the teacher-student conferences and the guided reading sessions as well as the classroom's observational notes on the researcher's professional notebook were used as an evidence of students' reading progress and will be discussed in the results of the study in a narrative form.

Data Sources

The researcher collected data from various sources. In order to monitor students' achievement in reading levels and comprehension skills in a first grade mixed-ability classroom, the researcher used data from the professional notebook's remarks, the guided reading notes and the teacher-student conference notes. Furthermore, data about students' reading levels and comprehension skills were gathered from the running records of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (Appendices B, C, E, F, H and I) and the reading continuums (Appendices D, G and J), which provided the researcher with evidence of the improvement of students' reading abilities.

Data Analysis

A detailed data analysis described the procedures that were followed in a first grade mixed-ability classroom to study the results of the implementation of the readers' workshop to differentiate reading instruction and meet the different levels and abilities of students.

Qualitative data, which were reported narrativelly rather than numerativelly, were analyzed and then the results of the study were reported. These qualitative data were gathered from the researcher's professional notebook, classroom's observational notes and students' running records and reading continuums.

The researcher used running records with every participant in the study twice during the year (in September 2008 and June 2009) to monitor his/her improvement in reading based on Fountas and Pinnell reading levels ranging from A to Z. The student's progression from a lower to a higher level will represent an evidence of growth in reading that supports the need of differentiating reading instruction in classrooms. In addition, the researcher also used the reading continuums twice during the year (in September 2008 and June 2009) to assess each participant's growth in reading comprehension.

At the end, the data collected from the various sources were compared together to reach the final results. The new reading levels of students on their running records and their abilities to progress to a higher stage on the reading continuums were analyzed in parallel with the researcher's observations of students during independent reading times, the teacher-student conferences notes and the guided reading sessions' feedback.

Ethical Considerations

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), the most important ethical consideration when conducting a research study is the confidentiality of the information that will be gathered on the participants in the study. Therefore, the researcher will make sure to keep the participants' names confidential by replacing their real names with Participants A, B and C.

Summary

This qualitative study represents an action research that investigated the effects of implementing the readers' workshop on students' reading levels and comprehension skills in a first grade mixed-ability classroom in a private school in Beirut. Three participants with different academic readiness levels were selected in this study based on stratified and random sampling methods. Students' reading levels and comprehension skills were measured twice during the year

through the use of running records and reading continuums. Data for the study were collected

from various sources including the researcher's professional notebook, classroom observations

and teacher-student conferences observations. The following chapter represents a narrative

analysis of the results of the study after the collection of the data.

major concerns: (1) How does the implementation of the readers' workshop improve students' reading levels? and (2) How does the implementation of the readers' workshop enhance students' comprehension skills?

The first phase of the study that targeted implementing the readers' workshop was administering a reading assessment during the month of September. In order to find out students' reading levels at that time, the researcher met with every student separately, gave him/her different leveled books ranging from A to Z and recorded his/her reading level on the running record that is considered an official assessment tool in the elementary department. The researcher also asked each student various comprehension questions to measure his/her comprehension level in general. This initial assessment drew the researcher's attention to the different reading readiness levels of students in reading.

The second phase in conducting this study was reading about the elements of the readers' workshop and how it is usually implemented in classrooms. This allowed the researcher to discover that the structure of the readers' workshop supports the concept of differentiating reading instruction. Moreover, the whole-group minilessons as well as the individual teacher-student conferences and the guided reading sessions catered to meet the different readiness levels of students and build on them. Other important factors that the researcher realized through her investigations involved (1) Giving students the chance to read about topics that interest them; (2) Ensuring that students read everyday for a certain amount of time; (3) Allowing students to share their successful reading experiences with peers; and (4) Exposing students to different genres of books.

In order to start implementing the readers' workshop in the best way to help students improve both their reading levels and comprehension skills, the researcher still had to set the

reading time blocks within the daily English hours. Therefore, the readers' workshop was scheduled for a 60 minutes block everyday of the week. On one hand, this procedure helped students to know at what times the readers' workshop block was assigned everyday. On the other hand, it allowed students to get used to the fixed and predictable structure of the readers' workshop for the rest of the year.

On October 6, 2008, the researcher officially started implementing the readers' workshop in her first grade classroom. She introduced students to the structure and components of the readers' workshop and the role of each one. She also explained to students how they are expected to work within the setting of the readers' workshop.

Minilessons taught during the month of October focused on two major goals. The first two weeks consisted of minilessons that covered the first goal which is the routines of the readers' workshop in details. It was extremely important for students to get familiar with the structured schedule of the readers' workshop and understand the expectations that come along with it. Therefore, the minilessons focused mainly on teaching students how to (1) listen quietly to the short ten minutes minilesson; (2) select independently any books and read them quietly during the ten minutes of the first independent self-selected reading time; (3) find a comfortable individual reading space; (4) use whispering voices during reading time; and (5) what to do in case a student needed help in reading while the teacher is busy conferring with other students or leading a guided reading session.

Minilessons during the last week of October covered the second major goal which is teaching students the whole system of reading leveled books. Therefore, minilessons discussed the following topics: (1) what does reading leveled books mean; (2) what are just-right books; (3) how would I know if this is a just-right book for me to read; and (4) how do I start getting

higher leveled books. The researcher felt that it was beneficial to teach the above procedural minilessons during the month of October because it allowed students to smoothly get used to the readers' workshop routines to become independent learners and more proficient readers throughout the year. Moreover, instructing students about just-right leveled books helped them to become wiser when selecting their own books and decreased their comparisons to each other.

The beginning of the month of November witnessed the start of the instruction of the reading and comprehension strategies' units. The title of the first unit was "Students build reading habits by using before, during and after reading strategies". The main goal of the researcher in this unit was to assist students in becoming effective participants in the process of reading by activating their imagination. Therefore, it was important to find a six years old child-friendly expression that would describe how readers predict the story events before reading, cross-check their predictions while reading and make conclusions at the end. Thus, the researcher's minilessons highlighted mainly the fact that readers have strong reading muscles that allow them to start making movies in their heads after looking at the title and cover page of a book. They predict the stories before reading, monitor if their predictions were right and keep running movies in their heads. Students also learned during this month how to stop and think about what they read on one hand and reread to better understand on the other hand.

December's reading unit was entitled "Readers try harder when they tackle difficult or tricky words". Most of the minilessons focused on training students to become active problem-solvers who have a variety of decoding strategies that will allow them to figure out how to read some difficult words that they might encounter in their texts. Again, it was important for the researcher to find a child-friendly way to explain to students what they are expected to do when they come across tricky and unfamiliar words. Therefore, the researcher compared her students

to characters in stories who might face unexpected problems. Instead of giving up, these characters try various ways to solve the problem and reach a solution at the end. Readers were expected, as these characters, to spring into action and use different reading strategies to tackle difficult words. Some of the reading minilessons taught in December included using picture cues, sounding out the words, looking through the word till the end and chunking.

January's reading unit was about "Studying what characters in books do and make connections with them". Although this unit's focus was mainly to introduce students as much as possible to various characters in the book, it also held with it a collection of comprehension strategies that were extremely important in analyzing characters' traits and feelings. The minilessons of this month trained students on how to retell story events in sequence to see how the characters change, how to make text-to-text and text-to-self connections, how to stop and think about the story elements and how to make inferences at the end of the text. Moreover, the researcher introduced students to the different graphic organizers that were used to enhance their comprehension skills. Students worked on story maps, character maps and made comparisons of different characters using Venn Diagrams.

During the month of February, most of the minilessons taught students how good readers use meaning, structural and visual cues to figure out words while reading, especially that most students were starting to read books at higher levels. At that time of the year, it was necessary to teach some strategies that will help them balance their reading efforts between decoding words and understanding the stories. Therefore, the researcher stressed on instructing her students on how to confirm whether what they read made sense (meaning), sounds right in English (structural) and looks visually correct (visual). They were also taught how to stop while reading to self-monitor for meaning, cross-check different strategies and self-correct if needed. As a

result, students learned that making meaning while reading assists them in tackling difficult words.

In March, students were introduced to a new genre in reading to broaden their general knowledge of books. The title of the unit was "Reading non-fiction books to become experts". Students were eager about the idea that they would read books that talk about their favorite topics. The list of subjects that students read about varied from animals and insects, to Earth and other planets, to countries and places. One minilesson focused specifically on how expert readers brainstorm all their ideas about a certain topic before starting to read the book. Another minilesson taught students how to use the KWL and the before/after charts on which they would write down all the new information that they have learned after reading the book. Other minilessons taught students how to research a non-fiction book and take notes by jotting down the new information on post-its and using these post-its at the end to synthesize the main ideas about that topic. This unit empowered all students, regardless of their reading levels, with some sophisticated comprehension strategies that they can keep using when reading any non-fiction book throughout their lives.

In April, the focus of the reading instruction was again on using various word-solving strategies to increase fluency while reading. The unit was entitled "Brave and resourceful readers find various ways to tackle difficult words". The main objective of this unit's minilessons was to assist students in breaking big words into smaller words, finding similar spelling patterns and making connections between word families. Therefore, the minilessons of this month focused on teaching students how to work with word parts. Other minilessons introduced students to compound words and how they can divide them into two words. Also, students learned in one of the minilessons how to reread to make sure that the unfamiliar word sounds right and makes

sense. At the end of the month, students learned that in order to become brave and resourceful readers, they should not ignore difficult words or give up. Rather, they should use their repertoire of strategies to attack the tricky words.

In May, the researcher revised all the previous reading and comprehension minilessons to evaluate how the students grew as readers at that time of the year. Therefore, the minilessons reviewed some of the basic decoding strategies, as well as more sophisticated comprehension strategies. Most of the students were successful in using many of these strategies when reading independently their leveled books during their reading time. These minilessons presented the basis upon which other strategies will build on during the coming years.

During the first week of June, new running records were administered to all students in the classroom, including participants A, B and C to evaluate whether they showed improved reading skills. In addition to the running records, the reading continuums were also used in June to assess students' growth in reading according to the students' new stages on the continuums. Both the running records and the reading continuums were considered by the elementary division of the school as the official tools to measure students' achievement in reading at the end of the academic year, instead of using letter grades or scores.

Analysis of Participants' Running Records and Reading Continuums

Students' reading achievement has been assessed using the running records and the reading continuums. The results of the students' running records were compared to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project benchmarks for independent reading levels which clearly state the levels at which all students in first grade should be reading at that time of the year. The section that will follow discusses the assessment results of participants A, B and C to show how they improved their reading abilities by participating in the readers' workshop.

Participant A

Participant A was a boy who was considered to be below the first grade level standards in reading because the results of his running record in September showed that he was only able to read level A (Appendix B). When compared to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project benchmarks for independent reading levels, participant A's low level in reading confirmed that he needed support. The analysis of his error patterns on the running record showed his inability to use meaning, graphophonic and structure cues to decode unfamiliar words on one hand and to self-correct when the words do not make sense on the other hand. In fact, participant A lacked the simple reading strategies for emergent readers such as using pictures cues and sounding out the words. He also answered the comprehension questions very briefly. In September, participant A was considered to be in the emerging stage of the reading continuum (Appendix D). He knew all letters' names and sounds, was capable of reading a text from top to bottom and left to right, and identified some words in the book.

In June, the results of participant A's running record showed his improvement in his reading and comprehension skills. He was able to read independently level K (Appendix C), which means that he was then considered to be meeting the first grade standards of reading according to the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project benchmarks for independent reading levels. Participant A was also capable of using more advanced reading strategies such as noting patterns in text, looking through the word till the end, chunking the word, skipping and coming back and self-correcting. Additionally, participant A started using some simple comprehension strategies to better understand the text such as making and confirming predictions, making text-to-text and text-to-self connections and stopping to think. Participant A reached the beginning stage of the reading continuum in June (Appendix D). He was capable of

reading early-reader books for a period of ten to 15 minutes, recognizing basic reading genres, identifying high frequency words and summarizing story events in sequence.

Participant B

Participant B was a girl who was meeting the first grade level standards in reading as indicated by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project benchmarks for independent reading levels. The results of her running record in September showed that she was able to read level D independently and answer the comprehension questions (Appendix E). She also applied different reading strategies such as using picture cues, sounding out the word and chunking to decode difficult words. However, participant B's main weakness was her inability to read with expression and fluency. Actually, the way she was reading the text in hands was extremely slow and monotonous. In September, participant B was considered to be in the developing stage of the reading continuum (Appendix G). She was capable of reading simple books for a short period, recognizing simple words, making predictions and answering simple comprehension questions.

By June, participant B showed an enormous improvement in her reading level. The results of her running records showed that she was able to read chapter books from level N (Appendix F), which is considered to be a grade three level of reading. Moreover, both the teacher-student conference notes and the classroom observational notes showed that participant B was also highly capable of using advanced reading strategies such as making connections between word families, using meaning, structure and graphophonic cues, monitoring, cross-checking and self-correcting. Also, her comprehension skills have highly improved since the beginning of the year. In fact, she was able to use different graphic organizers, make text-to-text and text-to-self connections, take notes to answer research questions and summarize a text. She also demonstrated a great improvement in overcoming her monotonous and slow way of reading

a text. In fact, the researcher noted her success in reading with fluency and expression while administering the end of year running record. Participant B reached the expanding stage of the reading continuum in June (Appendix G). She was capable of reading easy chapter books for a period of 15 to 30 minutes, comparing characters and events in stories, "reading between the lines", and using the dictionary to figure out the meaning of difficult words.

Participant C

Participant C was a girl who was highly exceeding the first grade level standards in reading since she was already able to read level Q in September (Appendix H). Her decoding skills were extremely advanced compared to her age and she was proficient in reading the text with fluency. However, her answers to the questions of the running record showed that her comprehension skills were not well developed compared to the level of the book that she was reading. She was not able to retell the story events in details and answered only two out of four comprehension questions. In September 2008, participant C was considered to be in the expanding stage of the reading continuum (Appendix J). She was capable of reading easy chapter books within 15 to 30 minutes, self-correcting, and using advanced reading strategies to decode tricky words.

By June, participant C showed a major growth in both her reading and comprehension skills. She was able to read challenging chapter books from level U (Appendix I), which is considered to be a grade seven level of reading. Moreover, her comprehension skills have highly improved since the beginning of the year. In fact, her responses on the running record showed her ability to summarize the story in sequence and answer both the literal and inferential questions. Moreover, both the teacher-student conference notes and the classroom observational notes confirmed her ability to use sophisticated comprehension skills while reading such as

making and confirming predictions, making text-to-text and text-to-self connections, creating mental images and making inferences. Participant C reached the fluent stage of the reading continuum in June (Appendix J). She was capable of selecting and reading different genres of books for 30 to 40 minutes, using the dictionary to figure out the meaning of new words, discussing the story elements including the characters, setting and plot and "reading between the lines" to better understand the text.

In general, after implementing the readers' workshop into the daily schedule of the literacy curriculum in a first grade classroom, various benefits resulted. The readers' workshop was an efficient instructional reading approach because it provided the following principles: (1) A differentiated reading environment; (2) A secure reading setting that encouraged students to take risks while reading; (3) Meaningful reading experiences; (4) Individualized instruction that directed students' success in reading; and (5) Direct teaching of strategies used by proficient readers in minilessons.

Students in first grade gained several learning experiences from the implementation of the readers' workshop in the classroom. Everyday, all students were excited about the idea that they had the chance to select any book of their own interests during the self-selected reading time. They were also greatly motivated about the opportunity to read their leveled books from different genres and grow as proficient readers. They gained more self-esteem and turned into passionate readers every time they had the chance to share some reading information with their classmates. Moreover, the implementation of the readers' workshop helped in increasing students' self-confidence because they had the chances to witness their growth as readers due to their improvement in reading levels.

Being an individualized and differentiated approach, the readers' workshop helped all students to develop their reading abilities, regardless of their academic readiness. Students ended up loving to read because they indirectly knew that all their efforts were being recognized and reinforced.

Within the supportive climate of the classroom, all the students felt secure when reading, which allowed them to enjoy their individual progress. They also knew that no matter what levels they were reading, their improvement in the use of reading and comprehension strategies was always complimented and praised.

Students were also motivated to take risks in reading and share various information about them as readers because of the risk-free and helpful setting of the classroom. Students were always given confidence when reading even if they made some reading mistakes. They realized that after all, the main priority was to learn reading and comprehension strategies that are needed to become engaged and proficient readers. Therefore, both the researcher and the students worked hand in hand to create many opportunities to celebrate their reading success. Most importantly, the teacher-student conferences have helped in strengthening the communication between both of them. On one hand, it allowed the teacher-researcher to learn more about the thinking of the students as strategic readers and reinforce their trials. On the other hand, the students were not intimidated to share their reading experiences with the teacher because they knew that they would not be assigned letter grades or scores. This is what fostered the positive and enthusiastic attitude of students to the reading process.

In order for students to observe the behaviors and strategies of a proficient and strategic reader, the teacher had to model these reading elements in front of the class. It was through the minilessons that the teacher-researcher demonstrated to students the quality of effective reading,

hoping that they would use the techniques and strategies during their own reading time. During the teacher-student conferences, the teacher-researcher observed them reading, re-explained some strategies and gave them direct feedback to strengthen their use of the acquired strategy. This way, students did not feel threatened and showed a positive attitude towards learning how to read.

Students also needed to read topics that interest them as readers, instead of being told what to read. Through guiding students towards the baskets of books that correspond to their reading levels and giving them the freedom to choose from among them, the researcher turned the reading process into a meaningful and interesting experience.

Another important element to monitor students' involvement in reading was conducting a teacher-student conference. During the reading conferences, the teacher-researcher met with every student to informally assess his/her reading level, check the strategies that he/she was using to decode tricky words and understand the text. It was also a time for the teacher to re-teach the student a certain strategy that was not well applied, model to him/her how to apply it and then set it as a goal for the student to practice during the independent reading time. Thus, setting a clear objective during every conference gave the teacher and the student a base to monitor reading growth during the next conference and increased the chances that the techniques shared during that conference will improve the student's reading ability in general.

Concerning reading assessments, both the running records and the reading continuums provided the researcher with an evidence of students' reading abilities and reflected on their reading growth throughout the year. The improvement of the reading levels, in addition to the progression to a new reading stage on the continuum, showed how each student improved his/her reading skills, regardless of their academic readiness levels. Also, the reading continuum by

itself served as a detailed description of every student's achievement in reading with very specific reading behaviors. Using the continuum was a more favorable alternative to giving students scores on their reading achievement. In summary, both the running records and the reading continuums were considered as official assessment tools that measured students' reading achievement and presented evidence of students' improvement in their reading skills.

Summary of Participants' Reading Achievement

The results of the participants' running records and reading continuums reflected a great improvement in their reading levels and comprehension skills after implementing the readers' workshop in the classroom. When compared to September's assessment results, the three participants, who were at different reading readiness levels, demonstrated a positive growth in their reading achievement in June. They were able to independently select just-right books that correspond to their reading levels without asking for help. They were also exposed to various genres of books such as fiction and non-fiction and were able to identify the characteristics of each. They also learned how to set reading goals for themselves when conferring with the teacher, which enabled them to know what they needed to work on and turned them into engaged and motivated readers. Additionally, all three participants succeeded in learning a variety of reading and comprehension strategies taught during the minilessons and the guided reading sessions. By possessing this repertoire of simple and more advanced strategies, the participants were able at the end of the academic year to increase their reading levels and enhance their comprehension skills.

In general, the implementation of the readers' workshop in the classroom allowed the three participants to be more self-confident as readers. Moreover, they all learned that, regardless

of the varying reading levels that they were reading, each one of them was progressing differently but certainly into a proficient reader.

Summary

This chapter described the way the researcher implemented the readers' workshop in a first grade mixed-ability classroom to assist her students in improving their reading abilities.

The chapter investigated the basic elements of the readers' workshop that are vital in order to consider the workshop as a valuable instructional approach in the classroom. Also, the chapter displayed the yearly calendar of the reading curriculum and presented the reading and comprehension strategies that were taught during the year. It also analyzed the assessment data that were gathered from the researcher's observational notes, running records, reading continuums and notes from conference and guided reading sessions. This helped the researcher in evaluating fairly and objectively students' reading achievement. At the end, the chapter illustrated how participants A, B and C were able to show improvement and growth in their reading levels and comprehension skills due to their participation in the readers' workshop.

CHAPTER V

Discussions and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This research study analyzed how the readers' workshop was implemented in a first grade mixed-ability classroom in order to improve the reading levels and comprehension skills of students who have different needs and academic abilities. The readers' workshop was described constantly in the literature as an effective instructional approach that supports the differentiation of reading instruction.

Thus, in order to measure students' reading achievement, the teacher-researcher used the reading continuums and the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project's running records, which are considered as the official assessment tools in the elementary division.

The study took place in a first grade classroom in a private school in Beirut. By using stratified then random sampling, three out of 18 students were selected as the main participants in the study. Also, the teacher-researcher participated in the study by being a teacher and an action researcher at the same time.

In order to investigate the effect of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading achievement, the study followed the design of an action research. The following instruments were used throughout the study to gather qualitative data: (a) teacher's observational notes during the self-selected reading time, independent reading time, guided reading and reading conferences; (b) teacher's professional notebook; (c) running records; and (d) reading continuums.

A narrative description analyzed the data collected from the four instruments. The narrative summaries included an illustration of the reading and comprehension strategies and

minilessons that were taught throughout the year as well as a detailed interpretation of the effectiveness of the readers' workshop.

The following section addresses both research questions of the study that analyzed the effect of the implementation of the readers' workshop, considered as a differentiated instructional approach, to improve students' reading levels and comprehension skills. It also presents a synthesis of the major elements that took place within the readers' workshop setting and compares them to the literature discussed before.

Analysis of the Research Questions

The research questions in this study investigated the effect of implementing the readers' workshop on the reading levels and comprehension skills of students, knowing that they reflected different levels of reading readiness. After administering in September the running records of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project that revealed differing students' reading and comprehension levels, the researcher was convinced that she needed to differentiate reading instruction in her classroom to meet the needs, interests and learning profiles of all students, as proposed by Tomlinson (1999, 2001). Therefore, students were divided at the beginning of the year into three different categories based on the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project's benchmarks for independent reading levels: (a) needs support; (b) meets standards; and (c) exceeds standards. This division of students into three groups with differing reading readiness allowed the researcher to cater for the needs of each group differently.

Another important factor that was established in the classroom, as suggested by Tomlinson (1999, 2001), was creating a safe and friendly environment, where all students felt respected and cared for, regardless of their academic abilities. Thus, through participating in the readers' workshop, students gained a significant reading instruction that catered for their

individual reading needs. All students in this first grade classroom were empowered with learning experiences that turned them into confident and effective readers.

The fact that the readers' workshop structure and time were predictable and took place on a daily basis allowed the students to work better within the workshop's setting. All students had the opportunity to practice reading books with different topics and genres every single day, which reinforced their interests in the process of reading. As Lause (2004) indicated, the readers' workshop approach assisted in turning first grade students into self-disciplined and proficient readers who are motivated to read because of a real interest.

During the first self-selected reading time, students were allowed to select books to read from any reading level and genre, as pointed out by Keene and Zimmermann (1997) and Taberski (2000). They were given the freedom to choose books above their reading levels, which motivated them to be exposed to higher levels of reading. This exposure to higher reading levels with more advanced text structures and vocabulary words challenged the students to use more sophisticated reading and comprehension strategies in their attempt to decode difficult words and understand the text.

Reading and comprehension strategies were formally taught to students during the whole group minilessons. Everyday, the students gathered in the meeting area of the classroom to learn a new skill that will enable them to tackle unfamiliar words and make meaning of the text. As indicated by Nesheim and Taylor (2000), the reading minilessons were short and specific and delivered in a manner that was meaningful to the readers' needs. The collection of these reading and comprehension strategies taught during minilessons empowered students with an advanced reading repertoire that they could use while reading to reach higher reading levels. Students were also frequently exposed to different types of read-aloud during the reading block. As Miller

(2002) indicated, the read-aloud served as a model for the teacher to show students how to use the reading and comprehension strategies to demonstrate proficient and engaged reading behaviors.

During the second independent reading time, students were matched to their just-right books that corresponded to their accurate reading levels, as pointed by Fountas & Pinnell (1999). Students read their just-right books with accuracy and fluency that enabled them to be engaged in successful processing in reading. They were encouraged to use all the reading strategies that they knew to tackle independently the difficult words. Therefore, the reading levels improved from one letter to another when they were able to do that independently.

During the second independent reading time, the teacher held reading conferences with students, as suggested by Keene and Zimmerman (1997), Miller (2002) and Taberski (2000). These reading conferences were greatly beneficial for two reasons. On one hand, they allowed the researcher to informally assess her students by observing their reading behaviors and taking notes of their usage of different reading and comprehension strategies. This enabled the researcher to discover students' weaknesses in reading and work individually with each one of them on fulfilling their needs. On the other hand, the teacher-student conference was the time in which the teacher would decide to move a student to a higher reading level when she would feel that he/she read with accuracy, fluency and comprehension, as suggested by Fountas and Pinnell (1999). Thus, the conference time was at the heart of the readers' workshop because it enabled the teacher-researcher to assess every student's reading improvement throughout the year.

The guided reading time also played an important role in improving students' reading levels and comprehension skills. As proposed by Browning Schulman and Dacruz Payne (2000), Fountas and Pinnell (1999) and Taberski (2000), the teacher frequently met with a homogeneous

group of students who had similar reading levels to teach them a certain reading or comprehension strategy that would enhance their understanding of a text and their abilities to decode difficult words. The teacher played the role of a coach who assisted the students in learning new skills that would support them in reaching higher reading and comprehension levels. The guided reading time also represented an opportunity for the teacher to check students' fluency and error patterns and correct any misconception that students might had when reading. Additionally, the observational notes that the teacher took on each student during the guided reading time were extremely helpful in assessing students' improvement in reading levels and comprehension skills.

The reading share at the end of the readers' workshop was also useful in summing up the work of the day. All students had the chance in the last five minutes to share with their friends the reading and comprehension strategies that worked well with them. As Taberski (2000) indicated, the reading share operated as another short minilesson, in which students learned from each other's experiences in reading to become proficient readers. This share enhanced their reading and comprehension skills which in return improved their reading and comprehension levels.

The readers' workshop approach offered first grade students the opportunity to expand their reading experiences throughout the year and empowered them with a sophisticated repertoire of reading and comprehension strategies that in return enhanced their reading levels and comprehension skills. Being a differentiated instructional approach, the readers' workshop enabled students to improve at different paces based on their academic abilities. Additionally, another advantage that resulted from the readers' workshop was greatly demonstrated in the high levels of students' enjoyment for reading. Students were greatly motivated to read about their

favorite topics and share with each other their successful experiences in applying reading and comprehension strategies while reading. The readers' workshop also provided students with a safe and friendly environment in which they learned to take risks in reading to become proficient readers.

Limitations

There are two limitations for this action research. The first limitation is that the study was limited only to one section in first grade because the teacher-researcher taught that section only. As a result, the sample that was selected for the study does not represent all students in the first grade level. Therefore, generalizations of the results of this research study cannot be made on other grade levels at the school.

A second limitation of the study is related to the number of participants. Because the researcher chose only three students who had three different reading abilities to participate in the study, generalizations of the improvement in reading skills cannot be made on all the 18 students in first grade.

Recommendations

As a result of this study, various recommendations are proposed to elementary teachers, school principals and for further research studies.

This action research strongly recommends elementary teachers to implement the readers' workshop approach in their mixed-ability classrooms because it enables them to differentiate the reading instruction with students who have different reading readiness levels and needs. The structured components of the readers' workshop, including students' independent reading times in addition to guided reading and teacher-student conferences, enhance the individualized reading instruction and allow students to develop at their own paces. Thus, it is extremely

important for teachers to set a daily amount of time for students to practice reading in order for them to learn how to read with accuracy, fluency and comprehension. This will also allow students to love the process of reading. Moreover, teachers must try to establish a joyful and safe reading environment in their classrooms where all students will feel respected and motivated to take risks in reading.

Teachers are also recommended to give students the freedom of choosing their leveled books according to what interests them instead of assigning them what to read. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to expose students to the different genres of books (fiction, non-fiction, poetry...) and keep them available in the classroom library for students to be able to check them when it is independent reading time.

Additionally, this study strongly recommends using running records and reading continuums to report students' progress in reading as an alternative to assigning letter grades. Both the running records and the reading continuums are considered as reliable assessment tools that demonstrate students' improvement in reading levels and comprehension skills. They also offer the teachers an idea of the students' error patterns, suggest an analysis of these errors and also highlight students' development in reading from one stage to another. Using these assessment tools will make it easier for the teachers to inform parents about their children's progress in reading during parent-teacher conferences.

School principals are also highly recommended to offer continuous support and training to teachers who are starting to learn more about the implementation of the readers' workshop in their classrooms. Thus, it is suggested that school principals hire a reading mentor who will assist teachers and train them on the best practices of teaching reading. The reading mentor will

model to teachers the techniques of the readers' workshop, provide feedback on their applications and plan reading lessons with them.

Another recommendation for school principals is to inform parents about the readers' workshop approach and how it is structured in order to involve them in the process of teaching their children how to read. Parents can play an effective role in supporting their children and instructing them to use the same reading and comprehension strategies at home if they were well involved in the way reading is being taught at school.

The last recommendation is addressed to researchers who would like to conduct further studies regarding the implementation of the readers' workshop in mixed-ability classrooms. One suggestion is to conduct various studies on a larger sample that might include more than one school or students from several grade levels but in the same school. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal studies that will determine the long-term results of the implementation of the readers' workshop on students' reading achievement.

Conclusion

The findings of this action research study reveal that the implementation of the readers' workshop improves students' reading levels and comprehension skills in mixed-ability classrooms. Through differentiating the reading instruction, students, who have different learning needs and reading readiness levels, enhance both their reading levels and comprehension skills at different paces. The learning experience in such a differentiated reading classroom creates various opportunities for students to grow as proficient and strategic readers who are able to apply several strategies to decode difficult words and understand the texts in their hands. Additionally, the readers' workshop provides students with a safe and risk-free environment in

which all students are respected regardless of their academic abilities. In return, this type of

learning environment allows students to feel more confident and motivated to learn.

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APPENDICES

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TCRWP Benchmarks for Independent Reading Levels (2008-2009)
September 20, 2008

September	November	March	June
Kindergarten Emergent Story Books Shared Reading	**Kindergarten** Emergent Story Books Shared Reading	**Kindergarten** 1= Pre-Emergent 2= Early Emergent 3=A/B/C *with book intro* 4=D or above	**Kindergarten** 1= Early Emergent 2=A *with book intro* 3=B/C/D *with book intro* 4=E or above
Grade 1: 1=A *or below* 2=B *with book intro* 3=C/D/E 4=F or above	**Grade 1:** 1=B or below 2=C/D 3=E/F/G 4=H or above	**Grade 1:** 1=D or below 2=E/F 3=G/H/I 4=J or above	**Grade 1:** 1=F or below 2=G/H 3=I/J/K 4=L or above
Grade 2: 1=F or below 2=G/H 3=I/J/K 4=L or above	**Grade 2:** 1=G or below 2=H/I 3=J/K/L 4=M or above	**Grade 2:** 1=H or below 2=I/J 3=K/L/M 4= N or above	**Grade 2:** 1=I or below 2=J/K 3=L/M/N 4=O or above
Grade 3: 1=I or below 2=J/K 3=L/M/N 4=O or above	**Grade 3:** 1= J or below 2= K/L 3= M/N/O 4=P or above	**Grade 3:** 1= K or below 2= L/M 3= N/O/P 4= Q or above	**Grade 3:** 1=L or below 2=M/N 3= O/P/Q 4=R or above
Grade 4: 1=L or below 2=M/N 3= O/P/Q 4=R or above	**Grade 4:** 1=M or below 2=N/O 3=P/Q/R 4=S or above	**Grade 4:** 1=N or below 2=O/P 3=Q/R/S 4=T or above	**Grade 4:** 1=O or below 2=P/Q 3=R/S/T 4=U or above
Grade 5: 1=O or below 2=P/Q 3=R/S/T 4=U or above	**Grade 5:** 1=P or below 2=Q/R 3=S/T/U 4=V or above	**Grade 5:** 1=P or below 2=Q/R 3=S/T/U 4=V or above	**Grade 5:** 1=Q or below 2=R/S 3=T/U/V 4= W or above
Grade 6: 1=Q or below 2=R/S 3=T/U/V 4= W or above	**Grade 6:** 1=R or below 2=S/T 3=U/V/W 4=X or above	**Grade 6:** 1=R or below 2=S/T 3=U/V/W 4=X or above	**Grade 6:** 1=S or below 2=T/U 3=V/W/X 4=Y or above
Grade 7: 1=S or below 2=T/U 3=V/W/X 4=Y or above	**Grade 7:** 1= S or below 2=T/U 3=V/W/X 4= Y or above	**Grade 7:** 1=T or below 2=U/V 3=W/X/Y 4= Z or above	**Grade 7:** 1=T or below 2=U/V 3=W/X/Y 4= Z or above
Grade 8: 1=U or below 2=V/W 3=X/Y 4= Z or above	**Grade 8:** 1=U or below 2=V/W 3=X/Y 4= Z or above	**Grade 8:** 1=V or below 2=W/X 3=Y/Z 4=Adult Literature	**Grade 8:** 1=W or below 2=X/Y 3=Z 4=Adult Literature

4 = exceeds standards, 3 = meets standards, 2 = approaches standards, 1 = needs support.

These benchmarks correlate to indicators of probable reading success in that and following grades, as well as probable achievement on state reading tests, although there are many factors other than reading level that may contribute to test scores, including writing skills, higher level comprehension skills, stamina, and reading rate. Schools may incorporate the benchmark level above as part of the child's assessment for a marking period, although they will probably also want to take into account reading habits, including volume of reading. These benchmarks will be revised as the TCRWP schools gather and share more data, and will be available to Project schools on our website at http://rwproject.tc.columbia.edu, with the TCRWP reading assessments.   Levels A&B only are instructional levels, because the child will hear the pattern first from their teacher in order to read these books.   DRAFT

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels

Set 1   Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative)   Level A

Reader's Name _Participant A_ Grade _One_ Date _Sept. 08_
Excerpt from _What Do You See At the Pond?_, by Anastasia Suen
Level A1 15 Words

Independent Level: (Yes) No

Accuracy Rate: _____

Book Introduction: (Show the cover of the book to the student and say this to the reader before he or she begins reading.)
"_The title of this book is_ What Do You See At the Pond?. _This is a story about a little boy and his mother. Let's read this book to find out what they see at the pond. I'll read the first two pages. Then you read the rest._" (Read pages 1 and 2 aloud to the child, pointing under each word.)

					E			SC	
	E	SC	M	S	V	M	S	V
Level A/B Reading Behaviors: □ Can the reader match spoken words to printed words? _(On page 5 the text says, "I see a bug," and the child reads, "I see a fly," matching words correctly. She has met the criteria at this level. The mismatch of letter-sound will be addressed in C and D books)._ Yes (No) □ Can the reader move from left to right when reading? (Yes) No □ Can the reader use illustrations as a source of information? _Yes_ (No) □ Can the reader carry the pattern from page to page? (Yes) No.	**Running Record:** _Record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the words as he or she reads. Later, analyze and code miscues with MSV._ Pg. 2: _(Teacher reads.)_ I see a frog. Pg. 3: _(Teacher reads.)_ I see a plant. Pg. 4: I see a ~~duck~~. buck Pg. 5: I see a ~~bug~~. fly Pg. 6: I see a fish. Pg. 7: I see a turtle.								
Pg. 4	1				V			
Pg. 5	1				V			
Pg. 8: I see ~~me~~! my	1			S				

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Set 1   Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative)   Level A

Literal and Inferential Retelling

Say, "Please retell the big important parts of what you just read." Write notes regarding the student's retell on the back of this page. If the student has trouble getting started, prompt him/her to look at the text. Say, "What happened first?" Make a note that you prompted the student. Some students will retell the story sequentially in response to this prompt, while others will retell the gist of the story. Either response is acceptable here. *I see many animals in the story.*

Use the Retelling Rubric and Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retell and response to the comprehension questions are acceptable. If a student is not able to retell but is able to answer the comprehension questions, note that this student will need extra work on how to retell a story.

Comprehension Questions Section: Analyze the student's retelling to see if it contains information that answers each question below. If a question was not answered in the retelling, ask it and record the student's response.

1. *Literal Question:* Name three things the little boy sees with his mom.

       Fly, Fish, turtle.

2. *Literal Question:* What animal does he see first?

       frog

3. *Inferential Question:* On the last page how is what he sees in the pond different than the other things he saw?

       It's because he cannot see animals anymore.

4. *Inferential Question:* How do the boy and his mother feel about their day in the park?

       happy

Final Score

Yes ~~No~~ *The reader uses Level A reading behaviors.*
(Yes) No *The reader answered at least three comprehension questions correctly.*
Yes (No) *Did the retell express the important parts in the text?*

Is this the student's independent reading level?

If you circled 3 "yes" answers in this **Final Score** box, the student is reading strongly at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read strongly at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all 3 questions. The highest level that showed strong reading is the independent reading level. For example, you might find that you answered "yes" to all 3 questions in the **Final Score** box for level C, then a "yes" to all 3 questions for level D, but only 2 "yes" answers for level E. Level D is the highest passage on which you were able to answer "yes" to all 3 questions in the **Final Score** box. Level D is the current independent reading level for the student.

APPENDIX C

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels

Set 1 | Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative) | Level K

Reader's Name **Participant A** Grade **One** Date **June 09**

Excerpt from *My Steps*, by Sally Derby
Level K1   104 words

Independent Level: **Yes** No

Accuracy Rate: **96%**

Book Introduction: (Show the cover of the book to the student and say this to the reader before he or she begins reading.)
"The title of this book is My Steps. *In this story you will read a story about a little girl and her friend Essie. Let's read this story to find out what happens on the steps."*

		E			SC		
E	**SC**	**M**	**S**	**V**	**M**	**S**	**V**

Check the reading behaviors you notice the child using. These notes may not determine the reader's independent reading level, but will inform your teaching:

☑ Rereads and self-corrects regularly.

☐ Monitors for all sources of information: checks to make sure what has been read makes sense, sounds right, and looks right.

☑ Reads with some fluency: automatic processing of print, phrasing, and appropriate intonation and expression.

☑ Uses an increasingly more challenging repertoire of graphophonic/visual strategies to problem solve through text.

Running Record: *For the first 104 words, record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the word as he or she reads. Later, analyze and code miscues with (MSV).*

Pg. 5: These are my steps.   (This)

all five of them.

One, Two, Three, Four, Five.

I can hop up from One to Five

and down from Five to One

on just one foot.

Pg. 6: Whenever it's a pretty day

I play on my steps

while cars and buses   (with (SC))

swoosh down the street   (swish)

and people walk by on the sidewalk.   (side)

Sometimes I know the people,

and then I say, "Morning, Mrs. Johnson,"

"Afternoon, Preacher Jones."   (precher)

But my mom always says,

"Don't you go talking to strangers,"

so I don't. I look away.

Pg. 9: At the top of my steps is the stoop

where I play (**100 words**) with my friend, Essie.

Running record column marks:

		E			SC		
E	**SC**	**M**	**S**	**V**	**M**	**S**	**V**
I				V			
	I		S				V
I							
I		M					
I							

Total miscues including self corrected: **5**	**Accuracy Rate:** Circle the number of miscues the reader did not self correct.

	100%	99%	98%	97%	96%
104 words	0 miscues	1 miscue	2 miscues	3 miscues	**4 miscues**

Self corrections: **1**

96%-100% accuracy is necessary to determine the reader's independent reading level. Try a lower level text if the reader does not meet this level of accuracy.

Miscues reader did not self correct: **4**

TCRWP--DRAFT

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels

Set 1   Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative)   Level K

Literal and Inferential Retelling

Say, "Please retell the big important parts of what you just read." Write notes regarding the student's retell on the back of this page. If the student has trouble getting started, prompt him/her to look at the text. Say, "What happened first?" Make a note that you prompted the student. Some students will retell the story sequentially in response to this prompt, while others will retell the gist of the story. Either response is acceptable here. *The girl likes to play on the steps with her friends. She is enjoying her time.*

Use the Retelling Rubric and Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retell and response to the comprehension questions are acceptable. If a student is not able to retell but is able to answer the comprehension questions, note that this student will need extra work on how to retell a story.

Comprehension Questions Section: Analyze the student's retelling/summary to see if it contains information that answers each question below. If a question was not answered in the retelling, ask it and record the student's response.

1. *Literal Question:* What are three things the girl in this story does on her steps?

She can hop up and down, and she plays with cars and with her friends.

2. *Literal Question:* What are some things she and Essie bring to the steps to help them play?

They bring toys and cars and dolls.

3. *Inferential Question:* Consider what this book is really about, and tell why the girl says, "Summer is better than fall, and hot is better than cold."

It's better because she can enjoy her time with her friends.

4. *Inferential Question:* Why does she like her steps so much?

She likes them because she can play on them.

Oral Reading Fluency Scale – Circle the Appropriate Level

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

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study.

Final Score

(Yes) No   Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%?
(Yes) No   Did the reader read with some fluency?
(Yes) No   Did the reader answer at least three comprehension questions correctly?
(Yes) No   Did the retelling/summary express the important things that happened in the text?

Is this the student's independent reading level?

* If you did NOT answer "yes" to all 4 questions in this Final Score box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all questions in the Final Score box.

* If you circled 4 "yes" answers in this Final Score box, the student is reading strongly at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read strongly at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all four questions. The highest level that showed strong reading is the independent reading level. For example, you might find that you answered "yes" to all four questions in the Final Score box for level K, then a "yes" to all four questions for level L, but only three "yes" answers for level M. Level L is the highest passage on which you were able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the Final Score box. Level L is the current independent reading level for the student.

TCRWP--DRAFT

📖 READING CONTINUUM

Preconventional Ages 3–5	Emerging Ages 4–6	Developing Ages 5–7	Beginning Ages 6–8	Expanding Ages 7–9
☐ Begins to choose reading materials (e.g., books, magazines, and charts) and has favorites. ☐ Shows interest in reading signs, labels, and logos (environmental print). ☐ Recognizes own name in print. ☐ Holds book and turns pages correctly. ☐ Shows beginning/end of book or story. ☐ Knows some letter names. ☐ Listens and responds to literature. ☐ Comments on illustrations in books. ☐ Participates in group reading (books, rhymes, poems, and songs).	☐ Memorizes pattern books, poems, and familiar books. ☐ Begins to read signs, labels, and logos (environmental print). ☐ Demonstrates eagerness to read. ☐ Pretends to read. ☐ Uses illustrations to tell stories. ☐ Reads top to bottom, left to right, and front to back with guidance. ☐ Knows most letter names and some letter sounds. ☐ Recognizes some names and words in context. ☐ Makes meaningful predictions with guidance. ☐ Rhymes and plays with words. ☐ Participates in reading of familiar books and poems. ☐ Connects books read aloud to own experiences with guidance.	☐ Reads books with simple patterns. ☐ Begins to read own writing. ☐ Begins to read independently for short periods (5-10 minutes). ☐ Discusses favorite reading material with others. ☐ Relies on illustrations and print. ☐ Uses finger-print-voice matching. ☐ Knows most letter sounds and letter clusters. ☐ Recognizes simple words. ☐ Uses growing awareness of sound segments (e.g., phonemes, syllables, rhymes) to read words. ☐ Begins to make meaningful predictions. ☐ Identifies titles and authors in literature (text features). ☐ Retells main event or idea in literature. ☐ Participates in guided literature discussions. ☐ Sees self as reader. ☐ Explains why literature is liked/disliked during class discussions with guidance.	☐ Reads simple early-reader books. ☐ Reads harder early-reader books. ☐ Reads and follows simple written directions with guidance. ☐ Identifies basic genres (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, and poetry). ☐ Uses basic punctuation when reading orally. ☐ Reads independently (10-15 minutes). ☐ Chooses reading materials independently. ☐ Learns and shares information from reading. ☐ Uses meaning cues (context). ☐ Uses sentence cues (grammar). ☐ Uses letter/sound cues and patterns (phonics). ☐ Recognizes word endings, common contractions, and many high frequency words. ☐ Begins to self-correct. ☐ Retells beginning, middle, and end with guidance. ☐ Discusses characters and story events with guidance. ☐ Identifies own reading behaviors with guidance.	☐ Reads easy chapter books. ☐ Chooses, reads, and finishes a variety of materials at appropriate level with guidance. ☐ Begins to read aloud with fluency. ☐ Reads silently for increasingly longer periods (15-30 minutes). ☐ Uses reading strategies appropriately, depending on the text and purpose. ☐ Uses word structure cues (e.g., root words, prefixes, suffixes, word chunks) when encountering unknown words. ☐ Increases vocabulary by using meaning cues (context). ☐ Self-corrects for meaning. ☐ Follows written directions. ☐ Identifies chapter titles and table of contents (text organizers). ☐ Summarizes and retells story events in sequential order. ☐ Responds to and makes personal connections with facts, characters, and situations in literature. ☐ Compares and contrasts characters and story events. ☐ "Reads between the lines" with guidance. ☐ Identifies own reading strategies and sets goals with guidance.

Bridging Ages 8–10	Fluent Ages 9–11	Proficient Ages 10–13	Connecting Ages 11–14	Independent
☐ Reads medium level chapter books. ☐ Chooses reading materials at appropriate level. ☐ Expands knowledge of different genres (e.g., realistic fiction, historical fiction, and fantasy). ☐ Reads aloud with expression. ☐ Uses resources (e.g., encyclopedias, CD-ROMs, and nonfiction texts) to locate and sort information with guidance. ☐ Gathers information by using the table of contents, captions, glossary, and index (text organizers) with guidance. ☐ Gathers and uses information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps with guidance. ☐ Increases vocabulary by using context cues, other reading strategies, and resources (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) with guidance. ☐ Demonstrates understanding of the difference between fact and opinion. ☐ Follows multi-step written directions independently. ☐ Discusses setting, plot, characters, and point of view (literary elements) with guidance. ☐ Responds to issues and ideas in literature as well as facts or story events. ☐ Makes connections to other authors, books, and perspectives. ☐ Participates in small group literature discussions with guidance. ☐ Uses reasons and examples to support ideas and opinions with guidance.	☐ Reads challenging children's literature. ☐ Selects, reads, and finishes a wide variety of genres with guidance. ☐ Begins to develop strategies and criteria for selecting reading materials. ☐ Reads aloud with fluency, expression, and confidence. ☐ Reads silently for extended periods (30-40 min.). ☐ Begins to use resources (e.g., encyclopedias, articles, Internet, and nonfiction texts) to locate information. ☐ Gathers information using the table of contents, captions, glossary, and index (text organizers) independently. ☐ Begins to use resources (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) to increase vocabulary in different subject areas. ☐ Begins to discuss literature with reference to setting, plot, characters, and theme (literary elements), and author's craft. ☐ Generates thoughtful oral and written responses in small group literature discussions with guidance. ☐ Begins to use new vocabulary in different subjects and in oral and written response to literature. ☐ Begins to gain deeper meaning by "reading between the lines." ☐ Begins to set goals and identifies strategies to improve reading.	☐ Reads complex children's literature. ☐ Reads and understands informational texts (e.g., want ads, brochures, schedules, catalogs, manuals) with guidance. ☐ Develops strategies and criteria for selecting reading materials independently. ☐ Uses resources (e.g., encyclopedias, articles, Internet, and nonfiction texts) to locate information independently. ☐ Gathers and analyzes information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps with guidance. ☐ Integrates information from multiple nonfiction sources to deepen understanding of a topic with guidance. ☐ Uses resources (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) to increase vocabulary independently. ☐ Identifies literary devices (e.g., similes, metaphors, personification, and foreshadowing). ☐ Discusses literature with reference to theme, author's purpose, and style (literary elements), and author's craft. ☐ Begins to generate in-depth responses in small group literature discussions. ☐ Begins to generate in-depth written responses to literature. ☐ Uses increasingly complex vocabulary in different subjects and in oral and written response to literature. ☐ Uses reasons and examples to support ideas and conclusions. ☐ Probes for deeper meaning by "reading between the lines" in response to literature.	☐ Reads complex children's literature and young adult literature. ☐ Selects, reads, and finishes a wide variety of genres independently. ☐ Begins to choose challenging reading materials and projects. ☐ Integrates nonfiction information to develop deeper understanding of a topic independently. ☐ Begins to gather, analyze, and use information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps. ☐ Generates in-depth responses and sustains small group literature discussions. ☐ Generates in-depth written responses to literature. ☐ Begins to evaluate, interpret, and analyze reading content critically. ☐ Begins to develop criteria for evaluating literature. ☐ Seeks recommendations and opinions about literature from others. ☐ Sets reading challenges and goals independently.	☐ Reads young adult and adult literature. ☐ Chooses and comprehends a wide variety of sophisticated materials with ease (e.g., newspapers, magazines, manuals, novels, and poetry). ☐ Reads and understands informational texts (e.g., manuals, consumer reports, applications, and forms) ☐ Reads challenging material for pleasure independently. ☐ Reads challenging material for information and to solve problems independently. ☐ Perseveres through complex reading tasks. ☐ Gathers, analyzes, and uses information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps independently. ☐ Analyzes literary devices (e.g., metaphors, imagery, irony, and satire). ☐ Contributes unique insights and supports opinions in complex literature discussions. ☐ Adds depth to responses to literature by making insightful connections to other reading and experiences. ☐ Evaluates, interprets, and analyzes reading content critically. ☐ Develops and articulates criteria for evaluating literature. ☐ Pursues a widening community of readers independently.

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels

Set 1　　　　　　　　Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative)　　　　　　　Level D

S
Reader's Name _Participant B_ Grade _One_ Date _Sept.08_
Excerpt from *I Play Soccer*, by Mary Cappellini
Level D1　31 words

Independent Level: (Yes)　No

Accuracy Rate: _97%_

Book Introduction: (Show the cover of the book to the student and say this to the reader before he or she begins reading.)
"The title of this book is I Play Soccer. *It's about a soccer team and it tells all the things they do when they play a game of soccer. Let's read to find out what happens."*

			E			SC		
E	**SC**	**M**	**S**	**V**	**M**	**S**	**V**	

Check the reading behaviors you notice the child using. These notes may not determine the reader's independent reading level, but will inform your teaching:

(☐) Uses some of the letter(s) of a word (including some of the final letters) along with meaning. The child first attends to beginning letter(s) and then progresses to using final letter(s).

(☐) Reads known words in text automatically.

☐ Begins to integrate sources of information: making sure it makes sense, sounds right and looks right.

☐ Demonstrates appropriates stress on words.

Running Record: *Record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the words as he or she reads. Later, analyze and code miscues with MSV.*

Pg. 2: I wait for the ball.

Pg. 3: I run after the ball.

Pg. 4: I kick the ball.

Pg. 5: I pass the ball.

Pg. 6: I call for the ball.

Pg. 7: I ~~pump~~ bump the ball.　　　| ... | ... | V

Pg. 8: I score a goal!

Total miscues including self corrected: _1_

Self corrections: _0_

Miscues reader did not self correct: _1_

Accuracy Rate: Circle the number of miscues the reader did not self correct.

100%	97%	94%	90%
0 miscues	(1 miscue)	2 miscues	3 miscues

96%-100% accuracy is necessary to determine the reader's independent reading level.
Try a lower level text if the reader made 2 or more miscues.

Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels

Set 1   Levels A-K (Fiction/Narrative)   Level D

Literal and Inferential Retelling

Say, "Please retell the big important parts of what you just read." Write notes regarding the student's retell on the back of this page. If the student has trouble getting started, prompt him/her to look at the text. Say, "What happened first?" Make a note that you prompted the student. Some students will retell the story sequentially in response to this prompt, while others will retell the gist of the story. Either response is acceptable here. *The story is about a girl who is playing soccer and she is having fun.*

Use the Retelling Rubric and Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retell and response to the comprehension questions are acceptable. If a student is not able to retell but is able to answer the comprehension questions, note that this student will need extra work on how to retell a story.

Comprehension Questions Section: Analyze the student's retelling/summary to see if it contains information that answers each question below. If a question was not answered in the retelling, ask it and record the student's response.

1. *Literal Question:* What does the girl in the story play with her friends?

   She is playing soccer with her friends.

2. *Literal Question:* Name three things she does as she plays.

   She runs, kicks the ball and she scores a goal.

3. *Inferential Question:* How did the girl and her team feel at the end of the story? Why?

   She felt happy

4. *Inferential Question:* How does the blue team feel?

   They felt sad because they didn't win.

Final Score

(Yes) No   Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%?

(Yes) No   Did the reader answer at least three comprehension questions correctly?

(Yes) No   Did the retelling/summary express the important things that happened in the text?

Is this the student's independent reading level?

- If you did NOT answer "yes" to all 3 questions in this Final Score box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all 3 questions in the Final Score box.

- If you circled 3 "yes" answers in this Final Score box, the student is reading strongly at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read strongly at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all 3 questions. The highest level that showed strong reading is the independent reading level. For example, you might find that you answered "yes" to all 3 questions in the Final Score box for level E, then a "yes" to all 3 questions for level E, but only 2 "yes" answers for level F. Level E is the highest passage on which you were able to answer "yes" to all 3 questions in the Final Score box. Level E is the current independent reading level for the student.

Set 1   Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels   Level N
Levels L-Z (Fiction/Narrative)

Reader's Name **Participant B** Grade **One** Date **June 09**

Excerpt from *Silver*, by Gloria Whelan, pp. 49-51
Level N   284 words

Independent Level: (Yes) No

Accuracy Rate: **96%**

Book Introduction: *Say this to the reader before he or she begins the student copy of the text:* "In this passage, a girl named Rachel is outside in a snowstorm trying to carry her puppy, Silver, back home to safety. The story takes place in Alaska, where the winters are very cold, dark, and snowy. Please read aloud the first section. *(Point to the line on the student copy to show the child where the first section ends.)* After this part, you may read the rest silently. If you need to, you can reread the first part. When you are finished reading, I will ask you to retell the important things that happened in the story."

During & after the running record, you may make these observations & notes to inform instruction:

☐   *Self corrects*

(☐) *Pauses while reading to think*

(☐) *Uses more than one strategy to figure out unfamiliar words*

(☐) *Miscues make sense*

☐   *Miscues fit the syntax or structure of the sentence*

(☐) *Miscues look similar to words in the text*

☐   *Figures out the meaning of unfamiliar words—If the child mispronounces a word during the running record, ask the child if they know the meaning of the word when they finish reading the excerpt*

Running Record: *For the first 100 words, record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the words as he or she reads. Later, you may or may not code them, using miscue analysis (MSV). Stop when the child has made five miscues and go back to the previous level.*

I hoped I was running toward our house. The sun had begun to set and the darkness seemed to be coming to meet me. Mom and Dad and I had often walked here in summer, but now everything that was familiar was covered with snow. I wasn't sure where I was. Silver was growing heavy, but I held on to him and tried not to think what would happen to us if I got lost.

The wind started up, covering my tracks as soon as I made them, so there was no way I could tell if I was going *(100 words)* in a circle.

***** *(Reader may continue silently from this point on)* *****

You heard stories about this happening to people who wandered into the Alaskan winter. They were never heard from again.

The wind stung my face and the snow crept into my boots and mittens. I had to wriggle my toes and fingers to keep them from growing numb.

Suddenly the ground beneath the snow felt spongy. It sucked at my boots and I smelled something dark and musty. I had wandered into the cedar swamp

that runs along our land. My dad had warned me to keep out of the swamp because of the deep water-filled holes. *(200 words)* Now every step I took scared me. Overhead I saw a large black shadow start up from one of the trees. It was a raven. It spread its dark wings over me and flew off. Even the raven didn't want to be there.

When I finally found my way out of the swamp, I was so tired I didn't think I could take another step. I was about ready to just sink down into the snow and give up when Silver began to whine. *(284 words)*

Total miscues including self corrected: **4**

Self corrections: **0**

Miscues reader did not self correct: **4**

Accuracy Rate: Circle the number of miscues the reader did not self correct.

100%	99%	98%	97%	96%
0 miscues	1 miscue	2 miscues	3 miscues	4 miscues

96%-100% accuracy is necessary to determine the reader's independent reading level. Try a lower level text if the reader made 5 or more miscues.

* *If the child makes the same miscue repeatedly, count it as one miscue.*

Literal and Inferential Retelling or Summary

Say, "Please retell the big or important parts of what you just read." Write notes regarding the student's retelling or summary on the back of this page. If the student has trouble getting started, prompt him/her to look at the text. Say, "What happened first?" Make a note that you prompted the student. Some students will retell the story sequentially in response to this prompt, while others will summarize the gist of the story. Either response is acceptable here.

Use the Retelling Rubric and Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retell and response to the comprehension questions are acceptable. If a student is not able to retell but is able to answer the comprehension questions, note that this student will need extra work on how to retell a story.

The girl was lost with her dog Silver in the middle of the snow. Everything looked different to her. She was very scared and she was going to give up.

Comprehension Questions Section: Analyze the student's retelling/summary to see if it contains information that answers each question below. If a question was not answered in the retelling, ask it and record the student's response.

1. *Literal Question:* Why doesn't Rachel recognize her surroundings?

because the snow covered everything.

2. *Literal Question:* Describe what you know about the swamp that Rachel has wandered into.

It's cold and freezing

3. *Inferential Question:* Why do you think Silver is whining?

Silver wants to help Rachel so that she does not give up.

4. *Inferential Question:* Using what you know from the passage, what do you think Rachel is feeling in this story?

She is feeling scared and tired.

Oral Reading Fluency Scale – Circle the Appropriate Level

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

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study.

Final Score

(Yes) No   *Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%?*
(Yes) No   *Did the reader read with fluency? (a score of 3 or 4 on the Oral Reading Fluency Scale)*
(Yes) No   *Did the reader correctly answer at least 3 questions in the Comprehension Questions Section?*
(Yes) No   *Did the retelling/summary express the important things that happened in the text?*
Is this the student's independent reading level?

- If you did <u>NOT</u> answer "yes" to all four questions in this **Final Score** box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box.

- If you circled 4 "yes" answers in this **Final Score** box, the student is reading strongly at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read strongly at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all four questions. The highest level that showed strong reading is the independent reading level.. For example, you might find that you answered "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box for level P, then a "yes" to all four questions for level Q, but only three "yes" answers for level R. Level Q is the highest passage on which you were able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box. Level Q is the current independent reading level for the student.

TCRWP – DRAFT

September 2008
June 2009

📖 READING CONTINUUM

Preconventional Ages 3–5	Emerging Ages 4–6	Developing Ages 5–7	Beginning Ages 6–8	Expanding Ages 7–9
☐ Begins to choose reading materials (e.g., books, magazines, and charts) and has favorites. ☐ Shows interest in reading signs, labels, and logos (environmental print). ☐ Recognizes own name in print. ☐ Holds book and turns pages correctly. ☐ Shows beginning/end of book or story. ☐ Knows some letter names. ☐ Listens and responds to literature. ☐ Comments on illustrations in books. ☐ Participates in group reading (books, rhymes, poems, and songs).	☐ Memorizes pattern books, poems, and familiar books. ☐ Begins to read signs, labels, and logos (environmental print). ☐ Demonstrates eagerness to read. ☐ Pretends to read. ☐ Uses illustrations to tell stories. ☐ Reads top to bottom, left to right, and front to back with guidance. ☐ Knows most letter names and some letter sounds. ☐ Recognizes some names and words in context. ☐ Makes meaningful predictions with guidance. ☐ Rhymes and plays with words. ☐ Participates in reading of familiar books and poems. ☐ Connects books read aloud to own experiences with guidance.	☐ Reads books with simple patterns. ☐ Begins to read own writing. ☐ Begins to read independently for short periods (5-10 minutes). ☐ Discusses favorite reading material with others. ☐ Relies on illustrations and print. ☐ Uses finger-print-voice matching. ☐ Knows most letter sounds and letter clusters. ☐ Recognizes simple words. ☐ Uses growing awareness of sound segments (e.g., phonemes, syllables, rhymes) to read words. ☐ Begins to make meaningful predictions. ☐ Identifies titles and authors in literature (text features). ☐ Retells main event or idea in literature. ☐ Participates in guided literature discussions. ☐ Sees self as reader. ☐ Explains why literature is liked/disliked during class discussions with guidance.	☐ Reads simple early-reader books. ☐ Reads harder early-reader books. ☐ Reads and follows simple written directions with guidance. ☐ Identifies basic genres (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, and poetry). ☐ Uses basic punctuation when reading orally. ☐ Reads independently (10-15 minutes). ☐ Chooses reading materials independently. ☐ Learns and shares information from reading. ☐ Uses meaning cues (context). ☐ Uses sentence cues (grammar). ☐ Uses letter/sound cues and patterns (phonics). ☐ Recognizes word endings, common contractions, and many high frequency words. ☐ Begins to self-correct. ☐ Retells beginning, middle, and end with guidance. ☐ Discusses characters and story events with guidance. ☐ Identifies own reading behaviors with guidance.	☐ Reads easy chapter books. ☐ Chooses, reads, and finishes a variety of materials at appropriate level with guidance. ☐ Begins to read aloud with fluency. ☐ Reads silently for increasingly longer periods (15-30 minutes). ☐ Uses reading strategies appropriately, depending on the text and purpose. ☐ Uses word structure cues (e.g., root words, prefixes, suffixes, word chunks) when encountering unknown words. ☐ Increases vocabulary by using meaning cues (context). ☐ Self-corrects for meaning. ☐ Follows written directions. ☐ Identifies chapter titles and table of contents (text organizers). ☐ Summarizes and retells story events in sequential order. ☐ Responds to and makes personal connections with facts, characters, and situations in literature. ☐ Compares and contrasts characters and story events. ☐ "Reads between the lines" with guidance. ☐ Identifies own reading strategies and sets goals with guidance.

Bridging Ages 8–10	Fluent Ages 9–11	Proficient Ages 10–13	Connecting Ages 11–14	Independent
☐ Reads medium level chapter books. ☐ Chooses reading materials at appropriate level. ☐ Expands knowledge of different genres (e.g., realistic fiction, historical fiction, and fantasy). ☐ Reads aloud with expression. ☐ Uses resources (e.g., encyclopedias, CD-ROMs, and nonfiction texts) to locate and sort information with guidance. ☐ Gathers information by using the table of contents, captions, glossary, and index (text organizers) with guidance. ☐ Gathers and uses information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps with guidance. ☐ Increases vocabulary by using context cues, other reading strategies, and resources (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) with guidance. ☐ Demonstrates understanding of the difference between fact and opinion. ☐ Follows multi-step written directions independently. ☐ Discusses setting, plot, characters, and point of view (literary elements) with guidance. ☐ Responds to issues and ideas in literature as well as facts or story events. ☐ Makes connections to other authors, books, and perspectives. ☐ Participates in small group literature discussions with guidance. ☐ Uses reasons and examples to support ideas and opinions with guidance.	☐ Reads challenging children's literature. ☐ Selects, reads, and finishes a wide variety of genres with guidance. ☐ Begins to develop strategies and criteria for selecting reading materials. ☐ Reads aloud with fluency, expression, and confidence. ☐ Reads silently for extended periods (30-40 min.). ☐ Begins to use resources (e.g., encyclopedias, articles, Internet, and nonfiction texts) to locate information. ☐ Gathers information using the table of contents, captions, glossary, and index (text organizers) independently. ☐ Begins to use resources (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) to increase vocabulary in different subject areas. ☐ Begins to discuss literature with reference to setting, plot, characters, and theme (literary elements), and author's craft. ☐ Generates thoughtful oral and written responses in small group literature discussions with guidance. ☐ Begins to use new vocabulary in different subjects and in oral and written response to literature. ☐ Begins to gain deeper meaning by "reading between the lines." ☐ Begins to set goals and identifies strategies to improve reading.	☐ Reads complex children's literature. ☐ Reads and understands informational texts (e.g., want ads, brochures, schedules, catalogs, manuals) with guidance. ☐ Develops strategies and criteria for selecting reading materials independently. ☐ Uses resources (e.g., encyclopedias, articles, Internet, and nonfiction texts) to locate information independently. ☐ Gathers and analyzes information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps with guidance. ☐ Integrates information from multiple nonfiction sources to deepen understanding of a topic with guidance. ☐ Uses resources (e.g., dictionary and thesaurus) to increase vocabulary independently. ☐ Identifies literary devices (e.g., similes, metaphors, personification, and foreshadowing). ☐ Discusses literature with reference to theme, author's purpose, and style (literary elements), and author's craft. ☐ Begins to generate in-depth responses in small group literature discussions. ☐ Begins to generate in-depth written responses to literature. ☐ Uses increasingly complex vocabulary in different subjects and in oral and written response to literature. ☐ Uses reasons and examples to support ideas and conclusions. ☐ Probes for deeper meaning by "reading between the lines" in response to literature.	☐ Reads complex children's literature and young adult literature. ☐ Selects, reads, and finishes a wide variety of genres independently. ☐ Begins to choose challenging reading materials and projects. ☐ Integrates nonfiction information to develop deeper understanding of a topic independently. ☐ Begins to gather, analyze, and use information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps. ☐ Generates in-depth responses and sustains small group literature discussions. ☐ Generates in-depth written responses to literature. ☐ Begins to evaluate, interpret, and analyze reading content critically. ☐ Begins to develop criteria for evaluating literature. ☐ Seeks recommendations and opinions about literature from others. ☐ Sets reading challenges and goals independently.	☐ Reads young adult and adult literature. ☐ Chooses and comprehends a wide variety of sophisticated materials with ease (e.g., newspapers, magazines, manuals, novels, and poetry). ☐ Reads and understands informational texts (e.g., manuals, consumer reports, applications, and forms) ☐ Reads challenging material for pleasure independently. ☐ Reads challenging material for information and to solve problems independently. ☐ Perseveres through complex reading tasks. ☐ Gathers, analyzes, and uses information from graphs, charts, tables, and maps independently. ☐ Analyzes literary devices (e.g., metaphors, imagery, irony, and satire). ☐ Contributes unique insights and supports opinions in complex literature discussions. ☐ Adds depth to responses to literature by making insightful connections to other reading and experiences. ☐ Evaluates, interprets, and analyzes reading content critically. ☐ Develops and articulates criteria for evaluating literature. ☐ Pursues a widening community of readers independently.

Set 1   Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels   Level Q
Levels L-Z (Fiction/Narrative)

Reader's Name __Participant C__ Grade __One__   Date __Sept. 08__

Excerpt from *The Cuckoo Child*, by Dick King-Smith, pp. 25-26
Level Q   292 words

Independent Level: (Yes) No

Accuracy Rate: __96%__

Book Introduction: *Say this to the reader before he or she begins the student copy of the text:* "Jack loves all kinds of birds. In this scene, Jack and his class are at the zoo, watching the ranger feed the ostriches, which are very large birds. Please read aloud the first section. *(Point to the line on the student copy to show the child where the first section ends.)* After this part, you may read the rest silently. If you need to, you can reread the first part. When you are finished reading, I will ask you to retell the important things that happened in the story."

During & after the running record, you may make these observations & notes to inform instruction:
☐ Self corrects
(☐) Pauses while reading to think
(☐) Uses more than one strategy to figure out unfamiliar words
☐ Solves polysyllabic words
☐ Miscues make sense
☐ Miscues fit the syntax or structure of the sentence
(☐) Miscues look similar to words in the text
☐ Figures out the meaning of unfamiliar words—If the child mispronounces a word during the running record, ask the child if they know the meaning of the word when they finish reading the excerpt

Running Record: *For the first 100 words, record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the words as he or she reads. Later, you may or may not code them, using miscue analysis (MSV). Stop when the child has made five miscues and go back to the previous level.*

When he had gone some way away, the ranger began [begin] to throw the fruit and vegetables over the fence. Then, leaving the birds busily [busy] feeding, he hurried back, unlocked the gate, and, pushing in the wheelbarrow [wheelbow], reloaded it with the more outlying of the ostrich eggs.

Jack watched all this with mounting excitement. It might take a bird to hatch eggs, but a boy could hatch a *plan*! He unzipped the canvas backpack slung over his shoulder.

The ranger came out again and relocked the gate.

In the wheelbarrow [wheelbow] were nine eggs.

He picked one up.

"Now," he said, "where's *(100 words)* the young man who asked that question?"

***** *(Reader may continue silently from this point on)* ****

And when Jack raised his hand, the ranger said, "Here, you can go first," and handed him an ostrich egg.

Then, one after another, the ranger took the other spare eggs out of the wheelbarrow and gave them to various children to hold and examine.

"Let me!" "Let me!" "Give it here!" "Let me go first!" cried the boys and girls as they competed to hold an egg, and in the hubbub and confusion nobody noticed what Jack was doing or heard him zip his backpack shut.

"Now, now, children, that's enough!" said *(200 words)* the teacher. "Put all the eggs back in the wheelbarrow now." She turned to the ranger and said, "What will you do with these?"

"Often we send some to other safari parks or zoos," said the ranger, "but actually these will be fed to our big snakes, the pythons and the boa constrictors. Now then, have you all put your eggs back?"

"Yes!" chorused the children. Jack said nothing.

"Thank you for your trouble," said the teacher.

"Bye-bye then," said the ranger, and off he went. In the wheelbarrow were eight eggs. *(292 words)*

Total miscues including self corrected: _4_	**Accuracy Rate:** Circle the number of miscues the reader did not self correct.

Self corrections: _0_

Miscues reader did not self correct: _4_

100% 0 miscues	99% 1 miscue	98% 2 miscues	97% 3 miscues	96% 4 miscues

96%-100% accuracy is necessary to determine the reader's independent reading level. Try a lower level text if the reader made 5 or more miscues.

* *If the child makes the same miscue repeatedly, count it as one miscue.*

Literal and Inferential Retelling or Summary

Say, "Please retell the big or important parts of what you just read." Write notes regarding the student's retelling or summary on the back of this page. If the student has trouble getting started, prompt him/her to look at the text. Say, "What happened first?" Make a note that you prompted the student. Some students will retell the story sequentially in response to this prompt, while others will summarize the gist of the story. Either response is acceptable here.

Use the Retelling Rubric and Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retell and response to the comprehension questions are acceptable. If a student is not able to retell but is able to answer the comprehension questions, note that this student will need extra work on how to retell a story.

The ranger was showing the children the eggs. But he didn't pay attention that Jack took one.

TCRWP – DRAFT

Set 1   Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels L-Z (Fiction/Narrative)

Comprehension Questions Section: Analyze the student's retelling/summary to see if it contains information that answers each question below. If a question was not answered in the retelling, ask it and record the student's response.

1. *Literal Question:* What does the ranger say he will do with the spare eggs?

(couldn't answer).

2. *Literal Question:* Did anybody notice that one of the eggs is missing at the end of the passage? How can you tell?

No, because the ranger left and didn't say anything.

3. *Inferential Question:* The story says, "It might take a bird to hatch eggs, but a boy could hatch a *plan*!" What does this mean?

(couldn't answer).

4. *Inferential Question:* What do you think Jack did with one of the eggs?

He kept it for himself.

Oral Reading Fluency Scale – Circle the Appropriate Level

Fluent	Level 4	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the text. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Most of the text is read with expressive interpretation.
	(Level 3)	Reads primarily in three or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Some expressive interpretation is present; this may be inconsistent across the reading of the text.
Non fluent	Level 2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage. Beginning a little expressive interpretation, frequently first seen when reading dialogue.
	Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur—but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax. No expressive interpretation.

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study.

Final Score

(Yes) No   *Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%?*
(Yes) No   *Did the reader read with fluency? (a score of 3 or 4 on the Oral Reading Fluency Scale)*
Yes (No)   *Did the reader correctly answer at least 3 questions in the Comprehension Questions Section?*
Yes (No)   *Did the retelling/summary express the important things that happened in the text?*

Is this the student's independent reading level?

- If you did NOT answer "yes" to all four questions in this Final Score box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the Final Score box.

- If you circled 4 "yes" answers in this Final Score box, the student is reading strongly at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read strongly at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all four questions. The highest level that showed strong reading is the independent reading level. For example, you might find that you answered "yes" to all four questions in the Final Score box for level P, then a "yes" to all four questions for level Q, but only three "yes" answers for level R. Level Q is the highest passage on which you were able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the Final Score box. Level Q is the current independent reading level for the student.

TCRWP – DRAFT

Set 1   Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels   Level U
Levels L-Z (Fiction/Narrative)

Reader's Name Participant C **Grade** One **Date** June 09

Excerpt from *The Tarantula in My Purse*, by Jean Craighead George, pp. 85-87
Level U   245 words

Independent Level: (Yes) No

Accuracy Rate: 96%

Book Introduction: *Say this to the reader before he or she begins the student copy of the text:* "In this book, a writer tells stories about her many different pets, including this story about a robin named Pete. Please read aloud the first section. *(Point to the line on the student copy to show the child where the first section ends.)* After this part, you may read the rest silently. If you need to, you can reread the first part. When you are finished reading, I will ask you to talk about the big or important things that happened in the story."

During & after the running record, you may make these observations & notes to inform instruction:

☐ *Self corrects*

(☐) *Pauses while reading to think*

(☐) *Uses more than one strategy to figure out unfamiliar words*

☐ *Uses word parts to solve unfamiliar words (prefixes, suffixes, endings, etc.)*

☐ *Miscues make sense*

☐ *Miscues fit the syntax or structure of the sentence*

(☐) *Miscues look similar to words in the text*

(☐) *Figures out the meaning of unfamiliar words—If the child mispronounces a word during the running record, ask the child if they know the meaning of the word when they finish reading the excerpt*

Running Record: *For the first 100 words, record the reader's miscues (or errors) above the words as he or she reads. Later, you may or may not code them, using miscue analysis (MSV). Stop when the child has made five miscues and go back to the previous level.*

Peter
When Pete could fly, he graduated to the preteens. He was both independent

and dependent. He went out the door, enjoyed the garden, but always came back to

be fed and comforted. At this stage, he was a beautiful friend.

In July he brought me a chickadee. It happened this way: On a warm

preached
afternoon Pete flew in through the sunporch door and perched on the watering can.

wife
Suddenly, with a whir and a flash of black and white feathers, a chickadee followed

him in. The bold adventurer hovered in the air in front of my face, scolding me

severely. *(100 words)* I saw that the bird feeder was empty and picked up a

sunflower seed from the feed bag and held it between my fingers.

**** *(Reader may continue silently from this point on)* ****

The pretty bird hovered over my hand and, still on wing, took the offering in his

beak. He sped out the door to the apple tree. There he held the seed with his toes

and cracked it open with his beak. He ate, wiped his beak clean, and flew back in

the door. I picked up another seed. This time he alit on my fingers, his tiny feet

Set 1   Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels
Levels L-Z (Fiction/Narrative)

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feeling cool and weightless. His black eye glistened *(200 words)* as he tipped his head and looked at me.

I was enchanted. I had heard that chickadees come to know the people who live on their territories and

will eat out of their hands, but this was the first time it had happened to me. *(245 words)*

Total miscues including
self corrected: __4__

Self corrections: __0__

Miscues reader did not
self correct: __4__

Accuracy Rate: Circle the number of miscues the reader did not self correct.

100%	99%	98%	97%	96%
0 miscues	1 miscue	2 miscues	3 miscues	4 miscues

96%-100% accuracy is necessary to determine the reader's independent reading level.
Try a lower level text if the reader made 5 or more miscues.

* *If the child makes the same miscue repeatedly, count it as one miscue.*

Literal and Inferential Retelling or Summary

Say, "Please retell the big or important parts of what you just read." Write notes regarding the student's retelling or summary on the back of this page. If the student has trouble getting started, prompt him/her to look at the text. Say, "What happened first?" Make a note that you prompted the student. Some students will retell the story sequentially in response to this prompt, while others will summarize the gist of the story. Either response is acceptable here.

Use the Retelling Rubric and Sample Student Responses to determine if the child's retell and response to the comprehension questions are acceptable. If a student is not able to retell but is able to answer the comprehension questions, note that this student will need extra work on how to retell a story.

Optional: *You may ask the student to write his/her responses to this section on the attached forms. If you choose this option, observe the student as he/she writes. You must follow up any incorrect written response with a chance for the student to answer the question orally.*

Pete brought with him a chickadee that is
very nice and small. The boy was feeding
him and he was very happy to have a
nice bird. It was the first time that this
happened to him.

TCRWP – DRAFT

Set 1   Teacher Copy: Assessment for Independent Reading Levels   Level U
Levels L-Z (Fiction/Narrative)

Comprehension Questions Section: Analyze the student's retelling/summary to see if it contains information that answers each question below. If a question was not answered in the retelling, ask it and record the student's response.

1. *Literal Question:* Describe the "bold adventurer" that followed Pete in through the sunporch door.

He is a chickadee and he was trying to eat the seeds with his beak. He was very nice.

2. *Literal Question:* According to the story, what kind of food do chickadees eat?

They eat seeds.

3. *Inferential Question:* What makes you think that the chickadee probably trusts the author?

He trusts him because he stayed on his hand.

4. *Inferential Question:* Can you describe some of the ways the chickadee in this story behaves more like a human?

He wipes his beak after he eats.

Oral Reading Fluency Scale – Circle the Appropriate Level

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

(Level 4 is circled)

Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study.

Final Score

Yes No   *Was the reader's accuracy rate at least 96%?*
Yes No   *Did the reader read with fluency? (a score of 3 or 4 on the Oral Reading Fluency Scale)*
Yes No   *Did the reader correctly answer at least 3 questions in the Comprehension Questions Section?*
Yes No   *Did the retelling/summary express the important things that happened in the text?*

Is this the student's independent reading level?

- If you did NOT answer "yes" to all four questions in this **Final Score** box, try an easier text. Keep moving to easier texts until you find the level at which you are able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box.

- If you circled 4 "yes" answers in this **Final Score** box, the student is reading strongly at this level. However, it is possible that the student may also read strongly at a higher level. Keep moving to higher passages until you can no longer answer "yes" to all four questions. The highest level that showed strong reading is the independent reading level. For example, you might find that you answered "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box for level P, then a "yes" to all four questions for level Q, but only three "yes" answers for level R. Level Q is the highest passage on which you were able to answer "yes" to all four questions in the **Final Score** box. Level Q is the current independent reading level for the student.

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