

The Effectiveness of Repeated Reading on Increasing the Reading Fluency of Struggling Readers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of repeated reading intervention for increasing the reading fluency of an elementary student reading below grade level. Measures compared the fluency of a first grade student reading below grade level after participating in a repeated training for six weeks. Assessments to determine fluency prior to and after training were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the repeated reading intervention on the fluency scores of the student.

Results of this study, based on pre and post-assessment data, indicated that repeated readings are an effective practice for increasing the reading fluency of struggling readers. The student showed significant improvement with her reading fluency. In addition, she showed gains on her running record and oral reading fluency scores.

Keywords: struggling readers, fluency, repeated reading, comprehension

1. Introduction

Educators have sought ways to increase reading fluency for years. Fluency plays a huge role in the reading process, as it bridges the gap between comprehension and word recognition. According to Cook and Keaulana (2016), reading fluency is a necessary skill in both school and life. Wexler, Vaughn, Roberts, and Denton (2010) explained that fluency is an important component of reading and they define fluency as the ability to read text with speed and accuracy. "Reading fluency is a key component of effective reading instruction, because it is a necessary, although not sufficient, skill for accomplishing the ultimate goal of comprehension" (Williams, Klubnik, McCall, 2009).

Educators recognize that in order for students to be successful, it is imperative that they become fluent independent readers. The one researched strategy that stands out to most educators is repeated readings to increase fluency, and it is the most widely accepted method to increase fluency. "One instructional practice for which there is substantial evidence in both the behavioral and the cognitive literature for improving students' reading fluency is repeated readings" (Williams et al. 2009). Tompkins (2006) stated that repeated readings are when a student practices reading a book or an excerpt from a book three to five times. According to Tompkins (2006), when a teacher has a student engaged in repeated readings his or her goal is to decrease the number of errors one makes while reading and increase their reading speed or rate.

2. Review of the Literature

Repeated readings should be provided for students at their independent level, which is 95% accuracy, if they are practicing the reading alone. At this level the students can practice speed and expression rather than decoding. If a child is presented with a passage at their frustration level, then they will become overwhelmed and unmotivated to engage in the repeated reading intervention process (Cahill and Gregory, 2011).

In the review of the literature it is evident that repeated readings are an effective practice for increasing students' fluency. "The studies that have examined multi component repeated reading interventions have demonstrated repeatedly that providing students with modeling in the form of listening passage preview, multiple opportunities to practice passages, corrective feedback, and contingencies for improved reading can substantially increase students' fluency on practice passages" (Williams et al. 2009). According to Therrien and Kubina (2006), research shows that repeated reading facilitates growth in reading fluency and other aspects of reading achievement.

2.1 Keeping Students Motivated with Repeated Reading

Many educators support repeated readings because it is the most widely accepted method in the education field to increase reading fluency. However, some argue that this strategy can be boring for students, leading students to avoid the practice. So what can teachers do to engage their students in the repeated reading intervention? A teacher in Idaho stresses that she strives to make repeated readings fun and engaging for her students by using fun fluency kits during center time. In addition, she integrates Readers Theatre in her repeated readings. Her typical fun kits consist of two dice, a blow up microphone, sticky flags, small plastic animals, and a small key chain flashlight with a red beam. When using the dice, the students call out different voices they would like to use while reading as she numbers them on the board. Whatever number the student lands on, determines the voice the students imitate. Often, the students will pick their favorite character voices, such as Donald Duck, baby, cowboy, and whisper. The students are allowed to wear animal masks and use microphones to act like a speaker or an interviewer while engaging in repeated reading intervention. Fluency scales are used as a tool of motivation as students plot their progress weekly. In addition, the instructor simply allows a plastic animal to sit in front of the students to increase their motivation to read. The fun and motivating activities created by the instructor encouraged the students to enjoy repeated reading intervention while enhancing their reading fluency (Cahill & Gregory, 2011).

Many have researched ways to motivate students to engage in repeated readings. Marcell (2012) explained that the teacher should simply discuss with his or her student that with additional readings, not only will their rate and accuracy improve, but their comprehension will be enhanced as well. The researcher further states that using graphs that show students improvement will encourage and motivate students to engage in repeated readings. In addition, many school sites have purchased Readers Theatre scripts. During Readers Theatre students are allowed to get out of their seat and act out a script. Since students are able to have fun with the scripts, this motivates them to be more involved with repeated readings (Marcell, 2012).

2.2 Repeated Reading Intervention Using Generalization Passages

The first study in the review of the literature was based on using repeated reading intervention on generalization passages after pupils had read the passage three versus six times. Participants for the study consisted of four boys who lived and received their education from a residential facility for troubled youth. The subjects had been identified as being likely to benefit from fluency based intervention. Boys ranged from grades second to fifth. The study sought to increase the participants' fluency and reading ability by utilizing rereading intervention. The study went on for three days as the students read thirteen passages at their instructional level for one minute. Components of the intervention included (a) reading passage aloud to student, (b) students were granted three to six opportunities to read the passage aloud, (c) students being instructed on how many words read correctly and incorrectly. In addition, students received syllable segmenting and blending instruction on words they read incorrectly. The study proved that the repeated reading intervention resulted in substantial increases in the students' Words Read Correct Per Minute (WRCM) on practice passages compared to their pre-assessment performance on these passages (Williams et al. 2009).

2.3 Repeated Reading Intervention and Elementary Students

In Pennsylvania, a teacher stated that she learned early in her job, as a reading specialist, that enhancing her students reading fluency was crucial. The teacher tried using the Wilson Reading System, Explode the Code and Megawords to increase reading fluency. Unfortunately, she did not see much improvement in her students' reading fluency. However, after integrating timed repeated readings into her daily lesson plans, she noticed substantial gains in reading fluency. She allowed students to keep track of their goals in order to motivate and encourage them to read. "For many of my students, recording their repeated readings gave them their first concrete sign of reading success." In addition, she stated that improvement gains were also noted in their word recognition skills and comprehension (Stuadt, 2009).

Research conducted by the same teacher in Pennsylvania utilized two fourth-grade students to prove once again how effective repeated readings are. The teacher utilized phonics training in addition to repeated reading practice with these two particular children, who were reading two levels below grade level. Poetry was used for the repeated reading component, as she strives to make reading fun and engaging in her classroom. Using poetry for repeated readings can lead to improved attitudes toward reading in struggling readers. The students were introduced to a new poem every Monday and continued to practice and read the same poem through the week. At the end of the school year, both students showed significant gains in their fluency. One student read a third grade reading passage in the Qualitative Reading Inventory at 48 words per minute (wpm) in September and reached 80 wpm in May. The other student read the same passage at 29 wpm in the fall and 69 wpm in the spring. In addition, both students made solid improvement on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, their reading comprehension scores, and even greater progress in their reading fluency (Stuadt, 2009).

2.4 Repeated Reading and Elementary Students Continued

The next study consisted of eight low-performing second graders in an urban school by taking into consideration their need to develop reading fluency and the role their parents play in the process. The researchers hoped to help the students become fluent independent readers by engaging in repeated reading in their home environment. Students continuously reread text on their instructional level with their teacher and peers during the instructional day. In addition, the same texts were sent home for parents to help intervene with the repeated reading model. The parents received no formal training for this experiment. They simply used the shared reading strategy by allowing their child to reread the text aloud to them. Teacher-parent interviews and running records were used to continuously assess the students' progress throughout the study. All students showed growth when analyzing their running record scores and fluency. In addition, all participants demonstrated decreased error rates from the first to the last reading of stories (Hindin, 2007).

2.5 Repeated Reading and High School Students

The last study utilized ninety-six high school students with severe reading disabilities. Participants received daily intervention for ten consecutive weeks. The students read the same text three times each day and they were provided corrective feedback by the interventionists, who were two graduate assistants and one full time employee. The passages were 140-175 words in length. In sum, the study revealed that the repeated reading strategy is not as effective for older students. This could be contributed to the fact that high schools students need to be exposed to a variety of texts as opposed to reading the same material daily (Wexler, Vaughn, Roberts, and Denton (2010).

3. Description of Subject & Beginning Scores

The subject of this study was a first grade student enrolled in a Title I school in North Carolina. The student resided with her grandmother and younger sibling during the duration of the study. According to the grandmother, the student has experienced a lot traumatic stress in in her life. Her mother is wheelchair-bound. The student also has a history of seizures. The student was reading well below grade level, as she came into the training on a running record level of a 1-2 in the first grade.

In order to establish a baseline, initial assessment were administered to determine the student's current reading level. A running record was administered at the beginning and end of the study. Omissions, insertions, substitutions, and self-corrections were noted during the assessment. The pre-test showed that the student was reading on a level 1-2 and knew only 16 of the 91 first grade sight words utilized by the county. In addition, the student was given one minute to read one first grade-leveled passage for her oral reading fluency DIBELS assessment, which a score of 13 was recorded.

4. Repeated Reading Training

The student received one-on-one 30 minute sessions of repeated reading training for five days, which lasted for six consecutive weeks. The teacher leading the training was a reading specialist, who had a master's degree in reading and was licensed as a reading specialist in the state of North Carolina. During the repeated reading training, the student read text on her independent level, which means she could read it with 95 % accuracy or higher. Two texts were introduced to the student weekly. The first day the teacher read one text aloud to model fluent reading and this was followed by a teacher-led echo read. The following day the student echo read the story and then read it chorally with the teacher. On the third day, the student read the book from the two previous days aloud to the teacher. On the fourth day, the teacher presented the shorter text of the week to the child and the same routine was repeated. On Friday, the student read aloud both texts to the teacher with minimal help. During the study, the teacher assisted the student with phonics instruction while helping her sound out unfamiliar words. Word recognition and automaticity was enhanced as the teacher used sight words on index cards. In addition, comprehension strategies were introduced as the teacher used higher level questioning to ensure the student was understanding what she read.

The teacher also used repeated reading intervention at home to increase the student's fluency. With the grandmother's consent to assist in the training, two texts read during the week were sent home each Friday. This enabled the grandmother to read the texts through the weekend with the student. A student retell sheet was given to the grandmother at the beginning of the training to assist with the student's comprehension. The grandmother was also asked to assist the student with word recognition.

5. Results

Results of the study showed that the student made significant growth after the six week repeated reading intervention. Improvement was evident in her running record and oral reading fluency DIBELS assessment. According to the

student's post running record, she was reading at a level 9-10. This data concludes that the student came up four levels and is currently reading on grade level. She knew 81 of the 91 sight words on her post assessment. In addition, according to her DIBELS post assessment, the student was now reading 31 words accurately in one minute on a first grade passage.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that repeated reading is an effective strategy for increasing reading fluency of struggling readers. Repeated reading intervention fosters fluency, comprehension, and corrective feedback.

I would suggest using repeated readings daily in the elementary settings to help students with their prosody and word recognition. However, teachers must seek ways to make it fun and engaging for students. Simply adding inexpensive materials, such as plastic microphones, dice, cardboard masks, and plastic animals can motivate and encourage students during the repeated reading intervention. Next, I would suggest for teachers to seek parental involvement in the repeated reading intervention. Teachers can send home familiar texts with the students so they can engage in these repeated readings with their guardian. It would also be beneficial for schools to conduct workshops for parents to help them understand the repeated reading process. If parents are unable to attend, teachers, instructional coaches, or reading specialists could record a video demonstrating and explaining the intervention for parents to watch at home. I would encourage parents to motivate their children to read and assist them in developing a love for reading.

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