

Shifting from Assumptions to Actions: Building Students' Confidence in Reading!

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Abstract

“Reading the word and learning how to write the word so one can later read if are preceded by learning how to write the world, that is having the experience of changing the world and touching the world.”-Paulo Freire

It has been embedded in us that we need know learn how to read to survive in this world. In order to change the world, we must learn how to read and write. But, what happens when the education system fails our students, and as a result, they navigate through the education system without learning critical reading skills? Whenever I assign texts, students often say, “I hate to read!” or “Reading is so boring!” so I decided to stop ignoring the problem and dig deeper into why they have such a negative relationship with reading. This action research sought to increase students’ confidence and interest in reading by providing them with the reading intervention structure and strategies to help improve their reading skills. Data collection included students’ pre and post surveys, exit tickets, my observation notes, coaching’s feedback. Findings from the data show that students show a slight increase in interest towards reading, but they also reveal how students are beginning to use more reading strategies to help them make meaning of the text. While there is still tremendous work to be done to increase students’ interest in reading, this is the initial step towards providing students with the necessary reading tools to make them feel more confident in their ability to read fluently.

Problem of Practice

Freedom High School is a small, independent charter school in the heart of the Fruitvale District in East Oakland. The school's mission and vision is deeply rooted in social justice values. This school year, we serve 265 students. Currently, I teach 75 freshmen and 25 seniors, in both English 1 and English 4 courses. Most of our students are from low-income, immigrant background. 90.9% of our students receive free or reduced-price lunch.

I love teaching, especially teaching literature! Students need to be able to read, write and think critically in order to be social agents in our society. Literacy skills are the foundational tools of our education. In my courses, I use relevant texts that are culturally relevant to my students. Students read books and texts that talk about social issues that we currently deal with in their communities.

I am currently in my second-year teaching English at Freedom. I chose to teach English because I wanted to make English a more accessible subject to students living in low-income, urban communities, who are learning English as a second language. As a former English Language learner, I found the process of learning English quite challenging. If it were not for my fifth-grade teacher who carefully scaffolded that process and the extra one-on-one support that I got from other staff at school, I would not be teaching English today. Although I truly enjoy teaching English, it is a difficult task to fulfill when my students come in with diverse needs due to their skill levels and their process or learning English.

Currently, about 59.6% of my students are classified as English Language Learners. About five of my students are Beginning English language learners, while most of them are long-term English language learners. Without designated support and resources, I find it extremely difficult to support these students in my classes. Currently, I am not receiving training and support on how to support those particular students. There is no school-wide plan to support them. As a result, students often feel overwhelmed and unmotivated to read due to the lack of structural support. If there is no immediate plan for these students, they will continue to fall behind and won't get the knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in school.

For this action research, **my problem of practice is that students are not intrinsically motivated to read challenging texts.** During the Fall semester, we started reading a novel called "*Straight Outta East Oakland*" by Harry Louis Williams II., it really shocked me to witness how many students were struggling with the text. I began to realize that students struggled in different ways. Some students struggled with sounding out words and reading fluently. Others had a hard time with reading comprehension and analysis, while some did not understand some vocabulary terms in the text. There were many moments when I would catch students staring at their books or flipping through pages, instead of reading. When I asked students, they told me that they would give up on reading or daydream about random thoughts. These struggles built a negative reading culture inside and outside of the classroom. It became clear to me why many of my students often say, "I don't like to read!" or "I give up!" when they do not understand what they are reading. Improving attitude towards literacy is not only a need of beginning

English language learners, but a school-wide need. While my students really enjoyed discussing the thematic topics in the text and its cultural relevancy to them, they were certainly struggling with comprehension and analysis. When we read aloud in class, I found it ineffective because students were too often worried about when they would have to read aloud, rather than concentrating on understanding the text. When I asked students to summarize what they just read, they struggled with recalling the main ideas in the text. I want to teach my students how to read, not just providing them with random reading strategies, but to model and show students how to use specific reading strategies to comprehend difficult texts on their own. These techniques will hopefully build a more positive culture in reading, where students take small, concrete steps to learn how to read effectively, instead of pretending to read.

At the end of this research, I hope that my students will develop a positive outlook on reading. I do not expect their reading skills to improve drastically. However, it is my immediate goal to shift my students' perspective on reading. It is my hypothesis and hope that learning how to read effectively will boost their self-esteem and their relationship with reading. The point of this research is to show students that it is possible to learn the necessary skills to improve their reading skills, in which will cause them to build a higher interest in reading.

Literature Review

Introduction

Literacy is arguably the most important tool that students need to master in order to do well in school and future careers (Martinez, Harris & McClain, 2014). As

educators, we often assume that high school students naturally know how to comprehend texts independently when they move from elementary school to middle school, then high school. In high school, students are expected to comprehend, analyze, and make connections while reading different types of texts. For students who struggle with reading comprehension, reading can be meaningless, they are missing the main point (Fountas, Pinnell, 2012; Harvey, Goudvis, 2013). As Berardo (2006) has beautifully articulated, **“Reading is always purposeful. It is an integral part of the daily life, assumed to be an activity that everyone do. The reason for reading depends on its purpose”** (Berardo, 2006, pg. 60). Is it fair to our students if we always require them to read, even when they do not understand what they are reading? This literature review argues the importance of reading comprehension instruction for high school students, while providing a reading intervention structure that will be implemented in my classroom to increase students’ skills and motivation to read challenging texts.

Students’ Attitude Towards Reading

In her research, Byrne (2007) argues that the decline in reading motivation happens when students struggle with certain reading skills or texts. She refers to them as “point of discouragement,” students begin to lose interest in reading when they lose confidence in their ability to read. (Byrne, 2007) I see this in my students, even when the themes of the texts are culturally relevant, students become dispassionate when they do not have the tools to access the texts. Researchers have proven that students’ attitudes towards reading and motivation to read will increase if they are actually learning how to read and improving on those skills. (Chamberlain, 2007; Cremin et al., 2009; Crooks et

al., 2009; Twist et al., 2004, 2007). This realization leads me to understanding the necessary skills that I need to teach my students, so that they not only feel intrinsically motivated to read, but they actually enjoy reading challenging texts.

The Purpose of Reading

Reading must have a purpose (Berardo, 2006); students must be able to make meaning while they are reading. Too often, teachers focus on teaching students pronunciation, and not focused on making meaning of the text. (Chastain, 1988) Researchers argue that the most important thing about reading is comprehension. (Gambrell, Block, & Pressley, 2002) Snow describes reading comprehension as,

“the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow, 2003; p. 11)

Students need to be able to make meaning of the text that they are reading. These skills need to be explicitly taught to students. There is clear evidence that reading comprehension instruction is highly beneficial for students at all levels (Ness, 2011). It is often that schools rely on a reading program to help improve students’ literacy without taking the time to learn the needs of those students (Pitcher, et al., 2010). While online reading programs can help to improve students’ skills, they often do not meet particular students’ needs. This is why teachers need to investigate on the needs of their students and find reading strategies that will work for them. (Anders et al., 2000; Duffy, 2005; Gambrell et al., 2007; Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005; Williams & Baumann, 2008). Research has shown that explicit teaching on a specific reading

strategy for reading comprehension is highly effective (Ness, 2011). When teachers choose effective reading strategies to their students, they will be able to incorporate those strategies to comprehend the text.

Background on the Struggles of English Language Learners

About 75% of my students are classified as “English language learners” at various levels. The population of English language learners in the United States has increased dramatically over the past few years. However, there are very little support and resources to support English language learners in public schools (Kieffer, Lesaux, 2010; Martinez, Harris & McClain, 2014). Instead, English language learners are often assigned to Special Education programs, rather than language support programs (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, 2005).

One of the drastic change has been Proposition 227, Artiles, Rueda, Salazar wrote, "Proposition 227 called for the drastic reduction of bilingual education programs and primary language support for ELLs. The rationale for the Proposition included bilingual programs' lack of effectiveness and the low-academic achievement of ELLs" (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, 2005, p. 3). With the lack of financial and academic support for English language learners, their academic and socio-emotional struggles are often overlooked. English language learners often experience lower teacher expectations, limited access to support and services and have less opportunities than their monolingual peers. (e.g., Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). Many ELL students who encounter difficulties with learning the language also lack the academic language to

read and comprehend texts from other academic classes (August & Shanahan, 2008; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). For example, while Native English learners can learn up to 3,000 new words per year, English language learners and other marginalized students learn far fewer words (Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987).

In order for English language learners to succeed in school, they must reach English language proficiency (Chung, 2012). Instead of ignoring English language learners' needs, there are many effective strategies that can help them comprehend the text. Researchers have found many effective strategies, such as: word wall, using Realia, scaffolding, direct vocabulary instruction, etc. (Forehand, 2014). Morphology is a useful tool to learn English words at a faster rate (Kieffer, Lesaux, 2010). Instead of spending time teaching students new vocabulary terms, it is more effective to teach them a way to learn new words independently, without having to direct teach them every new word. The point is to provide students with the tools that will help them feel more confident in their ability to access challenging texts.

Teachers Need to Know How to Teach Reading

Researchers have proven that teaching reading is effective when teachers' beliefs and knowledge are solid on the subject. It is argued that universities should offer undergraduate courses that teach students literacy strategies and give them the opportunities to practice, so they feel more confident teaching reading and writing (Hail, Hurst, Camp, Laughlin, 2015). When teacher credential programs train teachers to teach

reading effectively, students can reach high achievement level in literacy, which build their confidence and interest in reading (Hail, Hurst, Camp, Laughlin, 2015).

In her research, Ness found that teachers do not feel qualified or think that it is their responsibility to explicitly teach reading (Ness, 2011). This is problematic because we cannot expect our students to know how to read independently, without teaching them to do so. As teachers, we need to prioritize time for reading comprehension instruction to happen in the classroom. If teachers do not feel qualified to explicitly teach reading comprehension, they must seek out for training and other resources to learn how to do it effectively. When teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to teach reading comprehension with confidence, it will create a productive classroom culture where students are motivated to read.

How Can Students Move From Being Dependent to Independent Readers?

Due to the advancement of technology, it is too often that schools rely on reading programs to be the main tool in improving students' reading comprehension skills (Pitcher, et al.d, 2010). Admins and teachers opt for the best and highly-rated reading intervention programs, without recognizing that students still won't know how to read, if they cannot figure out what is preventing them from reading or how to read.

In order to support students to progress from being dependent readers to independent readers, it is crucial for teachers to investigate what students struggle with. Then, it would help identify strategies that would best fit the students' needs. Teachers need to teach and model for students, rather than just expecting students to know how on

their own. In the beginning, teachers will be doing the heavy lifting to model reading strategies for students, but students will eventually feel confident enough to use the strategies to access challenging texts on their own.

What has been tried?

According to Beers (2003), there are various steps that independent readers take to comprehend the text when they don't understand it. The process that she developed allow students to stop, figure out what is confusing and identify a strategy that they can use to comprehend the text independently (Beers, 2003). Of course, it takes a lot of practice and guidance from the teacher, but students will eventually be able to comprehend the text independently. This is the point that I want to get to with my students, for them to feel confident in their ability to access difficult texts on their own.

The Reading Process for Independent Reader versus Dependent Readers

Independent Readers	Dependent Readers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure out what is confusing to them • Set goals for getting through the reading • Use many strategies for getting through the text • Can make the mostly invisible process of comprehension visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop • Appeal to the reader • Read on through • Keep mostly the invisible process of comprehension at the invisible level

Adapted from (Beers, 2003)

I argue that adolescents must learn effective reading strategies from observing their teachers model the read-aloud and think aloud process. Since teaching reading comprehension is a hard skill to teach, teachers must find out what their students struggle when they are reading, then teach it.

How do we get students to move from being dependent on the teacher to being independent?

There are many reading structures that have been tried, Fountas and Pinnell (2000) broke them down to eight different elements:

- ❖ **Reading aloud**
- ❖ **Shared reading**
- ❖ **Guided reading**
- ❖ **Independent reading**
- ❖ **Shared writing**
- ❖ **Interactive writing**
- ❖ **Guided writing or writing workshop**
- ❖ **Independent writing**

Why Guided Reading?

Researchers have found small reading interventions group to be a good practice for guided reading (Martinez, Harris & McClain, 2014; Wittier, 2013). Research has documented several different reading strategies and structures that would work best to support students' reading skills. Guided reading has proven to be an effective strategy because it gives teachers the ability to teach reading strategies explicitly in small groups (Beard, 1999). As an effort to improve reading skills, guided reading was introduced to public schools in the U.S by the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in 1999 (DfEE, 1998, p. 4).

Fountas and Pinnell (2000) provided a clear definition of guided reading:

“Guided reading is a reading approach designed to help individual students learn how to process a variety of increasingly challenging texts with understanding and fluency” (Fountas and Pinnell, 2000).

The guided reading has shown great success in many schools across the country due to its structure and focus, schools are beginning to implement this reading structure at least once a week (Swain, 2010). Instead of the teacher teaching students how to read in a whole class setting, guided reading is when the teacher introduces and models a specific reading strategy to a small group of students. It is usually a 20-minute session, with opportunities for students to do some independent reading while practicing the skill they just learned and fill out a reflection on the session at the end. Although there are some mandatory components that teachers should stick to, other activities are flexible, depending on the group’s skills level.

Choosing the RIGHT Texts

When teachers facilitate guided reading groups, choosing the right text is extremely important (Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles & Worrel, 2013). Wittier highly recommends that they choose a difficult text for ALL students (Wittier, 2013). However, Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles & Worrell (2013) actually argue that choosing difficult texts is not the only focus, the texts should also focus on which skills the teacher is focusing on during the guided reading (Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles & Worrel, 2013). Overall, “Guided reading lessons should match the right reading skill with the right student at the

right time, no matter where the students are” (Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles, Worrell, pg. 193). While many schools use book sets from Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2011) levels A through Z for guided reading, I will rely on various non-fiction texts, since I will be working with high school students. Texts will be chosen to best fit the students’ skills level. Since I am handpicking the texts, it won’t be an exact measurement of the students’ reading level, but I will modify the reading materials based on the group. Lastly, depending on the skills that I am teaching in that particular session, texts will also be purposefully chosen.

The Role of the Teacher

Bambrick-Santoyo, Settles and Worrell (2013) explain a great analogy of the teacher as the GPS during guided reading. While students are reading, it is the teacher’s task to provide “in the moment” feedback, while students are practicing. While it is difficult to write in-the-moment coaching into a lesson plan, it is useful to anticipate what skills your students might struggle with while they access the text.

Guided reading is effective because it gives students the opportunity to practice these reading skills on their own. The teacher is there to guide the process, but students still have to solve the problems on their own (Fountas, Pinnell, 2000). While guiding the process, the teacher should develop the prompts to guide students through the text. There are prompts provided for narrative texts and non-fiction texts (Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles, Worrell, 2013, pg. 221). Effective prompting pushes students to seek for meaning on their own, without relying on the teacher to give them the answer. The purpose of

guided reading is for the teacher to teach the reader, not the text (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012).

After every guided reading lesson, self-reflection is a critical process when it comes to improving our guided reading practices. Fountas and Pinnell (2012) have provided some self-reflected prompts for teachers to reflect on after every guided reading. For example, “What have I taught the readers today that they will be able to do with other texts?” (Fountas and Pinell, 2012). Guided reading is a challenging strategy to teach, but teachers will get better with self-reflections and practice.

Structure of Guided Reading

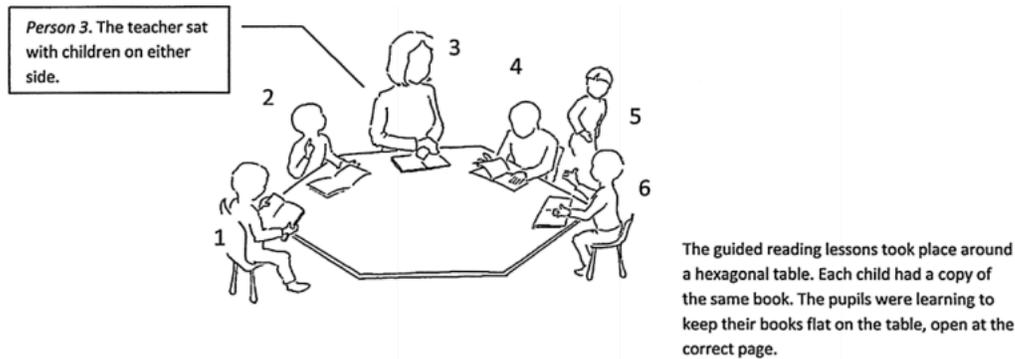
The basic structure of guided reading is broken down into four parts: Lesson Pre-work, Before Reading, During Reading, After Reading (Bambrick-Santoyo, Settles, Worrell, 2013). While it is valuable to follow the structure of this guided reading, the teacher has the flexibility to change the structure to fit the students’ needs at the moment. For example, lower-skilled students might need to work on reading-aloud during the guided reading, while the higher-level students can focus most of their guided reading time on the after-reading section, where they learn a reading skill to discuss and analyze the text.

Adapted from (Bambrick-Santoyo, Settles, Worrell, 2013)

Lesson Prework	*Analyze students’ data for grouping *Choose appropriate text for each group *Scripting prompts to focus on the skills that students are practicing
Before Reading (5 minutes)	*Introduce the reading strategy and the text *Hook the reader
During Reading	*Students read the text, teacher gives in the moment coaching

(12-15 minutes)	
After Reading (5-7 minutes)	Teacher facilitates discussion about what students have read, using prompts to target areas for students' growth

Guided Reading Group (Hanke, 2014)



a Example of representing the context. School A, phase 1, reading and discussion with teacher

How Will Students Benefit From Guided Reading?

Fountas and Pinnell (2012) state, “The goal of guided reading is to help students build their reading power—to build a network of strategic actions for processing texts” (Fountas and Pinell, 2012). When students are able to use various strategies to comprehend different texts, they will build the confidence and motivation to read. In her research, Hanke (2014) found that students felt more relaxed when they work in a small, familiar group, while the rest of the class is working on other projects directed to literacy tasks (Hanke, 2014).

While the teacher is facilitating the guided reading group, other reading groups can enrich their reading fluency by engaging in independent activities, such as: silent reading, working on quiz sheets, completing characterization logs, researching information to further their understanding of a text topic (Fletcher*, Greenwood, Grimley, Parkhill, Davis, 2012). For my class, I plan to implement group rotations where

students will continuously practicing reading strategies that they have learned in the previous lessons, such as: vocabulary development, question-answer-relationship (QAR), etc.

Theory of Action

Problem of Practice	Literature Review	Intervention	Expected Change
<p>My students (9th graders) are not reading at their “grade” level.</p> <p>Students are reading at various levels.</p> <p>Students are struggling with reading and understanding the text.</p> <p>Students don’t have reading strategies/tools to comprehend texts independently.</p>	<p>Reasons why students struggle with reading comprehension</p> <p>English language learners in school</p> <p>Reading strategies and structures that have been tried</p> <p>The effectiveness of guided reading</p>	<p>4-6 weeks of guided reading in the classroom</p>	<p>Students will have a tool box of reading strategies to use when they encounter difficulties with comprehending a text.</p> <p>Students will learn at least TWO new reading strategies that they can use to read text independently.</p> <p>Students will feel more confident and gain a positive perspective on reading due to their ability to tackle texts independently.</p>

Intervention Action Plan

	Component	Activities	Purpose
1	<u>Pre-intervention:</u> Interview students (one-on-one)	Google survey: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What typically happen when you get stuck reading? 2. How do you know when you don't understand what is going on in the text? 3. What are some strategies/tools that you use when you get stuck? 4. What strategy works the best? How do you know? 	-Understand students' perspective on reading and their strengths/improvements on reading skills
3	Small guided reading groups by skills level	<u>Grouping:</u> 5 groups <u>Timeline:</u> 4 weeks (April-May) Meet once a week/20 min each group Students access short, difficult texts in small groups by using one intentional reading strategy <u>Whole Class:</u> Students will be rotating in groups engaging in various group activities to practice their reading and writing skills (vocabulary development, QAR practice, audio-visual text analysis, café talk)	-Students observe how I use a reading strategy to access a difficult text; then they get to practice on their own. -While the guided reading group is happening, other groups will be focusing on their small group activities, which will be rotated every 20 minutes.
4	<u>Post-intervention:</u> survey on guided reading	Students will fill out a survey on the guided reading groups	-Gain feedback from students on the effectiveness of the guided reading groups and their own reflection on how it has helped/didn't help them

Process Data

Before beginning the intervention, I will collect qualitative data on students' experience with reading overall. This information will help me understand my students' perspective on reading, what have worked for them and what they need help on. This data will be collected on Google survey forms, which automatically show qualitative and quantitative results depending on the questions. Throughout the intervention, I will collect exit tickets after every session, which will be typed in a Google doc to save all students' reflections and feedback.

Intervention: During the guided reading session, I will be taking notes of students' actions while they are interacting with the texts in my research's journal. After every session, I will be writing down notes to reflect on each session and take into consideration of improvements for the next session. Additionally, students' work during the guided reading session will be an indicator to show their progress throughout. Lastly, I will be asking students to reflect on their learning and express how these reading skills have impacted their attitude towards reading.

As an attempt to improve my students' literacy skills and increase their interest in reading, I carried by research by implementing Guided Reading in my class.

Structure of the class: Since each block period was 100 minutes. Students were rotating in **five** different stations, which included:

1. Guided Reading
2. Vocabulary Practice,
3. Audio-Visual Text Analysis
4. Café Talk Prep
5. Café Talk

Since students have been practicing these skills all year long, they are familiar with what to do at each station. The purpose of having Café Talk stations were to prep students for the Socratic Seminar, while still engaging them in various activities that will improve their skills in vocabulary development, critical analysis, thinking and discussion skills.

Impact Data

Pre-Survey & Post-Survey: I will be given out the same survey for both pre-survey and post-survey. By the end of the intervention, the results from the post-survey will determine if the students' perspective on reading have changed since they took the pre-survey. The point of these surveys is to gather information to determine if students' improvement on reading would correlate to their motivation to read more challenging texts.

Guided Reading Group: I will be collecting exit tickets from student after every session, which will ask students questions on the effectiveness of the reading strategy that was modeled to them, if students were able to use the strategy to help them

comprehend the text. This will determine if I need to reteach the strategy this session or move on to the next strategy. The data from the exit tickets will also give me feedback on what they think of the guided reading groups and whether they think this is an effective reading structure.

Surveys: The post-survey will also be monitored on Google survey forms. This data will give me feedback on how students have benefited or have not benefited from the intervention. It will let me know if students' perception on reading has changed since they took the pre-survey. It also gives me ideas on changes to make the next time I do guided reading. Overall, it is important to see students' growth through this intervention, how it has helped them to comprehend texts and their attitude towards reading now.

Analysis & Findings

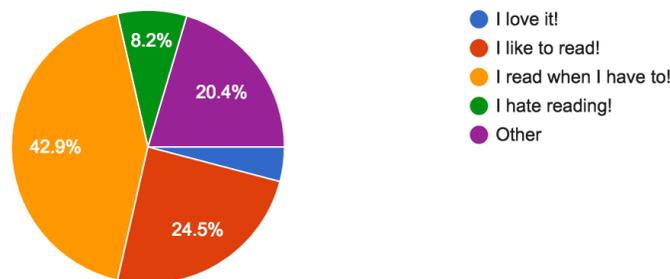
For my data analysis, I coded my surveys by looking for trends in students' responses. Multiple-choice responses were easy to analyze and the short responses were surprisingly easy to code due to the similar trends that I noticed. Many students said similar things when it comes to what they do when they get stuck or what reading strategy is the most helpful to them. For example, I looked for responses that students expressed on what they did when they got stuck before the intervention compared to after the intervention. Since students wrote similar responses, I chose the response that would best summarize how other students felt to include in my finding.

My data has shown that there has been a slight increase in students' motivation towards reading. While students did not show a drastic increase in their shift of attitude

towards reading, there were many indicators to demonstrate their growth through this process. By using students’ pre-surveys, post-surveys and exit tickets, I was able to collect data that contributes to my research question. The surveys provided me with critical insights on students’ perspective on reading and what they know/already know about reading strategies, how their perspective has changed or not changed after the intervention. The exit tickets provided me with honest feedback on how the guided reading sessions have or have not impacted them. While these research methods provided me with some critical information to analyze my data, the data was limiting at times because of students’ absences and the short time period that I had for my intervention.

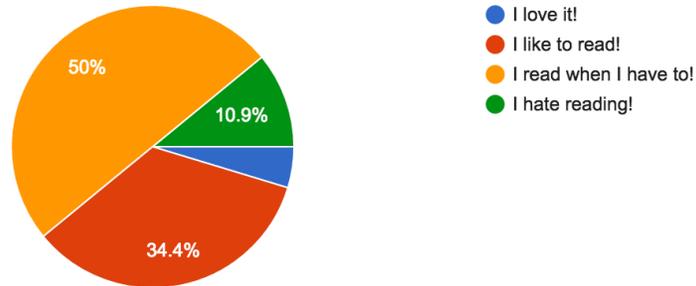
Pre Survey

What is your attitude when it comes to reading? (49 responses)



Post Survey

What is your attitude when it comes to reading? (64 responses)



Based on the graphs above, 24.5% students expressed that they like reading, while 4.1% expressed that they love reading in the pre-survey. On the other hand, 34% stated that they like reading and 4.7% expressed that they love reading in the post survey. This data shows a slight shift in the number of students liking reading. It is also important to point out that only 50 students took the pre-survey, while 64 students took the post-survey. I am not sure how much this fluctuate the data, but the percentages show a similar trend. This slight increase on students' interest in reading could be connected to their growing ability to make meaning out of the texts that they are reading.

Students are Actually Using Reading Strategies!

At the beginning of the school year, I noticed that my students' approach to reading was to give up when the do not understand what is going on in the text. They find no point to reading (Fountas, Pinnell, 2000; Harvey, Goudvis, 2007). The pre-surveys shows a pattern of responses, such as: **“I stopped reading.”** and **“nothing”**. These responses have proven to me that students will give up on reading if they find no purpose

in it (Harvey, Goudvis, 2007). This evidence led me to provide students with strategies that will lead them to figure out what they do not understand from the reading, rather than just giving up on it.

Students took the pre-survey in February, one question asked, “**What typically happens when you get stuck reading?**” 20% of students said that they stopped reading. However, in the post-survey that students took in May, only 9% of students expressed that they “stop reading, others revealed some strategies that they actually use to understand the text. In the post-survey, instead of quitting, **23 out of 64** students stated that they use the rereading strategy when they get stuck reading:

***Student A:** I don't really ever get stuck because I usually use the root words to find out the meaning.*

***Student B:** I reread what I didn't understand, and see if using context clues can help.*

***Student C:** Reread or restate to understand the text better.*

While the data conveys a minor shift in students' attitude towards reading, students expressed that they are using strategies that they have learned in class to help them find meaning in the text.

Guided Reading as a Powerful and Practical Reading Structure for High School Students

While there were many reading structures to choose as a reading intervention technique, I adapted the Guided Reading structure as an intervention for my students to effectively teach students reading strategies in small groups (Beard, 1999). At the end of every session, students reflect on their own participation and give feedback on the guided reading group. This is an important step for students to self-reflect on their own learning and how they can use it in the future (Fountas, Pinell, 2012). Students' feedback in these exit tickets showed that they found small, guided reading groups to be helpful for their growth in reading. In my first period class, 20 out of 24 students wrote that they thought that the guided reading group was a good and helpful experience for them, while the other 4 students thought that it was alright or it was not a good fit for them.

***Student A:** In my opinion it's pretty helpful for people who barely understand the reading.*

***Student B:** In my opinion is cool because you learned in a group not by yourself or the whole class.*

***Student C:** This guided reading group is good because we get to share what we don't understand.*

I want to highlight Student C's feedback because the guided reading groups create a small, safe space for students to not only learn from each other, but for them to be vulnerable and share words or phrases from the reading that they do not understand, process and work to understand it on their own, while I am there to guide them as the facilitator (Fountas, Pinnell, 2012). Students feel more comfortable and relaxed while

they are in a small group with classmates who share similar reading level as them (Hanke, 2014).

The sentence starters from the reading strategy provided students with the support to seek for meaning on difficult parts in the texts, without relying heavily on me as the teacher. This is what makes a powerful guided reading space, as the facilitator, I provide students with the tools and facilitate the session, while they push for meaning on their own. After the first guided reading session, I also came up with question starters to push students towards meaning of the texts to prevent myself from explaining it to them (Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles, Worrel, pg. 221). This is extremely important because it gives students critical reading tools to decode the texts independently, which will motivate them to read more.

The Implementation of the Think-Aloud Strategy in Guided Reading Groups

Think-aloud strategy was the main strategy used in the guided reading sessions. 4 out of 64 students expressed that they prefer this strategy to help them understand the text. Student D said, “Think aloud works best for me because I really liked how we talked about the things we didn’t understand and this strategy helped me get a better understanding.”

While it was not my initial intention to implement the think-aloud reading strategy throughout the whole intervention, I decided to stick with one strategy due to its’ effectiveness and for consistency. When asked about using the think-aloud strategy to

comprehend the text, 18 out of 24 students wrote positive comments about using the strategy.

Student A: I think the "think-aloud" strategy was good because we get to talk to others about the reading's meaning instead of just reading alone which is boring.

Student B: I liked it, it gave me a better insight on the reading.

Student C: I think is good so we can learn better and know what the article is talking about.

It is important to highlight that students thought this reading strategy and structure were more fun for them than reading alone, it affirms that students find comfort in not only using a strategy that works for them, but also to use it in a small space where they feel comfortable to read and learn from one another (Hanke, 2014). Students know that they can learn how to read from each other, rather than struggling alone. By strategically implementing these reading structures in high school classrooms, I am confident that students' interests in literacy will increase because students will be able to work in small groups to practice reading strategies that will push them towards improving their reading skills.

Change in Students' Perspective on Reading

In the post-survey, students were asked, *"Has your perspective on reading changed since we have done guided reading? Why or why not?"* 30 out of 64 students expressed that their reading has changed, their responses vary from it changed a little to a lot since they have started the guided reading group. This data indicates that guided reading is a

useful guided reading intervention for high school students because they now know effective reading strategies to use when they get stuck, which makes reading more interesting. Guided reading has given them the confidence to figure out the meaning of the text on their own, rather than relying heavily on the teacher (Fountas, Pinnell, 2000).

***Student A:** My perspective has changed because I find it easy to know what I am reading.*

***Student B:** I like to read more because be able to understand the reading, make the text more interesting.*

***Student C:** Yes, because I like reading when we do it in groups. I love interacting with other people.*

***Student D:** Yes because now I'm more aware of when I'm stuck in a reading and why I'm stuck. It also has helped me understand a text a little better.*

***Student E:** Yes it has changed because I used to think I didn't like reading but now when I read a book, I enjoy reading.*

Students' responses on how this guided reading intervention has impacted them show patterns of students' increase interest in reading as a result of working in a small reading group, learning and practicing effective reading strategies (Hanke, 2014). For the students whose perspective did not change from this intervention, their responses show a pattern of still not liking to read or already liking to read, already knowing on how to use those reading strategies. Their responses push me to think about how to intentionally find strategies that will push their reading skills and interests, since they all seem to have different relationships with reading. For the students who expressively stated, "No, I will

always hate reading.” I am interested in learning about the root causes of their hatred for reading and figure out strategies to support them within this reading intervention.

Implications & Limitations

Choosing the RIGHT Texts to Use During Guided Reading

In preparation for every guided reading session, I was intentional about which text to use for each group, since choosing the right text is essential in this process (Wittier, 2013; Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles & Worrel, 2013). During my observations with other teachers who implement guided reading in their classrooms, they both taught elementary school and middle school, so they were able to adapt book sets from Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2011). As a ninth-grade teacher, I decided to use all informational texts connected to the topics that we were learning in the unit, which made it easy to differentiate depending on the group and their skills level.

When assigning texts, a lesson learned was that the guided reading lesson is more effective when students get the reading for homework and I tell them to choose a part from the reading that was difficult for them. By doing this, it saves the group time from reading during the short 20 minutes that we are together. However, when students did not do the reading for homework, it slowed the group down because some students did the reading, while others did not. A suggestion is to assign a difficult, but short text so they do not have to spend a lot of time reading the night before. The key is to find texts that are challenging for all students, so they can effectively use the strategy to find meanings for difficult parts of the text (Wittier, 2013).

As a Facilitator, Trust The Process

Fountas and Pinnel (2012) have shown in their research that it is critical for the teacher to act as the facilitator, be there to guide the process, but let students solve the problem on their own (Fountas, Pinnell, 2012). I now truly understand what they mean by letting students solve the problem on their own. As the facilitator, in the beginning, I found myself jumping in a lot to answer and explaining questions for students. During coaching meetings, my coach would often say, *“You are doing all the work for your students.”* This realization led me to come up with five simple guiding questions to ask when students are stuck, instead of just giving them the answers. Again, it is more important for students to learn the skills to be able to read independently, rather than learning the meaning of the words that they do not understand. The time spent in these reading sessions should be focus on teaching the skill, rather than the text (Fountas and Pinnell, 2012).

Questions to ask during the Guided Reading Session

1. *What do you already know about the text?*
2. *What is confusing?*
3. *What do I already know about this paragraph?*
4. *How well do you understand this sentence now?*
5. *How did you figure out what you know?*

*These questions allow for students to figure out the answers out on their own and depend on each other, without relying on my help.

Differentiation for Each Guided Reading Group

In the beginning of this process, I used the MAP data and my own knowledge of students' reading skills to split them into groups of four or five students. By splitting students into groups based on their reading skills level, it not only makes it easier to differentiate, but it creates a safe space for students to struggle through this learning process. I observed students who do not often participate in class actually read and spoke up more.

The guided reading structure is flexible; the facilitator should differentiate based on what each group needs (Brambrick-Santoyo, Settles, Worrell, 2013). Based on the group, I would read-aloud with some groups and focus on deeper level questioning with other groups.

What are Other Groups doing When They are not Participating in Guided Reading?

Careful planning out what the other groups will be doing, besides the guided reading group is the key to successful guided reading sessions. These guided reading groups happen during my block period, which is 100 minutes. It is recommended that these stations can work on improving their literacy by doing independent activities (Fletcher*, Greenwood, Grimley, Parkhill, Davis, 2012). These stations are rotated every 20 minutes. I've learned to have really explicit directions at every station, so students know exactly what to do when they get there. The more detailed each station is, the less that they will have to depend on me, so I can focus my attention on the guided reading group. Before we began this intervention, I spent one day practicing each station, which was very helpful. Lastly, it is important for each station to focus on the skills that students already

know. This should be an opportunity for students to practice and strengthening the skills that they have learned throughout the year, rather than learning something new.

Conclusion

As an English teacher, we are given the difficult task to meet students where they are at and support them in improving their reading, writing and critical thinking skills. This action research has taught me to not make assumptions that students already know how to read when they get to high school. It was an eye-opening experience to listen to my students' needs when it comes to their own learning. By asking, I was able to collect useful data on what students do and do not do when they get stuck reading and the support that they need.

Before this action research, I “taught” my students reading by asking students to read-aloud to the whole class, in pairs, or independent reading without providing them with any effective reading strategies to use. I truly did not know what it takes to actually teach reading nor did I know how to do it. This intervention has taught me to meet my students where they are at by providing them with critical reading strategies and guide them to struggle with the text. I have learned the importance of teaching students how to read, rather than just teaching the texts.

Prior to this research, I have never thought that guided reading could be implemented in my class, I thought that those reading structures could only work in elementary school classrooms. Through this process, I stepped outside of my comfort zone to provide students with a structure that would work for them. I found that small

reading intervention groups are what students need and it is so possible to implement it in high school classrooms.

Structures like guided reading has the potential to create a positive reading culture in the classroom and encourage students to learn skills to make them become fluent readers. While my students had positive things to say about guided reading, I am still searching for other ways to make guided reading more effective to fully invest students in reading challenging texts. The intervention happened in a short time period, so I am interested in implementing guided reading as a consistent reading structure to track students' growth and their interest in reading. Since I will be looping with my students next year, I am very excited to continue this work with them.

A further direction of research is how to design and implement different types of reading structures that will increase reading instruction in high school classrooms. During my research and field observations, it was difficult to gather information on reading interventions that have worked particularly in high school classrooms, since reading instruction usually happen in elementary schools and decrease dramatically once students get to middle school. It is my hope that more research and practice on reading instruction will improve students' skills and attitude towards literacy.

To conclude, it is important for teachers to know that reading instruction takes a lot of pre-work, getting to know our students before teaching them random reading strategies. It takes a lot of preparation and effort to build a reading structure that will work for the whole class. While it is more work, it is incredibly fulfilling when we get to witness our students accessing challenging texts that they were not able to before, which increase their confidence level and interest for reading.

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APPENDIX 1: Pre-reading Survey (Google form)

Ms. T's Reading Survey

Please fill out this form by answering these questions honestly. This will help me become a better teacher by providing you with the support that you need to become a better reader! :)

What is your full name? (first+last)

What is your attitude when it comes to reading?

- I love it!
- I like to read!
- I read when I have to!
- I hate reading!
- Other :

What typically happens when you get stuck reading?

How do you know when you don't understand what is going on in the text?

What are some reading strategies/tools that you use when you get stuck reading?

What reading strategies work best? How do you know?

SUBMIT

APPENDIX 2: Post-reading Survey (Google form)

Ms. T's Post-Reading Survey

Please fill out this form by answering these questions honestly. This will help me become a better teacher by providing you with the support that you need to become a better reader! :)

What is your full name? (first+last)

What is your attitude when it comes to reading?

- I love it!
- I like to read!
- I read when I have to!
- I hate reading!
- Other :

What typically happens now when you get stuck reading?

How do you know when you don't understand what is going on in the text?

What are some reading strategies/tools that you use when you get stuck reading?

What reading strategies work best? How do you know?

Has your perspective on reading changed since we have done guided reading? Why or why not?

SUBMIT

APPENDIX 3: Guided Reading Exit Tickets (completed by students after every session)

Name _____

Date _____

EXIT TICKET

BEFORE the guided reading group:

While reading the article, rate your understanding of the text (circle one)

(Don't understand) 0 1 2 3 4 5 (Understand it very well)

1. What do you think about the “think-aloud” strategy?

2. Is this a useful tool to use while reading? Why or why not?

3. What is your opinion of this guided reading group?

AFTER the guided reading group:

While reading the article, rate your understanding of the text (circle one)

(Don't understand) 0 1 2 3 4 5 (Understand it very well)

