READING INTERVENTION: BREAKING THE LOOP

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to implement and evaluate a pedagogically based reading program that had the aims of encouraging student connectedness to reading, and motivating students to become readers. Current research on helping struggling readers focuses on several key concepts: a balanced approach incorporating both skills and meaning based perspectives, motivation to read, additional instruction time, fluency developed through repeated readings, metacognition, and comprehension strategies. Based on this research I developed an instructional approach incorporating these key components. I implemented this approach with two middle school students using an observational case study research method. One goal was to increase the students’ reading fluency, comprehension, and motivation. A second goal was to boost their self-perception of themselves as readers. I used the students’ perspectives, feedback, and progress during the project to guide instruction. In conducting this project, I increased my knowledge of reading theory, and improved my skills in providing remediation for struggling readers. I plan to present the project and conclusions to school staff, outlining the potential benefits of the program, and validating the need for continued intervention and support for struggling readers at the upper elementary level.
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Dr. Judith Lapadat, friends, and family, for their patience and support throughout the process of developing and completing this project. Their unfailing faith and patience during the process of drafting the proposal, conducting the research, and writing the report were invaluable in completing this project.
Chapter One: Reading Remediation for Older Struggling Readers: A Challenge

Introduction

Reflecting back on the last two school years is unsettling. I cannot help but wonder at the fate of several grade seven struggling readers as they journeyed on to high school. A sense of frustration and failure flood through me because some of those students entered high school reading at a primary level. As a Learning Assistance Teacher, my priority this year was to develop, implement, and document a program to improve the reading skills of upper elementary students.

According to Whitehurst (2008), many struggling readers face enormous challenges, as success in reading is fundamental to a child’s well being. According to his research, children who are failing at reading at the end of the first grade are extremely likely to be failing at reading at the end of fourth grade. Failure in reading strongly predicts failure in other academic subjects and this correlates to diminished economic opportunities later in life. Furthermore, his findings show that not only does this affect how much money you earn or where you live, but it also affects how long you will live. Ultimately, in North American society reading ability may relate to achieving a healthy, successful life.

Struggling readers are also at risk for developing a sense of shame and lack of self worth that affects their mental well-being (Lubliner, 2004). These children experience significant difficulties in mastering academic content and are at risk for failing in school (Salinger, 2003). As they get older, they are likely to develop avoidance strategies that may prevent their peers and teachers from recognizing their difficulties. Children can develop a negative feedback loop; because they find reading is difficult, they do not engage in it and because they do not engage in reading, they fail to make the gains needed for success. Trapped within this loop, children often develop negative
behaviors that further compound their difficulties (Stewart, Benner, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2007). Once children reach adolescence, the level of intensity of intervention required for these struggling readers to narrow the gap with their peers is high.

According to Denton and Vaughn's (2008) synthesis of research, on the efficacy of providing remediation for older students with significant reading disabilities, it is not too late to intervene with older struggling readers, but they need intensive intervention over an extended period. Denton and Vaughn cite a series of evidence-based articles written by Greg Roberts, Joseph Torgesen, Alison Boardman, and Nancy Scammacca that list five key areas of focus for older, struggling readers: word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation for learning. In their article, they also cite the research of Faggella-Luby and Donald Deshler who, in a summary of the findings of six research reviews, found that the reading comprehension of adolescents with learning disabilities can be improved through intervention. This research conducted by many of the top reading researchers over the past 25 years supports my own experiences of working with older struggling readers. Consistent interventions using a holistic, balanced approach are effective in improving motivation, reading fluency, and comprehension of older struggling readers.

Traditionally, energy and resources are channeled toward early reading intervention in the primary grades. Early education is the time when children develop skills, knowledge, and interest in the code-based and meaning aspects of written and spoken language. The current focus on early reading intervention arises from the evidence that early intervention promotes better literacy outcomes by supporting acquisition of precursor reading skills that prevent later reading problems such as alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness, print concepts, rapid naming, and oral language (Justice, 2006). Early intervention is crucial, but for some children reading struggles extend well beyond the primary grades.
My experience as a Learning Assistance Teacher has shown me that children who acquire reading skills at a slower pace, and children diagnosed with learning disabilities (LD) continue to need direct reading instruction (Salinger, 2003; Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, Scammacca, Linan-Thompson & Woodruff, 2009). The official definition adopted by The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2002), describes a learning disability as:

A number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, retention, understanding or use of verbal or non-verbal information...Learning disabilities may interfere with the acquisition and use of... oral language, reading, written language and mathematics. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction.

Instructional intervention strategies at the upper elementary level tend to shift from reading instruction towards interventions that support curriculum content. Yet, to be successful, struggling readers need support in both areas (Tyner & Green, 2005; Ivey & Fisher, 2006).

Although early identification and intervention programs for at risk primary students are essential, I have growing concerns regarding the lack of support, appropriate interventions, and resources for at risk readers in the upper elementary grades. Many of these students are identified with LD. These students are among the most vulnerable as they reach adolescence. They have spent years struggling to access information, and to keep up with an increasingly demanding workload that can be overwhelming. These students are often intellectually able, and they recognize the gap between themselves and their peers. They are often marginalized, and find it difficult to develop and maintain relationships, and they may develop greater levels of anxiety over higher performing peers.

Research shows that students identified with LD have higher rates of anxiety, stress, and apprehension and lower levels of self-confidence and stability. They are at risk of developing negative behavior, poor self-esteem, depression, and mental health problems (Wilson, Armstrong, Furrie &
Walcot, 2009). They can become frustrated, angry, and less motivated to engage in learning (Stewart, Benner, Martella & Marchand-Martella, 2007). These students are in danger of spiraling into the negative feedback loop, and dropping out of school. Even though research shows effective intervention is an essential component of reducing these risks and in creating positive learning experiences for these students, current intervention practices fail to meet the needs of these students (Swanson, 2008).

The program of intervention strategies that I utilize in my reading program is based on a balanced approach to counter the negative reading loop. This balanced approach is grounded in the theory espoused by Swanson (2008), Vaadenbroek, McMaster, Kendeou, & Espin (2007), and Fagan (1987).

Vocabulary development is one important skill in the acquisition of reading. Good readers spend more time per day reading than do poor readers. Readers who spend less than one minute a day reading read approximately 8,000 new vocabulary words per year while good readers who read approximately 20 minutes a day read 1.8 million words per year (Shaywitz, 2003). The discrepancy in vocabulary acquisition between good and struggling readers means that students like those described above have extensive vocabulary deficits by the time they reach grade six and seven. This deficit negatively affects fluency and comprehension of grade appropriate text.

Struggling readers also have less access to knowledge about the world, because they are unable to read to learn. This negatively affects their performance in writing, in spelling, and across the content areas of curriculum. They have limited exposure to the rich variety of genres of writing (e.g. short stories, poems, scientific reports, and essays) which leads to challenges in comprehending narrative and informational text structures. Their knowledge of formal sentence structure is restricted because spoken language often lacks variety of sentence forms (Lubliner, 2004, Ivey & Fisher, 2006).
To learn to read, struggling readers must engage in reading. According to Katz and Carlisle (2009), “Students with reading disabilities need more explicit and prolonged instruction in higher level decoding strategies, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies in order to acquire these reading skills” (p. 325). Only with exposure to reading can they develop the skills and strategies to read to learn. It is evident that without appropriate reading intervention these students are ill prepared to face the challenges of high school. The plight of these students and others like them is the inspiration for my reading intervention case study.

What Makes Me Qualified to Conduct This Case Study?

During the last twelve years as an employee of School District 82, I have taught kindergarten, grade two, three, four, five and six. The diversity of my teaching experiences gives me insight into reading development from Kindergarten to the upper elementary grades. During the last five years, I have been working as a Learning Assistance Teacher. The assessment and development of programs for reading intervention are an integral part of my job. I have experience in administering and interpreting the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2001) and the Diagnostic Reading Inventory (Alberta Education, 1994). These inventories provide key information regarding reading behaviors and reading processes that are crucial in instructional planning and reading remediation.

Over the last ten years, I have attended numerous workshops pertaining to reading development, such as Orchestrating Success in Reading, and Crosscurrents Special Education conferences held in Vancouver in 2002, 2003, and 2007. I am completing a master’s degree program in education, through the University of Northern British Columbia, which has included a course on literacy strategies for struggling learners along with other special education courses. These courses have provided me with resources to include current pedagogical practice in my work.

In my work teaching struggling readers in elementary school, I have the latitude to schedule
intervention sessions at greater frequency if I have considered it to be warranted. This latitude allowed me to develop a program based on a pullout group with repeated reading opportunities as a component of my reading instruction. This program is geared towards facilitating trust, creating opportunities for the students to read in a safe environment, encouraging interaction and discussion, and audiotaping to provide insight into each student’s reading needs and strengths.

Finally, as the Learning Assistance Teacher, I have the flexibility to choose the intervention approach. Often one of the greatest challenges to intervention is limited funding, which prevents sufficient intervention time, and promotes rigidly imposed programmatic models that fail to meet the individual needs of students. Although studies show appropriate intervention can improve students’ reading performance, support and resources often are not readily available. Staudt states, “Policymakers and school administrators likely read such studies with the thought that they lack the resources or time to mount such sustained and targeted interventions” (2009, p. 6), and as a consequence there can be disparities in instructional resources available to our most vulnerable students. Yet, I have received support from 2008-2010 for the intervention program that I have developed and begun implementing over the last two years. This has enabled me to choose to work with pre-adolescents with moderate to severe reading difficulties, up to eight times a week for half hour sessions. Using an individualized approach of intervention, I was able to modify instruction in order to be most effective in meeting their needs. In conducting this project, I was able to work with students and document their responses to my intervention approach.

My approach is holistic in nature; unlike narrowly defined programs it is dynamic and changes as the needs of the students change. Recently, while reading the book Touching Spirit Bear with a group of adolescent students, I came upon an analogy that captures the essence of my program. Eat a spoonful of flour; add salt, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, lard, and a raw egg. When you swallow
these ingredients individually, you are left with an unpleasant taste in your mouth, but mix these ingredients together and bake them and the end results will be a delicious cake. My program is much like the cake I have combined components to create an effective reading approach to meet the needs of struggling adolescent readers.

Struggling adolescent readers present with more complex challenges than younger readers do. In addition to a reading intervention program, they require an approach that includes alternative ways to support their acquisition of knowledge. Students with LD need access to information through a multimodal approach. Technology such as the internet, voice recognition software, and programs where books are scanned into the computer and read to the students, as well as books on CD, movies, television, and audiotapes are additional ways for them to access information. According to Ivey and Fisher (2006), “Older students must develop their abilities to think critically about a range of sophisticated concepts, even while they are still learning to read and write,” (p. 17). One of the challenges struggling readers and LD students with reading disabilities face in achieving this goal is maintaining their motivation.

It is increasingly evident that acquisition of reading, for some students, requires a great deal of motivation and effort. As struggling readers come to recognize they are not successful academically, they may experience low self-efficacy (low confidence in themselves as readers), higher levels of anxiety and apathy towards school (Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Percevich, Taboada, Davis, Scafiddi & Tonks 2004; Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Therefore, they develop work avoidance strategies. If they have not completed assignments, they can attribute failure, particularly to their peers, to their lack of effort rather than to lack of ability. Struggling readers often feel marginalized, experience a lack of belonging, and have difficulty forming peer relationships (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). My program is directed towards motivating students and rekindling their desire to read. The challenge is to show them
that there is hope of success, and to make them believe that they can become successful readers. Years of failure make motivation to read one of the most challenging factors in developing a program.

My program is student centered and focuses on creating an environment where students want to come, want to read, and feel free to take risks necessary to grow. My program is all about the teachable moment. When students express an interest in a topic, book, or article; then this becomes a springboard to engage students in reading. The structure of the program design is much like nurturing a budding flower to full bloom; just as it needs nutrients to grow so do these students. My program has the elements that these students need to grow. Through reading and interactive activities, opportunities are created to improve vocabulary, build fluency, develop comprehension strategies, and foster confidence and a pleasure in reading. Although my approach is primarily student centered, it is grounded in pedagogical practices, supported by research and current reading theories.

In the next section, I will describe the pedagogical foundation of my approach, and then I discuss the argument for a balanced approach to reading instruction as supported by the research literature. Finally, I describe the central focus and purposes of my project.

Pedagogical Foundation

The pedagogical foundation regarding how children acquire reading concepts arises from two theoretical stances. These are skill- based instruction and meaning based instruction.

Skill based instruction. The philosophy behind skill based reading instruction comes from phonics research. It arises from the perception that reading is not natural or easy for most children. Children acquire reading concepts through systematic instruction of prerequisite skills. These skills then enable readers to decode written language into speech (Moats, 1999).

Phonemic awareness is a vital skill linked to reading success. Phonemic awareness is an awareness of how oral language divides into sound components. Children must be able to hear,
manipulate, and sequence oral sound patterns before they can relate to print. Phonemic awareness is necessary prior to teaching phonics. Phonics is an approach to teaching the association of sounds to alphabetic symbols (Ellery, 2005).

In phonics instruction, there are five approaches: synthetic, analytic, embedded, analogical, and spelling-based (National Reading Panel, 1999). The synthetic approach provides explicit instruction in relating letters to sounds and blending the sounds to form words. The analytic approach teaches letter sound relationships using previously learned words. This prevents the pronunciation of sounds in isolation. However reading lists of unrelated words has little meaning for students and relates negatively to motivation. The embedded approach uses incidental phonics instruction during reading of text. The analogy approach teaches unfamiliar words through relationship to familiar words (light/fight). Phonics through spelling teaches children to spell phonemically by segmenting words into phonemes and selecting letters to match the phonemes (National Reading Panel, 1999). This works better with highly phonetic languages like Spanish, than it does with English, which has low phonemic/phonetic correspondence. Through mastery of skills at each level, children are then able to decode. This approach does not teach or assure comprehension, hence the need to also teach comprehension strategies within a meaning based approach.

Meaning based instruction. In contrast, proponents of the meaning-based philosophy view reading as a natural process that develops in a similar way to oral language (Coles, 2000). Children begin to attend to print as soon as they realize that written words impart meaning. They strive to make sense of written language, and through this process, they learn to read. Their primary focus in reading is self-interest as they strive to construct meaning from print in order to participate and communicate with others (Coles, 2000).

The emphasis in meaning based instruction is on the process of how children construct
meaning during reading. Readers use prediction; they select, confirm, and self-correct. They monitor their own reading to see if they guessed correctly. While they are reading, children access graphophonic cues, syntax, and semantics to help them make meaning of text. A key factor to meaning based instruction is that it begins with useful, relevant, and functional language. Children read familiar meaningful, predictable materials that allow them to draw from experiences they already have (Cole, 2000). One characteristic of many children with LD is that they do not “naturally” infer these meaning making strategies, just as they may not naturally infer phonemic awareness and sound symbol correspondences. These students need explicit instruction in both meaning making and phonemic strategies.

A Balanced Approach to Reading Instruction

It is readily apparent that the philosophies behind skills based and meaning based approaches to reading instruction arise from two very different views. The ongoing debate has been the topic of discussion for the last 40 years. Examination of the research has been important in clarifying the issues and in program planning; therefore as part of this project, I have read and cited selections from the current research literature on reading approaches recommended for upper elementary students with reading difficulties.

Research offers insights to guide teachers in facing this reading dilemma. In response to research presented by the National Reading Panel (NRP) (1999), the United States promoted a fundamental shift in the philosophy of reading acquisition and reading instruction in the school system. The government introduced the “No Child Left Behind” legislation. This legislation created a movement promoting skill based phonics programs like the Open Court program and Reading Mastery. These programs were legislated into the school system, and supported with government funding (Poonam, Martens, Wilson, Altwerger, Lijun, & Laster, 2005).
The American educational trends established through the “No Child Left Behind” legislation and the NRP report have affected Canadian educational policy. As a teacher, I have witnessed an increasing movement toward a focus on academic achievement as the measure of educational accountability. There is an increasing focus on standardized tests, such as *The Foundation Skills Assessment* that is administered twice yearly in schools throughout B.C. to measure achievement. Achievement measured through standardized testing fails to consider critical factors such as socioeconomic standing, minorities, race, and the needs of children with disabilities. The danger inherent in this trend is the narrowing of teaching practices to teach to the test, marginalization of vulnerable groups of students, and reliance on scripted programs like *Open Court*, rather than diversifying instruction to meet the individual needs of children.

The report of the NRP (1999) provides research to support explicit, systematic phonics instruction. It describes phonics instruction as a valuable and essential part of a successful reading program. It also states, “Systematic phonics instruction is designed to increase accuracy in decoding and word recognition skills, which in turn facilitate comprehension” (NRP, 1999, p. 11). This report provides evidence for, and advocates skill based phonics instruction within the schools to increase accuracy in decoding and word recognition skills.

In contrast to the NRP research, Frank Smith in *Understanding Reading* (2004) and *Reading without Nonsense* (2006) refutes the perspective that reading is simply a matter of decoding sound. He states, “Decoding sound rarely works and can be catastrophic in its effect on learning to read,” (Smith, 2006, p. 4). He claims, “To learn to read, learners need to read,” (Smith, 2006, p. 12). As children are read to and then through reading themselves, they not only get enjoyment from reading, but gain essential clues and feedback about the reading process, and develop reading comprehension strategies.

To read, children need exposure to the language of books. Primarily, children make sense of
written language by constructing meaning as they read, using context clues, making comparisons, questioning, and predicting, monitoring, and using prior knowledge. Smith (2006) argues that, contrary to the widely held belief of politicians and bureaucrats who support phonics instruction, “Trying to teach children to read by teaching them the sounds of letters is literally a meaningless activity” (Smith, 2006, p. 23). These diametrically opposite opinions contribute to the ongoing debate in education regarding the best pedagogical practices for reading intervention. Further examination of the research reveals alternative perspectives.

Poonam et al. (2005) conducted a study to examine claims that commercially based programs emphasizing systematic explicit phonics instruction are superior to literature-based programs. Their study found no evidence to substantiate the NRP claims. Their findings show that children from literature-based programs are more willing to take risks, provide divergent answers, and use multiple strategies for text processing and comprehension. They are more able to use what they know about language and the world to construct meaning as they read. Their findings also show that effective reading instruction extends beyond scripted lessons and mastery of grapheme-phoneme correspondence and should focus on strategies that make meaning while reading text (Poonam et al., 2005).

Fagan (1987) and Vandenbroek et al. (2007) offer another perspective on the reading process. They agree that the primary function of reading is making meaning from text. Fagan describes reading in terms of the cognitive processes we access in constructing meaning from text. These processes include attending, analyzing, associating, predicting, inferring, synthesizing, generalizing and monitoring. Different cognitive processes are activated depending on the purpose of reading. In reading for pleasure, we utilize different processes than we do in academic reading. According to Fagan (1987), reading entails complex cognitive processes, of which symbol-sound correlation is a
component. He states, "While symbol-sound associating is a process in which readers engage, there has been a danger that for some educators, this process tends to lose its perspective....The process of symbol-sound associating is not sufficient for reading to occur" (Fagan, 1987, p. 59).

Vandenbroek et al. (2007) also focuses on the role of cognitive processes in reading acquisition. He views reading as an interactive process. As readers engage with the text, they use higher order processing skills to construct mental networks. They relate pieces of information from the text and prior knowledge to create causal, logical connections. A key conclusion of this research is that both basic and higher order skills play an integral part in reading. These skills develop simultaneously and independently rather than sequentially.

Whereas basic reading skills are concerned with identification of letters and words, higher order skills are necessary in constructing meaning. This research suggests that although skills based phonics instruction has a role in the reading process it addresses only one component necessary for acquisition of reading.

Many current reading theorists agree that reading involves both meaning making and fluency in decoding. They advocate that teaching should address both. Essentially, a richly meaning based approach provides the broad literacy knowledge and motivation needed to learn to read effectively. At specific stages of reading development, learners may benefit from code-focused instruction, and the nature of the focus depends on the child’s stage of reading – e.g., sound-symbol instruction at the early stages of reading; spelling patterns a little later; cognitive, and meta-cognitive strategies much later (Ellery, 2005). Tyner and Green (2005) cite research by Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) as substantiating a balanced approach to producing well-rounded readers. They claim, “Successful teaching of reading requires skill instruction, including phonics (word study) and phonemics, in conjunction with stimulating, meaningful reading ... experiences” (Tyner & Green, 2005, p. 3).
As a Learning Assistance Teacher, I have found that reading instruction needs to be well balanced to effectively meet children’s needs. As Fagan (1987), Vandenbroek et al. (2007), and Ellery (2005) argue, phonics and phonemic awareness are components in the process of learning to read. We also need to include skill and meaning based strategies in reading intervention. We need to view the needs of the child in holistic terms. The problem with defining reading instruction solely according to one ideology is that it ignores other critical research and provides less flexibility for accommodating children’s individual differences (Tyner & Green, 2005).

Swanson (2008), in a synthesis of 21 research studies conducted between 1980 and 2005, on reading instruction for students with learning disabilities, offers reconciliation for these two theoretical perspectives, and identifies key components for reading instruction. She reports that research shows that reading instruction should include several components. These components include explicit and systematic instruction, foundational skills such as phonemic awareness and phonics, small group instruction, higher processing skills such as fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies for both beginning readers and adolescent struggling readers. This synthesis also reveals that although the above components form the tenets for effective reading instruction, many of the studies that they reviewed revealed that the quality of reading instruction for struggling readers was generally low, with little or no explicit instruction in phonics or comprehension strategies (Swanson, 2008). Clearly, the research shows there is a disparity between what is known to be effective through research, and current practice in many reading intervention programs. My challenge has been to utilize reading theory, along with my practical knowledge, in order to develop a program that makes a difference for older struggling readers.

The theoretical underpinnings of my program are based on the tenets of effective reading instruction outlined above (Swanson, 2008), and on the premise that in order to learn to read, children
need to be motivated to read. Reading needs to be non-threatening and enjoyable. Primarily children need frequent opportunities to interact with text that relates to their experience. In this program, I motivated students to read by creating reading opportunities that were fun, diverse, meaningful, and pedagogically based. As Ivey and Fisher (2006) state, “Teens read because it satisfies their mind. So when we recommend books to older, inexperienced readers, we want to show them that reading can stimulate their minds--make them laugh, puzzle, empathize, question, or reconsider previously held notions” (2006, p. 17). My program is very much focused on engaging the participants in reading that meets their individual needs, and on striking a spark by providing the strategies and skills they need to open the door to the joys of reading.
Chapter Two: Method

**Project Design**

I used an observational case study design in conducting my project. This type of research design suits my project well, for several reasons. In this design, according to Bogdan and Biklin (2007), “the major data-gathering technique is participant observation (supplemented with formal and informal interviews and review of documents)” (p.60). The focus of study typically can include one or more or the following: a particular place, a specific group of people, or some activity of a school. I chose to select two students to participate in my pull-out reading intervention program in the resource room of the school. Participants’ responses during the program were documented using a journal, taped recordings, and personal interviews of the students and parents. The data collected during participant observations was used to guide intervention, and to evaluate the program.

**Choosing the Participants**

Selecting the group was an important part of the process. I wanted to keep the group small, as studies indicate that results that are more positive are attained in smaller group sizes (Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, Scammacca, Linan-Thompson & Woodruf, 2009; Harn, Linan-Thompson & Roberts, 2008). In my position as Learning Assistance Teacher, I identified a group of two upper elementary students who are at risk for spiraling into the negative feedback loop. Prior to beginning my research in 2009-10, I had been working with these students within a larger group using the intervention strategies outlined in the project. The difficulties that these older students experienced in acquiring reading skills, and the success I noted while using these strategies with this group inspired my desire to develop this project to document my reading approach, and the students’ responses.

Both students I selected have a Learning Disability (LD), diagnosed following educational assessments conducted in the primary grades. They have struggled with the acquisition of reading
since starting school. I have observed that in the upper elementary grades they became adept at avoiding reading in school and at home. Reading, to them, has been a laborious, tortuous chore rather than a joy. Their reading difficulties negatively affect their performance across curriculum, and they struggle daily to survive in the fast pace of the regular classroom. The similarity in their learning needs made these students ideal participants for this small-group, differentiated reading program. Following formal approval from the school district superintendent, the school principal, and the University Research Ethics Board, I obtained parental and student consent for these two grade seven students to become participants in my research, and to proceed with the project. Also, parental consent was obtained to access and use information from the students’ files to gain background information (Appendices B, G, F, C).

Student A. Based on information gathered from A’s student file, student A was born prematurely at 34 weeks gestation and transferred to Vancouver because of respiratory distress. According to his mother, he reached his developmental milestones within the normal range, with the exception of speech and language development. Student A’s mother referred him, at age four, to the local Child Development Center (CDC) because his speech was unintelligible. Prior to entering school, student A was identified as having a spoken language disorder. He received speech and language support prior to school and up until grade three. Children with language disorders are at risk for experiencing social and academic problems throughout school and in adulthood. According to Cirrin & Gillam (2008), children with language disabilities are likely to have difficulty in more than one aspect of language, including grammar, syntax, semantics and pragmatics: “Many of these children present problems in language processing skills related to attention, speech perception, working memory, and phonological awareness” (p. 111). Spoken language difficulties in preschool years often are strongly predictive of the presence of a language-based learning disability and
subsequent problems with learning to read, write, and spell (Cirrin & Gillam, 2008). In the early primary grades student A already presented with many of these difficulties.

Student A had his first educational assessment in grade two (2005). The results indicated A’s verbal and non-verbal cognitive abilities were within the average range. His updated educational assessment in 2009 indicates a similar cognitive profile with verbal and non-verbal abilities within the average/above average range. Student A meets the Ministry of Education guidelines as a student with a learning disability. His oral language skills and visual memory skills are a strength, but student A has specific processing difficulties involving auditory and working memory, difficulty processing and retaining information, and poor visual motor integration skills. There is a statistically significant difference between student A’s verbal cognitive abilities and his achievement in the areas of reading, spelling and written language (School file, 2009). Student A received resource room support in these areas.

Despite attending the resource room for support, and working within the parameters of an individual education plan (IEP) designed specifically to support his learning needs, he has continued to struggle. Because of his significant learning difficulties, student A’s IEP provides a dual approach with information presented in a multimodal way, opportunities for alternative assessment from written form, as well as intervention to support acquisition of reading skills. Student A’s school achievement records, from Kindergarten to grade six, show that despite intervention, student A’s performance is below the widely held expectations in reading, writing, and math (School file, 2009).

Review of his school file shows that student A arrived in Kindergarten with a positive outlook, and slowly over time we see erosion of his self-efficacy, and growing frustration with the challenges of reading. According to the report card written by his Kindergarten teacher, she stated: “He is looking forward to grade one because, we will be reading.” In his grade one reports, we see a change
in his behavior. His grade one teacher reported: “We see changes in his behavior. Student A needs reminders to demonstrate appropriate behavior.” In the second term report, she observed: “Student A needs encouragement to focus on his work; he often talks to other children or plays with things in his pencil box.” He attended the resource room in grade one and the teacher commented in his report: “During his last reading assessment, A read 21 words correctly; he does know more, but became frustrated and would not co-operate.” There is evidence of growing disengagement between A and school.

In grade two, his teacher reported in term one: “He does need many reminders to listen, follow directions, and use a softer classroom voice.” In the final report his teacher wrote: “Student A has ideas for stories and can dictate and copy part of his work, but he finds it tiring and frustrating.” His grade two resource room report states: “Student A wants to be successful reader, and has worked well in a small group setting.”

In grade three, A began the year on a positive note. In his first term report, his teacher commented: “I am pleased to see A’s willingness to try, to ask for help when he does not understand, and his positive attitude towards school and learning. In term two, we see a shift in his reported behavior. His teacher commented in his report: “Recently, A has been reluctant to read any new material and chooses only very familiar stories. He is using breaks to the washroom frequently, sometimes as an avoidance tactic.” Unfortunately even at this young age, we see an emerging pattern of frustration and disconnection that is distressing in such a young student.

Other factors affecting A’s academic progress were gleaned from a pediatric assessment (School file, 2009). In grade three, student A intermittently took medication for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), but shortly thereafter medication was discontinued because of adverse side effects. Further pediatric assessment in 2009 reaffirmed an ADD diagnosis and a diagnosis of Developmental
Coordination Disorder (DCD). Although the dual diagnosis of ADD and DCD has significant impact for student learning, analysis of that impact is beyond the scope and purpose of this project.

Since September 2009, student A has recommenced intermittently taking medication for his ADD. Student A’s processing difficulties, in conjunction with his attention, and speech and language difficulties present significant learning challenges, particularly in the acquisition of reading and literacy skills that indicate he has already begun to spiral into the negative feedback loop, and without additional help he is likely to become more disconnected from learning.

Student B. As a preschooler, student B was identified as a child at risk with respect to acquiring language skills. B’s mother reported (B1 transcription, 2009) that B did not talk until he was four years old. According to the occupational therapy report, he also had some fine motor difficulties (School file, Occupational Therapy Report 2002). He reached his other developmental milestones within the normal age range. He attended the local Child Development Center Preschool from 2000-2002. He received speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and social integration support.

On entering school, B continued receiving speech and language support up until Grade 3. B was referred to the resource room for school-based assessment in grade one and he continued attending the resource room every year for literacy support. Student B had his first educational assessment in grade two (2005), and an updated educational assessment in 2007. The results indicated B’s verbal and non-verbal cognitive abilities were within the average to above average range. Student B meets the Ministry of Education guidelines as a student with a learning disability. His oral language skills and visual memory abilities are strengths, but B has specific processing difficulties involving auditory and working memory, difficulty processing and retaining information, and poor visual motor integration skills. There is a statistically significant difference between B’s verbal cognitive ability and his achievement in the areas of reading, spelling, and written language (School file, 2009), particularly
in his reading comprehension where his scores were in the well below average range. Student B attended the resource room for additional support in acquiring literacy skills.

Despite attending the resource room for support, and working within the parameters of an IEP designed specifically to support his learning needs, B continues to struggle. Because of his significant learning difficulties, B’s IEP provides a dual approach with information presented in a multimodal way, opportunities for alternative assessment from written form, as well as intervention to support acquisition of reading skills. Despite intervention, B’s school achievement records from Kindergarten to grade six show B’s performance to be below the widely held expectations in reading, writing and math (School file, 2009). He presents very much as a child spiraling into the negative feedback loop.

Another concern revealed in B’s history is his sense of frustration with his difficulties. In reviewing his school records, it is apparent that he recognized early the difficulties he was experiencing and this affected his willingness to take risks, his self worth, and his confidence. As early as pre-school, he needed encouragement to participate in activities that he knew he would find difficult. His mother describes him as being a perfectionist and not being willing to perform tasks unless he knew he was going to get them right. Comments in a resource room report state, “He is more willing to take risks in his personal writing... As he is more aware of the writing process, he is more accepting that his work does not have to be perfect in the first draft.” His sense of frustration is revealed in comments in his report cards, interviews with his parents, and my own observations. His grade one Learning Assistance teacher wrote, “He is unable to recall any of the words we have been reviewing. This is something very frustrating for B as he is aware that he should be able to remember what a word is but he cannot retrieve it from his memory” (Resource Progress Report, 2004).

Selection rationale. Given the similarities in their learning profiles, and the challenges these two students have faced in their struggles in the acquisition of reading, I am awed at their resilience.
Comments in their student files show that they want to become readers and they are still, despite obstacles, willing to try: “Instead of saying, ‘I don’t know’ quite as often. Instead, he’ll say ‘I know this!’ … “He is making more attempts to ‘decode’ words and he is happy when he can read a book” (B, school file report card 04/05). Both participants want to succeed in reading, yet after years of intervention they are still struggling to read books well below grade level. Research shows that most students with LD make slow progress in word reading, vocabulary development, and have more difficulty with their knowledge and implementation of cognitive strategies during reading, than their same age peers (Katz & Carlisle, 2009). One of my goals in this project was to transform the self-concepts these students have as non-readers into new identities so they can see themselves as readers that are more capable. Greenleaf and Hinchman (2009) identify the key role that self-concept and identity play in learning. They state, “Identity work is critical if they [struggling readers] are to embrace literacy, engage as readers, and improve academic performance” (p.6). By providing a safe environment within the resource room, I have created a place for the students to discuss their experiences, to take risks in trying new strategies, and to develop an understanding of themselves as readers.

Choosing these two grade seven students as participants for this case study had advantages and disadvantages. My previous experience in working with these students was an advantage, as it provided prior knowledge of their needs, strengths and interests. The insights and experiences I developed working with them enabled me to design instruction targeted to meet their needs.

At the same time, developing this program had inherent challenges. As these two students rapidly approach puberty, they are awkward, and reluctant to discuss their difficulties and feelings. This reluctance presented challenges in gaining insights into their status as readers, but over the last year, I have developed a trusting relationship with these students that encourages them to have open
honest discussions about their reading challenges. According to Clarke, “Honest discussion with students about where they are as readers leads to more independent reading” (2006, p. 67). I intend to build on this relationship to encourage the students to take more risks in reading familiar and unfamiliar text.

Another challenge is the diverse learning needs of these students. Both participants have numerous difficulties, which are outlined in their student profiles. Although they have received years of reading support, the interventions have proven ineffective in adequately improving their reading skills. Research shows that these types of at-risk students are the most resistant to remediation (Vaughn et al, 2009). Because of their memory and language processing difficulties, development of their sight word recognition skills are slow, and it is difficult for them to recall details of the text. Phonological challenges, weak decoding skills, poor fluency, and limited vocabulary development also affect their comprehension of text. The program of intervention that I designed provides differentiated instruction to meet the multiple needs of these two students.

Program Description

Given the rationale that one of the most effective steps to improving reading is through repeated frequent reading (Clarke, 2006; Conderman & Strobel, 2008; Musti-Rao, Hawkins, & Barkley, 2009; Straudt, 2009), the program was designed to provide as many opportunities to read as possible within the constraints of a busy grade seven schedule. The school administrator was supportive in agreeing to the time required to facilitate the program.

Although the classroom teacher also was supportive of this program, concerns arose regarding missed instructional time, particularly as frequency of reading experiences was a key component of the program. This concern was addressed through consultation with the classroom teacher regarding the least disruptive and most beneficial times for the reading instruction. Agreement was reached that four
30-minute blocks first period after the morning bell, and four 30-minute periods immediately after the lunch bell would be designated for the two students to attend a pull-out reading program in the resource room. These times reduced the loss of class instructional time, as the first period was mostly utilized for housekeeping items, and the period after lunch was designated to silent reading. A study conducted by Harn, Linan-Thompson and Roberts (2008) indicates that small group instruction, with more time spent on reading intervention, positively impacts on students’ reading comprehension. In addition, these researchers found that students who received more intense intervention (i.e., more time) showed significantly greater growth in fluency. Fluency is one component of reading instruction that supports comprehension of text.

Because the two student participants also have significant difficulty with written output, my program was orally based. Although reading and writing are integrally connected, because of the severity of these students’ learning needs, I focused on reading remediation. I believed that enriching these students’ reading experiences will positively affect their writing skills. Through reading, students are exposed to rich language with models from diverse authors. They increase their knowledge of vocabulary and examples of descriptive language that allows them to visualize, and explore possibilities for their own writing. As they expand their knowledge and use of strategies for reading and comprehension, many of the skills they acquire transfer to spelling and writing. Also, through their IEP’s these students have goals and objectives that include strategies, and support within the classroom to improve their writing skills, so I narrowed the focus of my program to reading intervention.

The key components in my approach include instruction to improve student motivation and self-image, and to increase the students’ use of reading strategies to improve their phonological and phonics knowledge, reading fluency, and comprehension. Through the use of games, frequent reading
and direct instruction of metacognition, summarizing, text structure and monitoring strategies, I provided a safe, supportive environment for the students to practice their skills. A more detailed description and analysis of each strategy are outlined in chapter three where I discuss implementation of my approach and the findings.

Although the breadth of my approach is extensive, it focuses on the individual needs of the students. The holistic nature of my intervention approach precludes narrowing the focus. My program is student-focused and interactive. My approach allows me the flexibility to take advantage of those teachable moments that are important in fostering motivation and in facilitating learning. I adjusted the progress and direction for the program based on the needs of the students and through evaluation of the data as we proceeded through the lessons. Therefore, for the purpose of limiting the scope of the work to that expected for a MEd. Project, I limited my case study to two participants, and chose to report only selected examples pertaining to each goal, rather than conducting an exhaustive analysis.

Data Collection

Although the participants attended the resource room in grade six for reading remediation and worked with me, research observations and documentation of the intervention approach did not commence until I obtained the required formal written consent (Appendices B, G, F, C, D, & E). I held meetings with the parents and students to discuss the program outline, and the data collection process. The four parents gave written consent in September 2009 for student A and B to participate in the project, to use data from the student records, to use data collected through audio tapings, to use data from field notes, and data from personal interviews as sources of information for the case study. Also, Student A and B both gave their written consent in September 2009 to participate in the project.

I began the data collection in October 2009, and concluded in January 2010. I obtained the student history and baseline information from official school documents, and the Wide Range
Assessment Test (WRAT-4) scores from assessment that I administered during the project. I have also included data from WRAT-4 assessment that I administered the year prior to the project as part of my duties as the Learning Assistance Teacher. The WRAT-4 provided a quantitative measure to complement the qualitative data. The WRAT-4 is a normative assessment, with subsections on word identification using a word list, reading comprehension based on word predicting cloze activities, spelling and math computation. Comparative data from WRAT-4 scores prior to the intervention and after the intervention provided information to assist in evaluating student progress, as well as the efficacy of the intervention approach.

I collected data during the group reading sessions using a journal, and via audio recording. I transcribed the audio recordings myself, as this gave the opportunity to reflect upon the program, student responses, emerging themes, and ways to adjust the program to meet the students’ needs. I analyzed the data using qualitative methods drawing from constant comparative and thematic analysis approaches. In the constant comparative approach, formal analysis begins early in the project and is almost complete by the end of data collection (Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

I conducted single session interviews with student A, student B, Student A’s parent, and both student B’s parents. Background information from the student files provided information to give me insight into the students’ perspectives of their reading experiences.

I recorded fourteen entries in my reflective journal from October 2009 to February 2010. I documented my observations and reflections after each reading session. Through this process, I recorded what I did and what the students did, made interpretive comments, and raised questions arising from my observations of the student responses and behavior during the reading sessions.

In addition, I audiotaped eight of the reading sessions from October 14, 2009 to November 26, 2009. Following the audiotaped sessions, I transcribed the tapes. The transcription process was
valuable as it allowed me to reflect, question, record my preliminary thoughts, and analyze the reading behavior of the students during the sessions. It enabled me to identify areas of weakness and strength in the students’ profiles, and allowed me to introduce strategies to support their weaknesses, and to reinforce strategies they already knew. As I reflected on the reading sessions, several key themes emerged. These themes include the challenges that both students experienced with phonics, motivation, self-efficacy, and the students’ need for continued direct instruction in reading strategies.

In particular, self-efficacy and motivation presented as areas of concern for both students. These two themes were strands that also emerged during my analysis of the student files, and from comments recorded during the parent and student interviews.

The findings in my report are based on what the participants said and did, and they are consistent with the data collected from the field notes, questionnaires, and transcribed audiotapes. I have included quotes from the participants, from their parents, from student documents and from my journal to provide insights into the students’ experiences during the project, and their responses to the instructional approach used in the program. Qualitative research produces an interpretation of reality that is useful in understanding human experiences (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). The data I collected, my observations, questions and analysis support the emerging themes, and will be discussed in chapter four.

Ethical Issues

Selection of adolescent students as participants in the case study presents ethical issues. These issues as well as other ethical concerns regarding collection and storage of data are outlined below. Protecting the identity of the students was a priority. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. Throughout the case study the students are referred to as “student A” or “student B.” Student A’s parent is referred to as “A1,” and student B’s parents are referred to as “B1” and “B2.”
The letter T, for teacher, delineates any contributions I made. Both students signed written consent to participate in the case study.

Participation in the project was voluntary, and the participants had the right to withdraw at any time and have their information withdrawn from the project. I communicated to the parents that should they decide to withdraw consent for their child to participate in the project, their child would continue to receive reading remediation and participate fully in the group, but I would not include their child’s data in the project. Throughout the project, any questions arising from the project were directed to the project supervisor, Dr. Judith Lapadat, or to me.

Other ethical issues in this project include storing and disposing of data, privacy, the benefits and disadvantages to the participants, and means of sharing the project. During the project, all uniquely identifying documentation and recordings were stored in a locked cabinet in the resource room at the elementary school, under my supervision. These documents and recordings will be retained for five years after the completion of this project, and then I will shred them.

The advantage of the project is that participants were recipients of an intensive reading intervention program designed to improve their use of reading strategies, reading fluency and comprehension, and to improve their self-perception as readers. In this program, I provided opportunities for the students to read at their level, and to improve their knowledge and practice of reading strategies in a comfortable non-threatening environment. I provided supportive, repetitive readings and exposure to high interest low readability text that is difficult to access in the general classroom setting. In this homogeneous grouping, the students were freed from hiding their reading difficulties, which allowed them to take risks and to build a network of support for each other that promoted confidence and pleasure in reading. In the small group setting, I provided differentiated instruction geared to meet the individual needs of the students. The strategies I used in the program
were geared towards building confidence and reading success that in turn promotes a positive sense of self.

The disadvantage of my program is that although the times were scheduled to be the least disruptive, the students missed some classroom instruction, and the students were sometimes sensitive to being pulled out from their peers. Also, although struggling readers need repetition, and pre- and re-teaching of strategies, it was important for me to find innovative ways of making the text engaging to avoid loss of motivation. As the group became more familiar with each other, it became more challenging to maintain educational boundaries and focus. Finally, although anonymity is protected with the use of pseudonyms, the elementary school is a small community and other teaching staff may guess the identity of the students in the project. Now that the intervention portion of the project is complete, meetings to provide a summary of the project report and to discuss the results with parents or guardians of the participants, will be arranged prior to submitting the final report or presenting the report to others.
Chapter Three: Reading Intervention Program

In this chapter, I will discuss my reading intervention approach. I will describe the motivational factors, and areas of need that emerged as I worked with the students. I will describe the reading strategies I used to improve phonics knowledge, reading fluency and comprehension. I will document, examine, and evaluate selected examples of the student responses to the strategies I used in my intervention approach.

Motivation

As I worked with the two participants, and began documenting their responses, it became evident that motivation played an important role in their acquisition of reading. Research shows that motivation plays an important role in the acquisition of reading comprehension. In their research, Taboda, Tonks, Wigfield and Guthie (2009), explored how motivational and cognitive reading strategies, such as activating background knowledge and questioning, affect reading comprehension. They concluded that both cognitive and motivational factors contribute to growth in reading comprehension. With respect to the influence of motivation on the acquisition of reading comprehension, they identified a correlation between five components of internal motivation for reading with reading comprehension. These were: perceived control, interest, self-efficacy, involvement, and social collaboration. Perceived control refers to how much control students feel they have over their reading activities. Interest refers to a stable orientation towards one area. According to Taboda et al, “Interest has been found to correlate... highly with deep-level learning" (2009, p. 89). Although the role of interest in reading comprehension is accepted as important, this variable is confounded with knowledge and so its actual role is unclear. Involvement refers to the amount of time spent on reading activities. Self-efficacy refers to students’ beliefs about their ability. For example, do they believe that they are capable of doing well in reading? Social collaboration occurs when reading
includes proactive social interaction between students while engaged in literacy tasks (Taboda et al, 2009). What happens when daily experiences in the classroom undermine these aspects of motivation toward reading?

When components of reading motivation are undermined, struggling readers feel inadequate. They are often all too aware of the differences in instruction and materials. This awareness often ignites feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. Feelings of embarrassment and helplessness can leave them unmotivated and disassociated from school. I see evidence of this trend in the behavior and history of both student participants, as documented in comments from their report cards, from observations recorded during the reading sessions, and from both their comments and their parents' comments in recorded interviews.

In an interview about his earlier reading experiences, student B’s recollections capture his sense of frustration:

I remember in grade four, at like popcorn reading, everybody like read a little bit and they told some other person to do it. When someone picked me I was kinda, I felt really I couldn’t do and so I got kinda mad about it... In the beginning in grade five like when we were... the DARE program asked me, the same, basically the same thing happened... oh another thing about the reading, I remember getting teased about it and because I did less work than everybody else, and that.. yep (Interview Transcript Student B, January 12, 2010).

During this conversation student B was rather emotional. He turned very red and kept clearing his throat, and looked as if he could burst into tears. Recollecting these experiences was obviously very difficult for him. These experiences are examples of the challenges he has encountered that influence his motivation as a reader. There is a need for continued vigilance in protecting struggling readers from classroom reading routines that publicly reveal their reading difficulties.
In the following and subsequent excerpts from interview and audio transcripts, the code-names T for teacher, and B1 and B2 for student B’s parents and A1 for student A’s parent are used to maintain confidentiality and gender neutrality. During the interview with B’s parents, the commonly used adjectives to describe B’s reading experiences were “struggle,” and “frustrating.” They used the word “frustrating” eleven times and “struggle” eight times during the conversation. The following are excerpts of some of the ways in which they described B’s reading experiences:

T. How would you describe your child’s reading experiences?

B1. Definitely a struggle, frustrating for him.

B1. He would want to say something and he would stutter, and he would get really frustrated.

B2. He would struggle, and he would get so frustrated that he would just stop and he wouldn’t say anything.

B1. I remember in Kindergarten he was in tears. I was there one day helping with the class, and they were learning how to write their names. He had so much trouble because at that point he couldn’t even recognize even what a B was. And, like I say, we had worked on that and that was such a struggle for him to recognize the alphabet and to write his name. He was getting so frustrated. He was in tears; he couldn’t even write his name. He was so upset, and that was sort of where it started.

B2. He just didn’t seem to be able to grasp it, and he would try, but then quickly get frustrated that he wasn’t able to pick it up, and then that was something to try and overcome; because of his frustration he would just stop.

B2. He is somewhat insecure, but so yes all this [reading struggles] hasn’t helped…he is quite a shy child.

B1. [He] puts up those barriers when he gets upset… he starts to get frustrated and just gets
upset and doesn’t want to do it.

B1. He is really worried about kids teasing him...he still says, “Mom, you don’t know these kids, they might tease me,” and so he is so afraid of that, of being teased from other kids (Interview Transcript Parents B1, B2, February 22, 2010).

According to both of B’s parents, B’s difficulties presented significant motivational challenges, but although B becomes frustrated and finds reading and school work challenging, he wants to do well. They report:

B2. If the teacher or the class is working on something, it’s homework that needs to be done, he will go that extra mile to try and get it done. He feels obligated to get it done, and even though he’s frustrated he’ll push to get it done.

B1. If the teacher asks to do it, he’ll do it. He may not be that cooperative [at home] or willing, but he will do it because he knows it’s for school (Interview Transcript Parents B1, B2, February 22, 2010).

It seems that B has many concerns regarding his academic struggles. He appears conflicted. Although he wants to do well his struggles make him resistant particularly in reading; based on what he and his parents report in the interviews, they are dealing with a high level of anxiety and pressure which can lead to poor motivation to read.

Similarly, evidence shows that student A’s reading challenges also affect his motivation and comprehension. Teachers have documented A’s declining motivation and how this affected his behavior. His third grade teacher noted in his third term report: “But recently A has been less interested in making any efforts to work independently. He has complained of being tired and is saying he ‘can’t read anyway.’ This bothers me as he has always been quite willing to try” (Student File Report Card). In addition A’s parent, in the parental interview, confirmed a deterioration in A’s
motivation to read. The following describes some of the responses to the question: “How would you describe your child’s reading experiences?”

A1. It became prevalent right off the bat, in Kindergarten. It began with sort of, I believe speech was a big part of it...Kindergarten is about play a lot, but it was still becoming obvious that there was a gap.

A1. By grade one--when I look back at that little stage when he was six, I don’t know if he identified it [reading problems] as much as me, amongst his peers. It wasn’t until about grade three that the gap became big, and it was more obvious to the other kids in the class...At that point he knew he needed extra help with it [reading], but I think he already knew... you know the learning to speak was a difficulty, you know these things.

A1. There wasn’t behavior issues, which is important to remember. He was always quite compliant... he basically was a charming kid in class.

A1. A piece of it is... it’s not that he doesn’t want to, there’s a willingness for him to learn. He wants to learn and to be like the other kids and have the same amount of ability to read and write with his peers, is important to him.

A1. I would say by grade four, he was starting to show self esteem [concerns], you know kinda. My biggest focus when he was younger was keeping that totally intact, was just his self worth and self esteem..., but by grade four he was making his own decision on how that felt, right. It was starting to be not a pleasant feeling some days, and then grade five as well, and six. Those three years were the hardest he’s had in school...as far as self esteem and sort of hopefulness in his own mind... Like his own hope for himself (Parent A, interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

Parent A’s comments reflect her concern for A’s self-worth and self-esteem. Research has shown that
these play a role in motivating students to read.

Given the challenges that both students face with self-efficacy and motivation, the first step in my approach was to develop a program that focused on building motivation and trust. I focused on creating a learning environment where both students felt able to take risks and begin to enjoy reading.

A trusting relationship is an important aspect of learning (Clarke, 2006). As the students recognized that they were in a safe, accepting environment, gradually they became more comfortable in taking risks in reading, and in expressing their views. I developed lessons around the students’ interests. Consultation played a key component in the program. The students were given choices over the selection of games, articles and books, and whether to read an article or to read a chapter book. Locus of control is an important part of motivation. When the students wanted to move beyond reading familiar short articles, they expressed their desire to read novels. The students and I went to the book room to view the book selections and the students brought books from home. The students controlled the selections. I provided support to facilitate reading and comprehension when the students chose text that was more challenging.

During reading activities, I used scaffolding in the form of multilevel articles, brainstorming, predicting and accessing prior knowledge, and made the lessons current and relevant. During the swine flu epidemic, the students read an article about flu. When I introduced an article on bartering and currency, I encourage the students to access prior knowledge through discussion of what they knew about money around the world. Student A brought many different coins to share, and I produced a variety of different currencies from my travels. I promoted social collaboration and interaction through activities, like the above, to stimulate curiosity and engagement with the text.

Initially I focused reading activities on establishing a high level of student success in order to build positive self-efficacy. I included multilevel articles varying from grade three to grade six in the
reading selections. I considered including lower level reading material, but decided that the content was not age appropriate, and that with my support the students would be successful in reading articles beginning at a grade three level.

The students took turns re-reading familiar articles to build fluency and confidence. In evaluating the motivational impact of the reading program, I look to my field journal where I have recorded my observations of the students’ interaction and behavior during the reading sessions. Both students arrived promptly for each session; they were often at the door in the morning and at lunch prior to the bell ringing. They often went in and got the book or game out prior to my arrival. The following are some excerpts from my journal that relate to my observations of student motivation and engagement.

In this initial entry, I noted some loss of skills over the summer, but saw some improvement after three sessions: “The summer holiday has somewhat eroded their comfort in reading out loud, but even after three sessions, I see an improvement.” (Research Journal, October 13, 2009). I have observed that during school holidays, students with LD have a greater tendency to lose skills than the general school population. I was not surprised by the students’ reluctance to read aloud, even in the familiar resource room setting. In the next entry, two weeks later, I observed behaviors that indicate an increased level of motivation and student engagement while reading:

We have missed a couple of weeks because of IEP meetings. Both B and A seems eager to get back to reading. They took turns reading review articles, and tracked along while the other was reading. A, still has a nervous habit of clearing his throat, but remained focused and self monitored and often backed up and corrected himself. B is also a little nervous, but settles into a rhythm, he also is self-monitoring and backs up and self corrects (Research Journal, October 27, 2009).
I also recorded that both students were tracking while the other student read, and they were observed using self-monitoring strategies to aid them in comprehending the text.

The following entry also shows the level of student engagement during reading activities. They were using the retelling and word predicting strategies to identify the key ideas in the paragraph. During this session student A demonstrated more confidence in raising concerns: “Both B and A were able to identify key elements in the paragraphs and predict word meaning... Student A raised an interesting idea, that having someone read and scribe is like cheating” (Research Journal, November 12, 2009).

I am not sure what triggered this idea, but the fact that student A raised this issue shows his growing level of trust. He seems more motivated to advocate for assistance and to raise sensitive topics of concern. In my experience, students with LD have difficulty in reconciling the concept that they are bright and that accommodations in their programs are the means through which they can legitimately show what they know. As students with LD become older, I see an increasing need for opportunities to discuss their disabilities and their needs. It is important to have discussions to allay underlying anxieties like those that student A raised regarding cheating, as these misperceptions may have a negative impact on motivation. Why would students be motivated to seek or accept support if they have an underlying fear that it is perceived as cheating, by themselves or their peers?

The journal entries from November 17 and 18 show behaviors that indicate an increasing level of motivation and confidence from both students: “Reflecting back on yesterday, I recognize that B is growing in confidence as a reader. A requested reading [assistance] for a multiple choice test he brought from class, B offered to read it for him” (Research Journal, November 17, 2009). The fact that student B made this offer is an indicator of B’s growing perception of himself as a reader. This is a huge step forward from wanting to avoid reading in front of peers to offering reading assistance to a
Both students are consistently punctual, and arrive ready to begin work. They are making connections to prior readings to support comprehension of new text. I have documented this behavior in my research journal:

A and B arrived promptly. They seem interested in how the trade routes are connected. They re-read the *Treasures of the Orient One*. They stopped and wanted to discuss connections to the previous article. They were keen to read article two, and they insisted that they wished to read the new article without me pre-reading it (Research Journal, November 18, 2009).

These behaviors indicate a huge leap in their sense of self-efficacy as readers, as they were more willing to tackle new reading material independently, make connections to their prior knowledge, and arrive promptly for each reading session.

As the reading sessions progressed I noted growing confidence in both students:

B is confident to take risks; he is self monitoring, predicting and using syntax. A is showing more willingness to take risks and asks B to wait before prompting (Research Journal, November 18, 2009 p.m.).

Reflecting on my journal was valuable in assessing the students’ daily progress and in providing guidance for adjusting my instructional approach. As the students grew in confidence and motivation, I broadened the scope of the lessons to include a variety of strategies that are described in the following sections. These included phonics instruction, repeated reading, fluency building, and comprehension strategies using metacognition, summarizing, text structure and monitoring skills.

*Phonics Instruction*

Although both students had attended the resource room for learning assistance and also received speech and language support, they still were having difficulty acquiring phonological
concepts and applying phonics strategies to decode text. Considering the histories of the students, I wanted to avoid using paper and pencil drills, because I wanted the activities to be more hands on and engaging. My approach was to use card games to explicitly teach phonics and then to encourage the students to apply their knowledge while reading.

In the beginning, I followed a structured framework in each lesson. We began with a phonics card game. I developed a variety of games based on phonics concepts-- long and short vowel sound, r-controlled vowels, rhyme, word families, consonant blends, digraphs, and diphthongs. As we proceeded through the lessons, I introduced new phonic concepts based on root word, suffixes, and prefixes. The premise of the games was simple; I created a set of cards printing words on cards based on one of the concepts. For example: initially the card sets focused on words to practice short vowel sounds—mad, sad, lad or bed, fed, red. Then the games progressed to include long vowel patterns such as words with the silent e ending. This provided the students with practice in how the silent e could change the vowel sound to from short to long mad/made, fat/fate, mit/mite. When I introduced a new concept, I explained the concept to the students prior to playing. Each student took turns selecting a card and reading the word on the card aloud, after pronouncing the word correctly the student kept the card. If the students were stuck, I modeled, and encouraged the students to use segmenting and blending strategies, using onset blends, vowel sounds, prefixes and suffixes to figure out the word. A number of free cards were included in the pack. When the student chose a free card, they selected another card from the deck. The student with the greatest number of cards at the end of the game was the winner. As the number of card games expanded, the students were encouraged to select the games and, during the game opportunities, to make connection to the concept taught in the game.

A small excerpt from one of the lessons reviewing pronunciation of words using the short O sound shows this strategy. In this card set, all the words include the letter O using the short O sound.
Student A and I take turns in flipping a card and reading the word:

Teacher M: Gob
Student A: Free, rock
Teacher M: Ox
Student A: Um op, oo, pod
Teacher M: Mm, sod
Student A: rod
Teacher M: So have you decided what the rule is?
Student A: O, ol, or no
Teacher M: O, is it short or long?
A: Short
Teacher: Gone, you’re right it is the short O sound (Lesson transcript, October 14, 2009).

These games are an engaging way to teach phonics. In each card set, the students were exposed to a variety of words that focused on a particular concept. Playing the card games provided the repetition that the students needed to become familiar with vowel patterns, common suffixes and prefixes, and how these patterns affect pronunciation and meaning. Both students were responsive and enjoyed the games. If I decided to skip the game, they would request to play, and to select the game themselves. More importantly in the reading sessions, I observed that the students were beginning to use their knowledge to decode words in text.

These card games may seem simplistic, but I was able to use these games to gather information regarding the students’ progress. I observed that Student A in particular had trouble visually discriminating between the graphemes for final consonants d/b/g, as in jod/ job/jog. The repeated reading strategy was also included in the program. During repeated reading, encountering words in
meaningful context within sentences was helpful for him. It provided contextual cues so he could discriminate between words like "jog/job" which otherwise (in isolation) would look the same to him. Also, onset blends like dr were difficult for him. He had to focus and tried ro, p and then dr before he identified the word drop. I also observed that student A was beginning to use self-monitoring strategies. He recognized when some words did not sound correct and tried to figure out the correct symbol/sound correspondence using both phonics knowledge and context clues.

Following the game I introduced an article or story, or the students took turns re-reading familiar articles. During reading practice, I encouraged students to make connections to the concepts practiced in the card games. The card games were tools to pre-teach strategies in blending and segmenting words, focusing on syllables, prefixes, suffixes or smaller words within words and the power of vowels in decoding. I observed that both Student A and B used these strategies in figuring out unfamiliar words while reading the novel, *The Giver*. Student B was able to decode the words: 'consciousness,' "separate," "bedcovering," and "extended." Student A decoded the words "absolutely" and "sensation," without any prompting. This was progress as typically student A would be hesitant in trying unfamiliar words and would say, "What is it?" rather than trying to use a strategy to figure the word out.

*Repeated Readings and Fluency Building*

Building fluency is an important goal for older struggling readers; consequently, I have included frequent reading opportunities in this program. Research shows that elementary and middle school struggling readers benefit from repeated reading (Conderman & Strobel, 2008) and that systematic fluency instruction supported with vocabulary and comprehension development improves reading, particularly reading comprehension (Musti-Rao, Hawkins & Barkley, 2009). Conderman & Strobel state, "To date, 30 years of research have supported the use of the repeated reading strategy to
increase oral reading fluency” (2008, p. 15).

Fluency is the ability to read accurately, quickly, and with expression. Fluency develops through many opportunities to successfully practice reading. Students who read word by word and with poor expression and inappropriate phrasing have difficulty in comprehending the text (Kulixh, 2009). Difficulties in reading fluency are an indicator of comprehension issues therefore direct instruction in strategies to support comprehension in conjunction with greater reading experience using repeated reading strategies supports reading comprehension.

Repeated reading strategies come in a variety of forms – timed repeated reading where the words per minute are recorded as a means to track progress, choral reading, neurological impress, and paired reading, (Therrien & Hughes, 2008). In my program, I chose to incorporate a variety of strategies to provide meaningful repeated reading opportunities.

Based on my prior knowledge of these students and discussions with them regarding interest and reading preferences, I created a reading portfolio using a variety of leveled reading material. I included both short narrative and expository reading material as this provided opportunities to explore at least two reading structures. The consultation process is important, as interest plays a crucial role in reading motivation (Ivey & Fisher, 2006). According to Miller and Meece, learning activities that enable students to collaborate with peers and to make decisions and choices also increase students’ task-mastery orientation (2001, p. 287).

In addition to the reading portfolio, the students also read two novels. The students and I went to the book room together and I suggested they choose an easier novel as their first selection and a more challenging novel as their second selection. Student A chose Stone Fox, a book at about an early grade three level, and student B selected The Giver, a book at a grade seven/eight level. An element of my approach is inclusion of a variety of grade leveled texts to provide thought provoking reading
experiences, while providing instructional tools for the students to make their way through the more challenging texts. For example, during reading I encouraged brainstorming to access prior knowledge, questioning, predicting, oral analysis of challenging vocabulary and summarizing of key ideas and events as the students read. While the students were reading the novels, I encouraged them to continue reading the familiar text in the reading portfolio to improve their basic reading fluency (Ivey & Fisher, 2006). With appropriate scaffolding, students are able to read texts even at their frustration level (Kulich, 2009).

Initially I was concerned that *The Giver* was too challenging a text for the students, but the level of engagement once we began the novel allayed those concerns. Both students were able to grasp the underlying issues in the utopian society. The students said that they preferred reading the novels over reading the articles, particularly the one with the more difficult text. When student A was asked about his feelings regarding the reading he stated, “If we read a novel kind of, that would be fun because they are more interesting than just tiny little stories” (Student A interview). It is important to make difficult text more accessible as it is a means to stimulate thinking about significant issues. It is also important to balance readability with conceptual challenges in selecting reading material (Ivey & Fisher, 2006), because it provides the students with exposure to more sophisticated vocabulary, sentence structure, and concepts than they would encounter in lower level material. Otherwise, they fall further behind their peers in content and language development. This is why, as an important comportment of my balanced program, I took turns reading to the students. My reading aloud provided access to the content. As I read to the students, I also role-modeled the use of punctuation in phrasing, the use of expression, correct pronunciation, and reading pace.

The intent of repeated readings using the portfolios was for the students to experience early reading success and to build fluency, so reading activities were structured in steps--using role
modeling, choral reading, and individual reading. Firstly, I read the article aloud, then we read it aloud together, and then the students took turns reading portions of the article aloud with teacher support as needed using the neurological impress technique. In this strategy, the aim is for the teacher to read slightly ahead of the student, then fade into the background, and allow the student to lead. I repeated the second step until the students felt confident to read on their own. I documented this approach during a reading session in October. Student B was absent, so student A chose to review an article that he had read on several previous occasions – *Games and Toys of Pioneer Children*. Although student A had read this article several times he found it challenging. He read slowly and haltingly. Although he showed evidence of self-monitoring and self-correcting strategies (underlined in text below), he required frequent cueing.

A: Since the, since there were no manufactured toys available to pioneer children they had to be very creative when it came to making their own toys, A small, small ball was made out of a stuffed (pause).

Teacher M: Stuffed

A: Stuffed pig’s bladder which was sturdy enough to be kicked around the – no around the field without being, oh breaking open. The name pigskin, which refers to this type of ball is a term still in use today. Uh

Teacher M: Hoop

A: Hoop rolling was also a popular game, an and

Teacher A: Iron

A: Iron or wooden hoop and a stick were all you needed. The child, yeah child?

Teacher M: Challenge (Lesson transcript, October 14, 2009).
Given the level of difficulty student A experienced when he finished reading the first paragraph, I chose to read the next paragraph role modeling phrasing and expression. Modeling is an effective strategy in improving the accuracy rate for students with learning disabilities. Modeling also helps students read with better expression (Staudt, 2009). Students need to hear correct pronunciation, syllabication, tones, and rhythm in order to internalize these concepts (Kulich, 2009).

Following taking turns reading this article we read it together, using the neurological impress strategy. Student A needed a reminder about this process:

Teacher M: Your job is trying to read ahead of me
A: Oh

Teacher M: Try to read on, around the corners, let your eyes flow along the line (Lesson transcript, October 14, 2009).

After reading the article together, student A re-read the article a third time independently. Although student A still stumbled over some portions of the text, he improved his reading fluency and reading speed during re-reading. The reading time for paragraph one was 3:27 minutes the first time, and it was 2:21 minutes the third time he read through it. For paragraph three, the first reading time was 1:45, and the third reading time was 1:08 minutes. Also in the third reading, student A used more self-monitoring skills, self-corrected more frequently, and required less teacher prompting. Student A took time to settle into reading. Initially he seemed tense. He has developed a nervous habit of clearing his throat. The longer he read the more comfortable he became. His father also has made the same comment regarding his reading experiences with him at home. We concluded this lesson with student A reading another familiar short text – *What Makes up Our Universe*. Reviewing the transcript of this reading, student A made fewer self-corrections, needed only three prompts, and read with greater fluency.
Comprehension Strategies

Although fluency is important in developing reading skills, comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading (Kulich, 2009). Research shows there are certain key components in developing comprehension. My program design incorporates a variety of strategies to enhance comprehension. I focus on explicit instruction through direct instruction using the strategies summarizing, predicting, reviewing new vocabulary, and connecting prior knowledge. I used implicit instruction through role modeling, questioning, discussions, and practice. According to Katz and Carlyle, “Students are more likely to be successful independent readers if they realize that they are equipped with effective strategies for figuring out the likely meanings of unfamiliar words” (2009, p. 326). However, research demonstrates that students with reading disabilities are often unaware of the strategies good readers use. Consequently, these students have difficulty in using these strategies to comprehend text (Manset-Williamson & Nelson, 2005).

In the discussion portion of the transcript of the lesson on November 16, 2009, I have written:

Although, as we have been reading each day and I encourage the students to think about and use the strategies I have role modeled and discussed, they both find it difficult to articulate what strategies work for them. I try to stop them when I see them using a particular strategy to give them immediate feedback.

In the lesson transcript I included several examples of my feedback. Two of those examples are included below:

Teacher M: There are some good things happening here. I saw you monitoring, self-monitoring and self-correcting good job, and you were tracking along that was great, keep that up

(Lesson Transcript, October 27, 2009).

Teacher M: I like the way that you were tracking and monitoring. How you were actually
backing up. There was just one word that you missed, you said developing viruses instead of vaccines, so, under there. Other than that, the words that you were having difficulty with you backed up and used the context of the sentence to figure out the words, and that is a very good strategy (Lesson Transcription, November 16, 2009).

Metacognition. One aim of my approach is to promote the acquisition of metacognition skills (Joseph, 2010). Metacognition is an awareness of one’s own thinking, understanding, or learning (Smith, 2004). Metacognitive skills can be promoted through guided experience using strategies designed to support analysis, language development, monitoring, and interest in reading. The repertoire of strategies I have included in my approach include cognitive strategies—questioning, clarifying, summarizing and predicting (Lubliner, 2004), think aloud using brainstorming to access background knowledge, direct instruction of vocabulary and text structure, and monitoring skills (Salinger, 2003; Radar, 2010).

When introducing a new article to the students, I used brainstorming activities to encourage the students to think about strategies they might use to understand the text, and to use predicting to access prior knowledge. This activity was important in building interest and allowing the students to make connections to the text that enhanced their word prediction and comprehension during reading (Brunner, 2009). The following transcript of a portion of a lesson on November 16, 2009 provides an example of this strategy:

Teacher M: So, this is a new article. What kind of strategies can we use now?

B: Look at the pictures

Teacher M: Yes, look at the pictures, yes, anything else?

B: Title

A: Well to me it looks like, well the picture makes it look like there are English men or
something, or French men and they see camels, they see horses and they see camels they know there are other people or something there.

B. They’re in the desert

Teacher M: He’s making connections good, the desert, and what’s the title, because looking at the title will also give us a clue?

B. Treasures of the Orient

Teacher M: What kind of thing do you think of when they are talking about treasures of the Orient?

B: They are trying to find treasures like Egypt

Teacher M: Could be like--

A: Like a Kingdom (Lesson transcript, November 16, 2009).

In this lesson, I used the think aloud/questioning technique to encourage the students to access background knowledge and make connections to an article as we read. Metacognitive awareness can be taught through talking about reading and thinking processes (Joseph, 2010), so I encouraged the students to recall and discuss the strategies they used while reading the articles. In the context of this project, metacognition awareness is student self-awareness of the thinking processes and strategies that they are using during reading activities. Both students still struggle in retrieving the strategies they know and in applying them to new text. This is typical with LD students. You can teach the cognitive strategies, but they have great difficulty knowing when to apply them and retrieving them.

Summarizing. In the lesson on November 16, after the brainstorming activity, I read the new article to the students using the read/stop/summarize technique, while taking time to preview new vocabulary with the students as I read. Teachers, as role models, can be a prime means to enhance students’ vocabulary, by using challenging vocabulary, checking on students’ understanding, and
defining words as needed. Research shows that children expand their vocabulary as they engage in routine conversations, as they listen to adults read, and as they read on their own (Salinger, 2003). Direct teaching of vocabulary has proven to be beneficial to adolescent struggling readers (Swanson, 2008). It prepares them for the text content, it enriches their background knowledge, and it bridges the gap in vocabulary development that we see between fluent and struggling readers (Salinger, 2003).

Summarizing and paraphrasing during reading is an effective comprehension strategy. Summarizing is putting the content into one’s own words. Summarizing encourages students to monitor their understanding, to make connections to what they know about the topic, and to use language already available to them to demonstrate their understanding.

The following is an excerpt of the transcript from a lesson on November 24, 2009 showing the use of oral retelling to summarize story events:

Teacher M: Oh, you’ve read this story already, so maybe if you’ve read it you could give me a quick synopsis, a summary of what you think the story is about, if you recall the details of the story plot?

A: Well it’s a little girl who, I guess, I dunno, sewing or something, she took her mother’s wedding ring or something and placed it around, the what is it? And you know how crows like shiny things. She took it and one day she walked into the room, well the ring went missing because the crow took it and she walked into the room, and there was a shiny little ribbon on the counter, I think. And the crow snatched and she said to her mother, I have a good idea where the your ring is.

Teacher M: Okay, could you tell me the rest B. Thank you A; that was a good beginning. What happened then?

B: Well, just thinking. She goes, she goes downstairs. No her mom like goes upstairs and
comes back and says, “Do you know where my ring is?” And she says, “Wasn’t it on the counter,” whatever, and I think she just is, just about to go to a soccer game or something and she saw something shining in the crow’s nest and she thought maybe it was in there, so she got a ladder and went up. There it was.

The above transcript shows improvement in the students’ retelling skills. Although they read this article a week previously their retelling included a number of correct details from the plot. However, other details were invented. Summarizing and retelling is challenging for these students, as they have difficulty in remembering and organizing their ideas. As shown in this lesson, they are beginning to organize their retelling according to the sequence of events occurring at the beginning, middle and end, but comments like “I dunno,” “I guess,” “Or something,” and “Whatever” show their lack of confidence in their responses. Like many students with disabilities, these students need pre- and re-teaching of strategies through explicit and implicit instruction before they begin to internalize and use the strategies on their own.

Structure of text. Because of the oral nature of the program, brainstorming also provides a forum to explore text structure. Studies indicate that students with learning disabilities are unaware of the different characteristics of expository and narrative text that are important in comprehending what they read (Salinger, 2003). Explicit teaching of text structure is an important goal in my approach. I narrowed the focus of instruction to differentiating between the elements of narrative to plot, character, setting, and theme. The elements of expository text that I focused on teaching were topic sentence, supporting ideas, and conclusion. The following is an excerpt of a transcript of a lesson:

Teacher M: Today we are going to be starting our conversation talking about the differences between fiction and nonfiction.

B: Like nonfiction is like, well like the topic sentence and the clincher at the end and other
things in the middle about information.

A: Giving you more information.

Teacher M: What do we look for in the structure of fiction- stories and novels?

A: Well, um well just characters,

Teacher M: Yes.

A: Um, well if it’s a novel, look at the back, um it has picture on the cover, look at that I guess, but-

Teacher M: How is it different?

A: It’s made up instead of like true and stuff.

Teacher M: And what do we like to look at when we are looking at elements of stories, you said characters, what else do we look at?

A: Villains or something like that, they always have kinda like maybe rescue person, like a person who needs to rescue something, somebody and a villain is a good guy, people that try to stop him, two other bad guys (Lesson transcript, November 24, 2009).

This excerpt shows the need for further more explicit instruction in comparing text structure. Although the students are beginning to recognize there are differences in the elements of narrative and expository text, what those differences are remain somewhat elusive.

_Monitoring._ Finally, I taught a variety of strategies from the *Alberta Diagnostic Reading Program* (1994) to improve comprehension and word prediction processes. These include attending, synthesizing, inferring, predicting, analyzing, and monitoring. Attending is the process of paying attention to obtain meaning from print. Synthesizing is the process of restructuring information given by the author and presenting it in your own words. Inferring is the process of filling in information the author left out. Predicting is using context clues to read unfamiliar words, or thinking ahead and
predicting what will happen next. Analyzing is the process of breaking down information presented by
the author into parts. Monitoring is the process of recognizing miscues and self-correcting during
reading (ADRP, Evaluation Strategies 1, 1994). Below is an excerpt from a lesson where I focused on
reinforcing the use of monitoring and predicting strategies:

Teacher M: I see you doing that a lot actually, reading on that’s using the syntax, the flow of
the sentence, you stop, you go back and you think, oh that word did not make sense, and then
you think what word could go in there. Sometimes you predicted words that don’t change the
meaning, but were not exactly the word, and so you are using your predicting skills. That is a
really important strategy that we use when we are reading (Lesson transcript, November 17,
2009).

As the above strategies were incorporated into the lessons, discussions and role modeling were
used to raise awareness of how these strategies could be used by the students to improve their reading.
Gradually the students improved their self-monitoring skills and began using these strategies in
reading, as shown in the transcript excerpts incorporated throughout this chapter. The intervention
strategies I utilized in my program created a holistic approach that encouraged student motivation,
created opportunities for the students to practice reading, and provided them with access to the tools
to develop the skills they need to become readers. In the next chapter, I review and analyze the results
of my approach.
Chapter Four: Analysis: Is the Loop Broken?

The questions at the forefront of this project are: Has this intervention approach improved student motivation, reading fluency and comprehension? Has it provided the two students with the tools they need to break the negative feedback loop, or influenced their perception of themselves as readers? Further examination of parent and student interview transcripts, field notes, and pre- and post achievement scores of the WRAT-4 assessments provide further insights to evaluate this question. I discuss my analysis of the findings in three sections: first student A’s results; then student B’s results; and finally the overall findings, and implications for future reference.

Evidence of Student A’s Progress

This section provides a synthesis of the emerging themes revealed in my examination of student A’s parent and student comments in the interview transcripts, observations noted in my journal, transcripts of the reading sessions, information gathered from student school files, and the results of standardized testing. Looked at chronologically, these records provide evidence of changes in the students’ reading skills and self-perceptions during the period of time that they participated in the reading group intervention.

Parent A interview. On September 20, 2009 I met with both of student A’s parents to discuss the project and to gain consent. Parent A also gave written consent to participate in an interview. I provided them with a signed copy of the questionnaire (Appendix D) so they would have time to reflect on the questions prior to the interview. The questions were open ended and provided a lead into the interview.

I conducted an interview with parent A towards the end of the project, on January 6, 2010. We met for two hours in the school resource room. This location was selected because it was a convenient, familiar setting for parent A. For a number of years, parent A participated in school meetings and
arranged meetings with me in the resource room.

We mutually agreed on this location for the interview. During the interview parent A, in response to my questions, shared examples of student A’s reading and learning experiences. I recorded her responses using a tape recorder and I later transcribed the interview. I began with an initial question: How would you describe your child’s reading experiences? In response, she provided detailed description of her observations. She described A’s learning challenges prior to Kindergarten, and during the early grades. Her responses show her knowledge of and concern about how his learning difficulties affected his self-concept.

Parent A described the time when she first began to recognize A’s learning struggles:

I knew [about his difficulties] when he was four before he started school I tried to work super hard on him knowing his colors, and I taught my other son his colors really easily, so I could see there was this challenge in him remembering what they were. So, we went from there into the milestones that they are supposed to get to in Kindergarten, with knowing their colors and their alphabet and the basic beginning building blocks of beginning to read. Kindergarten is about play a lot, but it was still becoming obvious that there was a gap...He really has always struggled...it wasn’t until about grade three that ...the gap became big, and it was more obvious to the other kids in the class... At that point, he knew he needed extra help (Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

Parent A identified A’s attention and speech difficulties as two factors that affected his reading progress:

It became obvious that there was an attention deficit, and I think that the attention deficit is [affecting] his ability to pull the information that he does know out of his mind... his speech, his pronunciation was so poor...and I took him to speech therapy prior to going to school... He
made progress every time he had speech therapy... It’s just one of those things that is another piece of his learning blocks, [It] is hard when you don’t pronounce and you don’t say words properly, to write them to read them, you know (Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

Parent A attributed the lack of speech and language resources as a factor contributing to A’s difficulties. She observed improvement in his language skills when he received speech and language support. She stated:

The school highly recommended and saw the need that he have speech therapy, but there wasn’t the resources for him…” “Because he couldn’t pronounce things properly, I can’t see how he could spell them properly, because you are not saying them, you know, certain sounds still are a little bit off (Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

A number of researchers have shown that there is a correlation between speech and language delay and difficulty in the acquisition of reading and writing skills. According to Cirrin and Gillam (2008), children who have difficulties with learning and using language are at significant risk for social and academic problems through the school-age years and into young adulthood.

I asked whether A’s reading difficulties have affected him in other areas. In response to this question, parent A identified self esteem as an area of concern. She stated:

I think that it [his reading difficulties] affected him. I would say by grade four, he was starting to show self esteem [concerns], you know kinda. My biggest focus when he was younger was keeping that totally intact, was just his self-worth and self-esteem... but by grade four he was making his own decision on how that felt, right. It was starting to be not a pleasant feeling some days, and then grade five as well, and six. Those three years were the hardest he’s had in school...as far as self esteem and sort of hopefulness in his own mind... Like his own hope for himself (Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).
Later in the interview, comments parent A made regarding A’s participation in the reading program suggests that there was a positive change in A’s ability to read, and in his confidence in reading. She attributed this change to the fact that A was more willing to read in an environment away from his more able classroom peers, and to the individual help A received in the reading group:

I think that it [reading in the group] has had a tremendously positive effect on his ability to read, his confidence in reading, because he is allowed to be outside of his peers [in the general classroom setting]. The students who aren’t struggling, to have to struggle all the time in front of them would make him, I think, withdraw...He already feels the segregation, a bit, of being different, and I think that coming here [to the reading group] gave him a safe place to express his difficulties, and his progress. It gave him a place to get one-on-one, ‘cause let’s face it, the classes are really big and there is not enough help in them for these kids... I mean he had to go and get extra help or he would be just sitting in his seat doing nothing but doodling...In the grades 4, 5, and 6, I noticed a lot of doodling started taking place (Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

Parent A noted that over the last year student A developed an increase in motivation toward reading at home, particularly in the more functional realm like reading the calendar and recipes. Student A also developed a desire to own his own books. During the interview, in response to my question as to whether she saw any changes in his behavior at home regarding reading, parent A stated:

We have, he did take a real interest in books at the end of last year and over the summer. He has specific books he wanted. He wanted to own them. Which I thought was great...I was really pleased that he took an interest in wanting to have his own little library...So he did for the first time show an interest last year and over the summer and this year of having his own
books...(Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

Also, parent A observed that student A was more willing to read around the house:

At home, I would say he has progressed to have some functional reading ability. Where there are certain things that, you know, he can check expiry dates...use the calendar...I am trying to work on practical things right now with him at home. Money is a big one, because money is not always in paper coins, sometimes you have to read, and add things up and say this is five dollars...I try to get him to help me when we are looking for things in the kitchen, for spices and stuff whatever, and he is a little more involved (Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

In her concluding statements, parent A reinforced her belief in the importance of individual reading support, and time to read. Without this type of support, parent A fears that the alternative student A faces is sitting in class pretending he knows how to read. She stated:

I would say that these opportunities [in the reading program] where he got focused on and given that time to read, you know, I think that is the only thing that is really going to push him into being a reader is sitting and reading. You know this has been all about that. In a classroom, if you don’t know how to read ...then I see you are going to sit and pretend you are reading (Interview transcript, January 6, 2010).

During this interview, parent A introduced several key themes. These are: the impact of ongoing speech difficulties for learning, the need for continued speech support, the role that attention deficits play in acquiring skills, the importance of providing individual reading opportunities in a safe environment, the important role self efficacy and motivation play in learning, and the positive impact of this intervention approach.

Interview of Student A. Student A also participated in an interview on January 13, 2010. The interview took place in the resource room, as this was a familiar environment for student A. At the
beginning of the project I discussed the interview process and provided student A’s parents with a copy of the questions (Appendix E) so they could read them over with student A prior to the interview.

On the date of the interview, prior to beginning the taped interview, I reviewed the process and questions with student A, and obtained written consent for his participation. During the interview, student A had difficulty answering the questions. He reported that he could not remember anything from grade three or four. When questions were presented in closed form (e.g. yes/no questions, or questions that could be answered with a single word), he indicated with one-word answers that he enjoyed attending the reading group and it was fun, but was unable to articulate what exactly was fun. I asked: what are your experiences in reading in the last few years? In response to this question, he stated, “I dunno how to kind of explain that much of it because just reading kind of.” I probed further with the question: What have you found easy, what have you found difficult about reading?” Student A replied: “Kinda, I dunno.” The inability to provide elaborated answers clearly shows that student A continues to have difficulty reflecting on his own behavior and thinking. His responses indicate the need for continued direct instruction to increase his metacognition skills.

Field notes. My observational log in which I recorded details of student A’s reading behavior provides further information. In October, near the beginning of the intervention, I observed that student A frequently cleared his throat while reading and although we had played the phonics card games many times, he continued to have difficulty with recall of sight words, onset blends and word endings. According to my field notes during the card game activities I wrote, “Student A still uses the chunking strategy to decode words, into onset consonant or blend, and the final sounds. He is getting better at predicting the words, but looks for affirmation of his choice... A is more anxious and needs confidence; he periodically clears his throat as he is reading” (Field notes, October 13, 2009). Also, observation recorded in my log during reading activities included statements like the following:
“Student A still has a nervous habit of clearing his throat, but remained focused and self monitored, and often backed up and corrected himself” (Field notes October 27, 2009). Two weeks later I wrote, “Student A needs reminders to use the strategies he knows. He sometimes begins decoding and then waits; he needs more confidence” (Field notes, November 16, 2009).

According to my records during the reading sessions, student A gradually seemed to relax, “[He] suggested as a warm up we review an earlier article. He chose Ghosts, and read with more fluency, less hesitation, [and he] says he feels nervous knowing of the tapings” (November 17, 2009). Student A’s increased anxiety level due to being audio taped is a point to consider when evaluating student A’s progress. The observation effect and its influence on data is documented in research. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) describe this effect as “how the researcher changes the environment he or she is studying” (p. 273). This effect can influence participant behavior, so A’s nervous behavior could be, at least in part, attributed to the fact that he knew he was being taped. My notes show, as student A became used to taping the sessions, he did become more relaxed and confident in his reading. He cleared his throat less frequently and needed less prompting during reading. I wrote:

Student A made significant progress; he was consistently tracking, monitoring and self-correcting as he read. He offered constructive ideas when called on to review vocabulary… student A is showing more willingness to also take risks and asks student B to wait before prompting him (Field notes, November 18, 2009).

During the particular session in November described above, student A presented as being more motivated and confident in his reading behaviors. However, there are some external factors influencing his progress that need to be discussed. One of those factors is attention. During one of the reading sessions, I noted in my journal field notes: “Student A was very off task, fiddling with papers. He blurted out that he was having trouble with concentration because he had run out of the medication
he had been taking for a couple of weeks” (December 1, 2009). A has a confirmed diagnosis of ADHD, but was not receiving medication for it, as a trial of medication when he was younger had been ended due to side effects. He recommenced taking medication midway through November. However, over the remaining intervention period, I observed that he was inconsistent in taking the medication. This is likely another factor affecting his ability to attend, and his reading performance.

As well, student A seemed to attend better when we changed our reading focus to a novel study. We started to read the novel *Stone Fox* that student A chose from the book room at the beginning of December. Perhaps, student A showed a higher level of motivation to read because he had selected this book himself. In my journal I noted: “This is new material with no pre-reading. Although it was still challenging for A, he was the one who asked every day to read the novel” (December 9, 2009). Student A also was able to articulate a strategy he was using to figure out words in the text: “I use meaning from text then try and figure out [the word]. I knew that Grandfather was putting the money in the bank. This helped me figure out [the word] ‘deposited’” (Field notes, December 2, 2009). Because the implementation of medication to treat student A’s ADHD coincided with the transition in the reading program to working with material that he found to be interesting and motivating, it is hard to separate whether the noted improvements related to the medication, the reading material, or both.

In the final documented reading sessions, Student A continued to make progress, particularly with fluency and in recognizing strategies he was using to support his comprehension. I have documented this progress in the field notes:

Today A chose to read *Nunavut, Canada’s Newest Territory*. He only needed assistance with two words, ‘Inuktitut’ and ‘sealskin.’ He chose *What Makes up Our Universe* as a second article, he self corrected, and read more fluently and required no prompts…(In reading) The
Incredible Butterfly, student A commented that he used the reading on strategy to figure out the word ‘anywhere.’ In reading Plants Nature’s Medicine, he required no prompting” (Field Notes, December 9, 2009).

These behaviors are indicators that A is developing comprehension strategies, metacognition, and tools to help him with reading. However, this progress is fragile, because in the next reading session he seemed to take a step backwards in his progress.

For example, according to my field notes in December, during an engaging discussion about the novel we were reading, The Giver, the topic branched off into how important reading was in life and in obtaining jobs. In the middle of the conversation, student A blurted out that he would never get a job; he would need his Grandma to fill out his application. He claimed that: “He would never read; he is dumb” (Field notes, December 17, 2009). It is apparent that A’s progress is tenuous and it will take continued intervention to undo years of failure.

I raised the question in my notes that perhaps his negative self-efficacy arose from comparing his progress with the progress of student B, who obviously had made significant progress during the reading sessions. Comparison with other more capable peers is one self-defeating behavior that struggling readers and students with LD often adopt, and that reinforces their negative self-efficacy and self worth.

WRAT- 4 assessment data, and time line. In addition to the qualitative record showing student A’s change over time as he participated in the reading program, I also conducted standardized reading assessment using the WRAT-4 to track his progress. The WRAT-4 is an assessment tool that I use in the resource room to monitor student achievement. There are two testing protocols, blue and green so that the test can be used for pre- and post assessment. The blue protocol is useful in gathering base line data of a students’ achievement in word reading, sentence comprehension, spelling, and math
computation that can be compared to post assessment using the green protocol. This provides me with another standardized source of data, to compare a students’ progress and to adjust interventions strategies appropriately. I used the WRAT-4 assessment to track the achievement progress of both student A and B.

I chose the WRAT-4 assessment because it is the most recent edition in a series of publications dating back to 1946. The WRAT-4 is a norm-referenced assessment that continues to be used extensively to measure basic academic skills. Normative scores allow comparison of students’ performance in relation to the performance of counterparts in the norm group. The WRAT-4 was standardized on a representative national sample of over 3,000 individuals ranging in age from 5-94 years. The normative sample was stratified according to national sampling procedure, with proportionate allocation controlled for age, gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and socioeconomic status. The age-and grade-referenced standardized scores were developed with mean score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006). Figure one, on the next page, shows the normal distribution graph (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006).

In my analysis of the WRAT-4 data, I utilized the standard scores (SS). The advantages in using standard scores are twofold--the units of the standard score are equal in terms of their standard deviation units and therefore, they are useful for summarizing and reporting test performance and for interpreting the students’ performance in relation to the standardized sample (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006). In interpreting the students’ data I describe their standard scores in terms of their distance from the mean (SS 100), and provide a qualitative description of range in which the student SS correspond to. A time line of the administration of the WRAT-4 assessments is included in the next paragraph, it shows the correlation between reading intervention and changes is achievement. It also clarifies how WRAT-4 assessment prior to the onset of the project provides useful data.
Figure 1
Graph of the Normal Distribution and Description of Standard Score Ranges
(WRAT-4 Professional Manual, 2006)

Qualitative Performance Descriptions Corresponding to Standard Score Ranges

| Qualitative description | Standard Score range | Percentage of individuals in the theoretical normal curve | Approximate percentage of the WRAT-4 normative sample
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<tr>
<td>Upper Extreme</td>
<td>130 and above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>120-129</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>110-119</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>100-109</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Extreme</td>
<td>69 and below</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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*Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.
Figure 2

Student A Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-4) Scores

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>&gt;-2</td>
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</table>

1 = Standard Score
2 = Standard Deviation
3 = Grade Equivalent

Using the standard scores in the above table a comparison graph was created

![Graph showing Student A WRAT-4 Standard Scores]
Student A, WRAT-4 data analysis. I administered the WRAT-4 twice during the project, once prior to intervention and once post intervention. The participants already had WRAT-4 assessment data for 2008-2009 on file. I collected this data as part of routine assessment that I complete in my position as the school Learning Assistant Teacher. The WRAT-4 scores from 2008-2009 provide additional data to evaluate the student’s progress, as in 2008-2009 I also worked with the participants in the resource room using the intervention approach that I used in this project. The WRAT-4 Standard Score data (1), Standard Deviation data (2), and Grade Equivalent data (3) from student A assessments are recorded above in comparison table and graph. (Figure 2)

In October of 2008 student A’s WRAT scores (figure 2) show his standard score (SS) for word reading was 69 and his sentence comprehension SS was 63. Both these scores are in the lower extreme range, and they are greater than two standard deviations below the mean. Student A became part of a group attending the resource room where I provided reading remediation using the instructional approach that I have described in this project. The end of the year assessment that I conducted in June 2009 shows that his WRAT-4 scores had improved, and his word reading SS was 75 and sentence comprehension SS was 74. Even though his WRAT-4 scores showed he had made progress, both his scores were in the low range and more than one standard deviation below the mean. He continued to struggle in acquiring reading skills. Therefore, he presented as an ideal candidate as a participant for this reading intervention case study.

In September of 2009, prior to the onset of reading intervention, base line data was collected through the administration of the WRAT-4. This assessment shows his WRAT-4 scores had slipped over the summer this is not an uncommon occurrence particularly with struggling readers and students with LD. His word reading SS was now 73, and his sentence comprehension SS was 66. During the months of October 2009 to February 2010, as a participant in this case study, student A was a recipient
of intensive reading interventions as outlined in the project. In February 2010, the WRAT-4 scores show that he made progress. His word reading SS was 79, and sentence comprehensions SS was 86.

From the onset of reading intervention in October 2008 to February 2010, student A received fourteen months of reading intervention. He received support from October to June in 2008-2009, and then during the project from October 2009 to February 2010. At the end of this fourteen months of reading intervention, student A’s SS in the word reading subtest increased by ten points from SS 69 to SS 79. He reduced his standard deviation score from greater than two standard deviations below the mean to greater than one standard deviation below the mean. His standard word reading SS improved from the low extreme range to the low range. His score was only one point below the below average range.

In the sentence comprehension subtest, he increased his standard score by 23 points from SS 63 to SS 86. He reduced his standard deviation score from greater than two standard deviations to less than one standard deviation below the mean. These results of the WRAT-4 assessments show that despite A’s continued struggle with fluency and decoding, student A is increasing his word reading, and he is assimilating and beginning to use strategies he has learned to assist him in reading comprehension.

Evidence of Student B’s Progress

Similarly to student A, student B also showed evidence of progress. According to student B’s parents’ comments in their interview and B’s own comments in his interview, and based on behavior documented in the transcripts and my field notes, student B has made constant steady progress during the reading program. In my field notes I observed that initially student B began reading hesitantly, especially with the break from reading over the summer (Field notes, October 13, and 27, 2009), but he quickly regained his confidence in reading (Field notes, November 16, 2009).
This section provides a synthesis of the emerging themes revealed in my examination of parent and student interview transcripts, observations noted in my journal, transcripts of the reading sessions, and information gathered from student school files. Then I present the WRAT-4 assessment scores, which supplement these qualitative results with a quantitative measure of student B’s progress.

B’s Parental interview. On September 10, 2009, I met with B’s parent, B1, to discuss the project and to gain consent. I provided B1 with a copy of the parent and student questionnaires (Appendix D, and Appendix E) so both parents and student B would have time to reflect on the questions prior to the interviews. The questions were open ended and provided a lead into the interview.

I conducted an interview, which both student B’s parents attended, towards the end of the project, on January 22, 2010. B’s parents and I met for two hours in the school resource room. I selected this location because it was a convenient, familiar setting for B’s parents. For a number of years, they had both participated in school meetings and arranged meetings with me in the resource room. We mutually agreed on this location for the interview. During the interview, both parents, identified as B1 and B2, responded to my questions, and shared examples of B’s reading and learning experiences.

The background history of B’s early reading experiences, and learning needs are documented in chapter one, and in chapter three under the section on motivation. In these chapters I have included examples taken directly from the interview with B’s parents. The commonly used adjective used by both B’s parents in describing B’s early reading were “struggle” and “frustration” and they described their difficulty in motivating him to read at home.

Both B’s parents, observed a change in his reading behaviors after my sessions with him. They described the changes they observed as occurring recently, over the last year. All of a sudden, they
noticed huge leaps and bounds in his reading behavior. His mother stated: “Something just clicked for him.” His father stated: “Finally he has built himself a bridge” (B parental interview, January 22, 2010). His mother described the reading group as:

I think it’s his place because he has always loved books, he has wanted to read, it’s something he has really, really wanted to do. I think this is just a comfort zone for him and it’s his place - where he gets frustrated with us at home” (B parental interview, January 22, 2010).

One change they noted at home was an increasing interest in books. He began reading in the living room or bedroom, and frequently he called for assistance in reading a word. Slowly the number of times he called for assistance became less and less until now he infrequently asks for assistance. He goes off to his room to read on his own. His mother describes her recent shock when she first had to tell student B to put down a book to come and eat, or go to bed. She stated:

I couldn’t imagine saying to my son, “Put that book down, go to bed,” The first couple of times I did I, I felt so guilty. I can’t believe I’m telling him to put the book down, stop reading, come for supper. He’s really happy about it as well, as he has confidence at home – now he will say to me, “Mom do you want me to read that to you,” and that was never before (Parent B interview, January 22, 2010).

*Interview of student B*. Similarly, student B reported in his interview that he only just began reading at the end of grade five, and beginning of grade six. The reading group was a place where he had the opportunity to read and to show that he could read. He stated in his interview:

Like I remember when I was really getting better at reading. I was really wanting to read because I felt proud of myself because I could read, and I wanted to read out loud, to see how improved I was (Student interview, January 12, 2010).

He claims that because we just read instead of doing other work, that helped his reading a lot. He
described his feeling when he first started reading. He stated:

I really liked it. I was proud of myself because I could read and I was kind of reading a lot, and it was kind of, it was really fun... and my mom was proud of me (Student B interview, January 12, 2010).

Student B’s growing efficacy as a reader was evident in his participation in the reading group. The field notes and audio taping transcript provide evidence of his increasing fluency, and use of the strategies as tools to help him in comprehending text. He brought books from home to share in the group and he showed confidence in choosing The Giver, which is a more difficult text in comparison to the reading portfolio and other novels we have read during our reading sessions. In addition, he is beginning to articulate the strategies he uses when encountering unfamiliar words. In his interview, I asked what strategies he used while reading. His response was: “A bit to decode words... Break down the words to see other like words in the words... I know more, but can’t get it (Student interview, January 12, 2010).

Field notes. Many of the comments in the field notes show that student B continues to develop confidence as a reader. I wrote: “B has really developed confidence as a reader. He self monitors, uses syntax to figure out unfamiliar words... and he self corrects as he reads” (Field notes, November 16, 2009). And, “Student B makes consistent gains. He is reading more fluently, is using punctuation more effectively in phrasing, and he helps student A, by prompting as needed” (Field notes, November 18, 2009). Student B enjoyed playing the phonic card games, but after playing the games a few times, he had little difficulty using sight recall to identify the words.

Student B is beginning to show transfer of knowledge he has learned from reading. We learned about the use of a marketing strategy in one article, and B used the term appropriately in discussing a subsequent article. B is beginning to develop his metacognition skills. For example, he is beginning to
recognize the strategies he uses as a reader. He stated: “I slow down, sound it out in my mind, and then I get it” (Field notes, December 2, 2009). In my field notes I have observed student B use a variety of strategies in his reading:

Student B… is self-monitoring and backs up and self corrects (Field notes, October 27, 2009). Student B is making consistent gains; he is reading more fluently, and he is using punctuation more effectively in phrasing...B made the connection that the term endangered is usually related to animals [not culture]...[He] relates fortune telling to magic (Field notes, November 18, 2009).

Lesson transcript side notes. The lesson transcript side notes provide further insight into student B’s progress. I wrote:

Student B’s attitude to reading and his fluency are improving. It is apparent that he is internalizing many of the strategies that we have practiced. He self monitors, self corrects, he uses predicting strategies. [He] breaks words into chunks using beginning, middle and end...He likes the time to decode words himself and does not now want words provided for him, but prefers to persevere until he has got it (lesson transcript side notes, October 27, 2009).

Later on in the transcript side notes I wrote:

Student B continues to show that he has internalized many of the reading strategies that we have been studying. He still occasionally repeats words in text. He seem to be mentally checking if they fit before he proceeds...he requests and enjoys the opportunity to read the whole article on his own (Lesson transcript side notes, November 18, 2009).

Student B, WRAT-4 data analysis. The time line for the administration of the WRAT-4 assessments for student B is similar to time line as Student A’s. The results provide quantitative data to supplement the qualitative data documented above. Figure 3 provides a table and graph showing The WRAT-4 Standard Score data (1), Standard Deviation data (2), and Grade Equivalent data (3).
### Student B Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT-4) Scores

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<td>-2</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>95</td>
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1 = Standard Score (100)  
2 = Standard Deviation 15 = one standard deviation  
3 = Grade Equivalent Score
Student B’s WRAT-4 assessment scores demonstrate growth particularly in word reading and sentence comprehension subtests. In September of 2008 student B’s WRAT scores (figure 2), show his standard score (SS) for word reading score was 75 and his sentence comprehension SS was 69. His word reading score was in the low range and was more than one standard deviation below the mean. His score for sentence comprehension was in the lower extreme range, and was two standard deviations below the mean. Student B became part of a group attending the resource room, where I provided intensive reading remediation using the instructional strategies that I have described in this project. The end of the year assessment that I conducted in June 2009 shows that his WRAT-4 scores had improved, and his word reading SS was 90 and his sentence comprehension SS was 97. Both these scores are less than one standard deviation below the mean in the average range. Even though student B’s WRAT-4 scores showed he had made progress, his self efficacy was tenuous and his skills were newly developed and just beginning to transfer into the classroom. He presented as an ideal candidate as a participant for this reading intervention case study.

In September of 2009, prior to the onset of reading intervention, base line data was collected through the administration of the WRAT-4. This assessment shows his WRAT-4 scores in word reading had slipped over the summer, but not significantly. His word reading SS was now at 87, less than one standard deviation from the mean and within the below average range. His sentence comprehension SS was 95, down only two points from his June score. This score is less than one standard deviation from the mean and is within the average range. During the months of October 2009 to February 2010, as a participant in this case study, student B was a recipient of intensive reading interventions as outlined in the project. In February 2010 Student B’s WRAT-4 scores show that he continued to make steady progress. His word reading score was GEL SS 90 and his sentence comprehensions SS was 98, only two points away from the mean.
From the onset of reading intervention in October 2008 to February 2010, student B received fourteen months or reading intervention support. He received support from October to June in 2008-2009, and then during the project from October 2009 to February 2010. At the end of this fourteen months of reading intervention, student B’s SS in the word reading subtest increased by 15 points which equates to an improvement of one standard deviation, and places his scores within the average range. His sentence comprehension SS increased by 29 points which is very close to two standard deviations, and places his scores within the average range; quite an amazing feat for a student who states that he only just began to read at the end of grade five/beginning of grade six.

Summary of the Findings

In summary, as I examined what the students said and did, what the parents said, and my own observations several key ideas evolved. They were the importance of early detection and consistent differentiated instruction. The parents in this case study identified in the pre-school years the learning challenges that their children faced, and sought appropriate support through the Child Development Center. The parents identified persistent frequent intervention as positively affecting their child’s progress. Parent A specifically raised concerns regarding the challenges of attaining ongoing speech and language services. Negative self-efficacy, self-concept, and motivation were raised as areas of concern, arising from the years of struggle the students faced in school. Both sets of parents and student A and B reported positive outcomes from participating in the reading project, and this is substantiated in the field notes and audio taping transcripts. Student behavior during the program indicated a high level of engagement and motivation, and a growing sense of self-efficacy. They arrived early, and during the reading activities each student tracked along, while the other student read. They provided support by prompting each other as needed. Both students contributed ideas regarding prior knowledge, and predicting, and they are developing skills in questioning as they read. They
requested to play the word games and debated over the choice of game. Their requests to go down to
the book room when selecting a new book, showed a high level of engagement, motivation, and
interest. They also monitored whose turn it was to read and if they were missed when it was their turn,
they brought it to the group’s attention. One student brought several books from home that he wanted
to consider as a reading option. These behaviors are also indicators of an increased level of motivation
and interest in the reading activities. Although the students still have difficulty articulating their
thoughts about reading, their increasing use of decoding the comprehension strategies when they
encounter unfamiliar words, and to figure out meaning in text, and the improvement in their WRAT-4
word reading and sentence comprehension scores are indicators of the progress they have made.

Discussion

Through the implementations of this project, I have met many of the project goals. Current
research on reading intervention to support older struggling readers has provided a firm pedagogical
base for my interventions approach, and allowed me to expand my existing knowledge and practice as
a teacher. Working frequently and closely with the two students in this case study provided the
opportunity to adapt and modify the program as needed. Transcribing the taped reading sessions
personally gave me opportunities to reflect and evaluate each lesson and student progress.

Taking a holistic approach allowed me to provide an environment that the students found
engaging, to provide the strategies that they needed to change their perceptions of themselves as
readers, and to improve their reading fluency and comprehension. The findings show an increased
level of student motivation, and improved self efficacy, an increased understanding and use of
strategies while reading, and an improvement in fluency and reading comprehension skills.

Student B has discovered the joy of reading. He has difficulty putting a book down to go to
bed, he wants to read aloud to show us what he can do, and he is proud of himself, and his
achievements. This is a different child to the grade five student who when called upon to read in the DARE program felt a sense of anger and frustration. For him the negative feedback loop is broken. For him to continue to build on this success is crucial he could so easily slip through the cracks during the transition to high school. Already parental meetings, and meetings with special services staff from the high school, and meetings with counselors have taken place to discuss his IEP and his specific learning needs.

Careful program planning to facilitate the appropriate levels of support was discussed in team meetings. Ideally, student B still needs a dual approach in his program. Although his reading and comprehension have improved, his written output continues to be an area of concern. He requires supports to ensure that he is able to access information in a variety of ways, and alternatives to written output to show what he knows. At the same time, he continues to need direct explicit instruction to continue to build his basic skill level. Student B has demonstrated that with appropriate intervention and support he is able to acquire new skills.

Individual visits to the high school were also arranged to assist student B in his transition. Despite this pre-planning, student B has expressed a high level of anxiety about his transition in September and he will need close monitoring and follow up by the learning Assistance Teacher.

I am not as confident that student A has broken the negative feedback loop. Student A had greater obstacles to overcome. His continued speech and language, and attention challenges were stumbling blocks that he has worked to overcome. The findings show that he wants to become a reader. During the project he has shown not only motivation, but determination and perseverance. I sense he feels that reading is just within his grasp. He is beginning to practice the strategies he has learned while he is reading, it is coming together and making more sense to him. During the rest of the school year continued frequent reading, and reinforcement of the strategies he has learned is the key to
ensuring he does not fall into the negative feedback loop, but experiences the success he has worked to achieve.

The challenges that student A face are many. Although he is just beginning to develop self-efficacy as a reader, he also has written output, and attention concerns. Over the past two years, technology has become an alternative way for him to access information and to show what he knows. Scribing and reading are supports provided through the recommendations in his IEP.

This year he has recommenced speech and language support and his Special Services Assistant is following up by reinforcing the strategies recommended by the speech pathologist. Ideally, he should continue with this support in high school, as he is missing some fundamental language skills.

He also is a student who needs a dual approach in his program, wherein he can continue to improve his basic skill level, but at the same time have accommodations that allow him to continue to access information, at his interest level, in a variety of ways, and to participate fully in classroom activities with his peers. Students A will continue to require a multidisciplinary team based approach to his program planning to facilitate his successful transition to high school.

Observing the growth that these two students have made in confidence and reading, during this case study, has validated the continued need to provide reading instruction for older struggling readers. It also, validates the need for a holistic approach that provides the tools to meet the individual needs of older struggling readers. Although the project has demonstrated favorable outcomes for the two participants, there are limitations of this case study that are discussed in the next section.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this case study is that it did not occur in a vacuum. While these students were participating in this project, other outside factors continued to influence their learning. They were working within the parameters of IEP’s that provided alternative and additional support...
from the classroom teacher, the speech and language specialist, and special service assistants. These outside influences are contributing factors, which may have contributed to improvements in the two participants' reading, but consideration should be given to the fact that these supports were in place prior to the specific reading interventions used in my approach, and the students had not made the expected gains in reading.

Another limiting factor is the size of the group. The two participants presented their unique perspectives during this case study and their responses and behaviors cannot be generalized to another population. Further studies of this approach need to be compared before any definitive statement could be made about the success of this approach in reading remediation.

Implications

Research has been documented in this project that shows the dilemma older struggling readers encounter in the negative feedback loop. The downward spiral begins with lack of confidence and motivations, and growing frustration. The two students, and their parents, in this case study describe their feelings and their struggles to become readers. They describe their frustration and anger and the relief, joy and pride when finally they can read. I want to share the journey of these two students and I intend to present this case study within the school and district to advocate for continued resources to facilitate reading intervention at the upper elementary level that will prevent the negative feedback loop developing.

The holistic approach in my program has many advantages. It is based on sound pedagogical foundations it is dynamic and specifically designed not only to meet the needs of older struggling readers, but can be adapted at any age level to include the components each student needs. This facility is also what made this program ideally suited to these older students, although their skill levels were at a primary level, their social, emotional and academic needs were very different. The program design is
ideally suited to provide a dual approach in instruction. It provides direct instruction in the basic skill level, but provides the opportunities for students to develop these skills while exploring their own interests and intellectual needs. Struggling older readers have specific challenges, as delineated throughout this project, but one of the key challenges I focused on was overcoming years of failure and loss of motivation. My instructional approach is successful because the strategies and content are designed to motivate, promote self-efficacy and engage students in learning, while at the same time it provides direct instruction in targeted areas to meet the specific needs of students. The impetus behind this project stemmed from my frustration in seeing the growing number of students transferring to high school ill equipped for the challenges that they face. There is a greater need than ever before to provide programs, like mine, that prevent students falling into the downward spiral of the negative feedback loop and failure.

Recently, throughout British Columbia, there have been significant budget constraints in many school districts. This has led to program cuts in many areas, and special education is among the programs that have been affected by these cuts. I have undertaken this project, in part to provide evidence to School District 82 of the need to provide targeted programs, resources and funding for at risk students. We need to create and provide resources for programs like my intervention approach, to meet the needs not only of older struggling readers, but also to meet the needs of the growing number of students with multiple learning challenges.

What have I learned in conducting this project? During the development of my intervention program and in conducting this project, I have had the opportunity to explore current research to enhance my teaching practice. I have become more objective and reflective about my teaching. Primarily I have had the pleasure of closely observing student responses to my approach. This observation has provided me with valuable information to inform my future teaching practices. My
intervention approach is dynamic, and geared towards the changing needs of my students. The students' response throughout this project have reinforced the value of my approach, and the need for me to critically observe and analyze student behavior to better inform and guide my teaching practice in the future.


Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53(1) 1-13.


two students with learning disabilities. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(2), 142-151.


Appendix A- Description of Terms

Pedagogical Foundations: scientific principles

Phonics Awareness: refers to the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. (Reithaug, 2002, p. 101)

Syntactic Patterns: the components of grammar that arranges words into phrases and sentences

Semantic Systems: Systems used for analyzing the meaning of words

Grapheme-phoneme correspondence: grapheme (letter), phoneme (sound) correlation

Cognitive Processes: The thinking processes utilized while reading

Balanced Reading Program: Reading intervention based on phonics (word study) and phonemics, in conjunction with stimulating, meaningful reading instruction that considers the developmental stages and unique learning needs of individuals (Tyner & Green, 2005)
Appendix B - District Consent Form

Uplands Elementary School

School District 82

4110 N. Thomas St., Terrace, B.C. V8G 4L7 ph. (250) 635 2721 Fax (250) 635 4972

July 6, 2009

Dear Mr. Greenwood,

I am the Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT) at Uplands Elementary School. I am working on completing a master’s program in Multidisciplinary Leadership, with a focus in Special Education, through UNBC. I have a specific interest in reading remediation; consequently, I am developing a project based on reading intervention for struggling upper elementary readers (Reading Intervention-Breaking the Loop). I am seeking consent for two to four Grade 6 and Grade 7 students, who are attending Uplands Elementary School, to participate in my project. I am currently working with these students in my position as LAT. These students have a long history as struggling readers, and they have intermittently attended the resource room throughout their school years for reading remediation. The plight of these students and others like them is the inspiration for this project.

The purpose of the project is first, to develop a balanced, pedagogically based reading program to improve the reading fluency and comprehension of the students. Second, my goal is to boost their self-perception of themselves as readers and their general self worth. Third, the students’ perspective, feedback, and progress during the project will guide instruction. Fourth, in conducting this project, I will increase my knowledge of theory of reading and improve my skills in remediation of struggling readers. Finally, I will present the project and conclusions to school staff to validate the need for continued intervention and support for struggling readers in upper elementary.

In September 2009, the reading group will meet in the resource room twice a day for half hour pull out reading sessions in the morning and after lunch. The reading program is balanced, based on reading research and includes skills and meaning based instructional strategies using games and high interest narrative and expository text. Data will be collected during the reading group meetings using informal journal entries, field observation, audio recordings, WRAT – 4, Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2001), and parent and student questionnaires. I am requesting access to the students’
information from school files and prior assessment to gather background information.

As I will be instructing and actively participating with the students during the reading sessions, it will be difficult to take detailed notes. Audio recording is an unobtrusive alternative to note taking that will enable me to collect information regarding students’ participation, questions, responses and progress. The audio information will be transcribed by a medical stenographer, who has previous experience in transcribing data for thesis and projects, and who is bound by confidentiality codes. Both School District 82 and parental consent is required to collect the above data and for transcription of the audio tapes.

Pseudonyms will be uses to protect the anonymity of the participants. Uniquely identifying documentation, audio recordings, and notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the resource room of Uplands Elementary School, under the supervision of Mrs. Manji. The data will be analyzed using qualitative research methods-constant comparative and phenomenological perspectives. Uniquely identifying documentation and audio recording will be shredded by Mrs. Manji five years after the completion of the project. The final product will be used to provide information to parents, Uplands Staff, and District 82 staff regarding the efficacy of the program and to promote the use of the strategies in providing reading intervention for future upper elementary students.

The key component in this program is the frequency of reading opportunities. These students need intensive, frequent exposure to print. Because these students have writing difficulties the program will be primarily orally based. I plan to follow a structured framework in each lesson. We will begin with phonics card games. Focusing in on student’s interest in card games, I developed a variety of games based on phonics concepts - long and short vowel sound, r-controlled vowels, rhyme, word families, consonant blends, digraphs, and diphthongs. As we proceed, I will add games based on root word, suffixes, and prefixes, antonyms, and synonyms. Following games activities an article or story will be introduced. Students will be encouraged to use predicting strategies and access prior knowledge using brainstorming activities. This activity is important in building interest and allowing the students to make connections to the text that will enhance word prediction and comprehension during reading. Because of the oral nature of the program, brainstorming also provides a forum to explore concepts about elements of stories (plot, character, setting, and theme) and elements of expository text (topic sentence supporting ideas, clincher). During brainstorming activities strategies based on the Alberta Education Diagnostic Reading Program (1994) will be utilized to promote reading comprehension.
It is crucial that the students experience reading success. Reading activities are structured in three steps -- role modeling, choral reading, and individual reading. Firstly, I will read the article aloud, and then we will read it aloud together, and then the students will take turns reading portions of the article aloud to the group. The second step is repeated until the students feel confident to read on their own. Group dynamics are important and it is important to establish rules of respectful interaction during the games, brainstorming and reading activities. As the students recognize that they have a voice, they will become more comfortable in taking risks in reading and in expressing their views.

The advantage of the project is that participants will be the recipients of a reading intervention program designed to improve their use of reading strategies, reading fluency and comprehension, and to improve their self-perception as readers. This program provides opportunities for the students to read at their level, and to improve their knowledge and practice of reading strategies in a comfortable non-threatening environment. It provides supportive, repetitive readings and exposure to high interest low readability text that is difficult to access in the general classroom setting. In this homogeneous grouping, the students are freed from hiding their reading difficulties, which allows them to take risks and to build a network of support for each other that promote confidence and pleasure in reading. In the small group setting differentiated instruction can be more easily geared to meet the individual needs of the students. The strategies in the program are aimed towards building confidence and reading success that in turn promotes a positive sense of self. Also, the knowledge gained from observing and working with these students will be helpful for intervening with other students in the future.

The disadvantage of this program is that although the times are scheduled to be the least disruptive, the students will miss some classroom instruction, and the students may be sensitive to being pulled out from their peers. Also, although struggling readers need repetition, and pre and re-teaching of strategies, it is important to find innovative ways of making the text engaging to avoid boredom. As the group becomes more familiar with each other, it can become more challenging to maintain educational boundaries and focus. Finally, although anonymity is protected with the use of pseudonyms, Uplands School is a small community and other teaching staff may guess the identity of the students in the project.

The project proposal has been submitted to the UNBC Research Ethics Board for ethics approval. School District 82 and parental permission will be obtained prior to the onset of the project in September 2009. Students will be asked for assent to participate as well. Participation in the
projects is voluntary, and the participants have the right to withdraw at any time and have their information withdrawn from the project. If any parent does not give consent for their child to participate in the project, the child will continue to receive reading remediation and participate fully in the group, but their data will not be included in the project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 250 635-2721, or 250 635-9472, or my supervisor, Dr. Judith Lapadat at 250-615-3333. If any concerns remain unresolved during the project, contact the UNBC Office of Research reb@unbc.ca or 250 960-5650.

Meetings to provide a summary of the project report, and to discuss the results with parents or guardians of the participants, will be arranged prior to submitting the final project, or presenting the project. Thank you for supporting this project. Please sign and copy the form prior to returning it to me.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Manji (LAT Uplands Elementary School)

I __________________________, superintendent of School District 82 grant permission for Liz Manji to conduct a reading intervention research project, titled *Reading Intervention: Breaking the Loop*, using two to four student participants who are currently attending Uplands Elementary School. Following parental/guardian/student consent, permission is granted for Mrs. Manji to access participant information from school files and prior assessment. Also, I give permission for data collection to commence in September 2009, using field observations, reflective journal notes, audio taping and transcription, parental and student questionnaires, WRAT- 4 and the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2001) as sources of data for her project.

Signature: __________________________ Date: _______________
Appendix G - Consent Form
Uplands Elementary School
School District 82
4110 N. Thomas St., Terrace, B.C. V8G 4L7 ph. (250) 635 272 1 Fax (250) 635 4972

July 5, 2009
Dear Mr. Hollett,

As the Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT) at Uplands Elementary School, I am working on completing a master’s program in Multidisciplinary Leadership, with a focus in Special Education, through UNBC. I have a specific interest in reading remediation; consequently, I am developing a project based on reading intervention for struggling upper elementary readers (Reading Intervention-Breaking the Loop). I am seeking consent for two to four Grade 6 and Grade 7 students, who are attending Uplands Elementary School, to participate in my project. I am currently working with these students in my position as LAT. These students have a long history as struggling readers, and they have intermittently attended the resource room throughout their school years for reading remediation. The plight of these students and others like them is the inspiration for this project.

The purpose of the project is first, to develop a balanced, pedagogically based reading program to improve the reading fluency and comprehension of the students. Second, my goal is to boost their self-perception of themselves as readers and their general self worth. Third, the students’ perspective, feedback, and progress during the project will guide instruction. Fourth, in conducting this project, I will increase my knowledge of theory of reading and improve my skills in remediation of struggling readers. Finally, I will present the project and conclusions to school staff to validate the need for continued intervention and support for struggling readers in upper elementary.

In September 2009, the reading group will meet in the resource room twice a day for half hour pull out reading sessions in the morning and after lunch. The reading program is balanced, based on reading research and includes skills and meaning based instructional strategies using games and high interest narrative and expository text. Data will be collected during the reading group meetings using informal journal entries, field observation, audio recordings, WRAT – 4, Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2001), and parent and student questionnaires. I am requesting access to the students’
information from school files and prior assessment to gather background information.

As I will be instructing and actively participating with the students during the reading sessions, it will be difficult to take detailed notes. Audio recording is an unobtrusive alternative to note taking that will enable me to collect information regarding students' participation, questions, responses and progress. The audio information will be transcribed by a medical stenographer, who has previous experience in transcribing data for thesis and projects, and who is bound by confidentiality codes. Both School District 82 and parental consent is required to collect the above data and for transcription of the audio tapes.

Pseudonyms will be used to protect the anonymity of the participants. Uniquely identifying documentation, audio recordings, and notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the resource room of Uplands Elementary School, under the supervision of Mrs. Manji. The data will be analyzed using qualitative research methods-constant comparative and phenomenological perspectives. Uniquely identifying documentation and audio recording will be shredded by Mrs. Manji five years after the completion of the project. The final product will be used to provide information to parents, Uplands Staff, and District 82 staff regarding the efficacy of the program and to promote the use of the strategies in providing reading intervention for future upper elementary students.

The key component in this program is the frequency of reading opportunities. These students need intensive, frequent exposure to print. Because these students have writing difficulties the program will be primarily orally based. I plan to follow a structured framework in each lesson. We will begin with phonics card games. Focusing in on student's interest in card games, I developed a variety of games based on phonics concepts - long and short vowel sound, r-controlled vowels, rhyme, word families, consonant blends, digraphs, and diphthongs. As we proceed I will add games based on root word, suffixes, and prefixes, antonyms, and synonyms.

Following games activities an article or story will be introduced. Students will be encouraged to use predicting strategies and access prior knowledge using brainstorming activities. This activity is important in building interest and allowing the students to make connections to the text that will enhance word prediction and comprehension during reading. Because of the oral nature of the program, brainstorming also provides a forum to explore concepts about elements of stories (plot, character, setting, and theme) and elements of expository text (topic sentence supporting ideas, clincher). During brainstorming activities strategies based on the Alberta Education Diagnostic Reading Program (1994) will be utilized to promote reading comprehension.
It is crucial that the students experience reading success. Reading activities are structured in three steps - role modeling, choral reading, and individual reading. Firstly, I will read the article aloud, and then we will read it aloud together, and then the students will take turns reading portions of the article aloud to the group. The second step is repeated until the students feel confident to read on their own. Group dynamics are important and it is important to establish rules of respectful interaction during the games, brainstorming and reading activities. As the students recognize that they have a voice, they will become more comfortable in taking risks in reading and in expressing their views.

The advantage of the project is that participants will be the recipients of a reading intervention program designed to improve their use of reading strategies, reading fluency and comprehension, and to improve their self-perception as readers. This program provides opportunities for the students to read at their level, and to improve their knowledge and practice of reading strategies in a comfortable non-threatening environment. It provides supportive, repetitive readings and exposure to high interest low readability text that is difficult to access in the general classroom setting. In this homogeneous grouping the students are freed from hiding their reading difficulties, which allows them to take risks and to build a network of support for each other that promote confidence and pleasure in reading. In the small group setting differentiated instruction can be more easily geared to meet the individual needs of the students. The strategies in the program are aimed towards building confidence and reading success that in turn promotes a positive sense of self. Also, the knowledge gained from observing and working with these students will be helpful for intervening with other students in the future.

The disadvantage of this program is that although the times are scheduled to be the least disruptive, the students will miss some classroom instruction, and the students may be sensitive to being pulled out from their peers. Also, although struggling readers need repetition, and pre and re-teaching of strategies, it is important to find innovative ways of making the text engaging to avoid boredom. As the group becomes more familiar with each other it can become more challenging to maintaining educational boundaries and focus. Finally, although anonymity is protected with the use of pseudonyms, Uplands School is a small community and other teaching staff may guess the identity of the students in the project.

The project proposal has been submitted to the UNBC Research Ethics Board for ethics approval. School District 82 and parental permission will be obtained prior to the onset of the project in September, 2009. Students will be asked for assent to participate as well. Participation in the
projects is voluntary, and the participants have the right to withdraw at any time and have their
information withdrawn from the project. If any parent does not give consent for their child to
participate in the project, the child will continue to receive reading remediation and participate fully in
the group, but their data will not be included in the project. If you have any questions, please do not
hesitate to contact me at 250 635-2721, or 250 635-9472, or my supervisor, Dr. Judith Lapadat at 250-
615-3333. If any concerns remain unresolved during the project, contact the UNBC Office of Research
reh@unbc.ca or 250 960-5650.

Meetings to provide a summary of the project report, and to discuss the results with parents or
guardians of the participants, will be arranged prior to submitting the final project, or presenting the
project. Thank-you for supporting this project. Please sign and copy the form prior to returning it to
me.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Manji (LAT Uplands Elementary School)

________________________________________________________________________

I __________________________, Principle of Uplands Elementary School grant
permission for Liz Manji to conduct a reading intervention research project, titled Reading
Intervention: Breaking the Loop, using two to four student participants who are currently attending
Uplands Elementary School. Following parental/guardian/and student consent, permission is granted
for Mrs. Manji to access participant information from school files and prior assessment. Also, I give
permission for data collection to commence in September 2009, using field observations, reflective
journal notes, audio taping and transcription, parental and student questionnaires, WRAT- 4 and the
Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 2001) as sources of data for her project.

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________
MEMORANDUM

To: Elizabeth Manji
CC: Judith Lapadat

From: Henry Harder, Chair

Date: July 22, 2009

Re: E2009.0602.095
Reading Interventions: Breaking the Loop

Thank you for submitting the above-noted research proposal and requested amendments to the Research Ethics Board. Your proposal has been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the Research Ethics Board.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Henry Harder
July 6, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am the Learning Assistance Teacher at Uplands Elementary School. I am working on completing a master's program in Multidisciplinary Leadership, with a focus in Special Education, through the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). My goal is to help struggling readers improve their reading skills. The purpose of my project -- *Reading Intervention-Breaking the Loop* is to develop a balanced reading program to improve the reading fluency and comprehension of the students. Second, my goal is to boost their self-perception of themselves as readers and their general self-worth. Third, the students' perspective, feedback, and progress during the project will guide instruction. Fourth, in conducting this project, I will increase my knowledge of theory of reading and improve my skills in remediation of struggling readers. Finally, I will present the project and conclusions to school staff to validate the need for continued intervention and support for struggling readers in upper elementary.

I am seeking permission for your child ______________________ to participate in this project. In September 2009, the reading group will meet in the resource room twice a day for half hour pull out reading sessions in the morning and after lunch. The reading program is balanced, based on reading research and includes instructional strategies using games and high interest fiction and nonfiction. I will collect information during the reading group using journal entries, field observation, audio recordings, WRAT - 4, *Basic Reading Inventory* and parent and student questionnaires. I am also requesting access to the students' information from school files and prior assessment to document
background information. The identity of the participants will be protected with the use of pseudonyms. A stenographer, who will sign an agreement to protect the confidentiality of your child’s information, will transcribe the audio tapes.

During the project, all uniquely identifying documentation and recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet in the resource room at Uplands Elementary School, under the supervision of Mrs. Manji. These documents, recordings will be retained for five years after the completion of this project, and then Mrs. Manji will shred them.

Participation in the project is voluntary, and the participants have the right to withdraw at any time and have their information withdrawn from the project. If any parent does not give consent for their child to participate in the project, the child will continue to receive reading remediation and participate fully in the group, but their data will not be included in the project. Any questions, regarding the project may be directed to Mrs. Manji at 250 635-2721, or 250 635-9472, or the project supervisor, Dr. Judith Lapadat at 250-615-3333. If any concerns remain unresolved during the project, parents may contact the UNBC Office of Research reb@unbc.ca or 250 960-5650.

The advantage of the project is that your child will be the recipients of a reading intervention program designed to improve their use of reading strategies, reading fluency and comprehension, and to improve their self-perception as readers. This program provides opportunities for the students to read at their level, and to improve their knowledge and practice of reading strategies in a comfortable non-threatening environment. It provides supportive, repetitive readings and exposure to high interest low readability text that is difficult to access in the general classroom setting. In the small group setting differentiated instruction can be more easily geared to meet the individual needs of the students. The strategies in the program are aimed towards building confidence and reading success that in turn promotes a positive sense of self.
The disadvantage of this program is that although the times are scheduled to be the least disruptive, the students will miss some classroom instruction, and the students may be sensitive to being pulled out from their peers. Also, although struggling readers need repetition, and pre and re-teaching of strategies, it is important to find innovative ways of making the text engaging to avoid boredom. Finally, although anonymity is protected with the use of pseudonyms, Uplands School is a small community and other teaching staff may guess the identity of the students in the project.

Meetings to provide a summary of the project report, and to discuss the results with parents or guardians of the participants, will be arranged prior to submitting the final project, or presenting the project. Please sign two copies of the consent form, one I will retain and the other is for your files.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Manji

Reading Intervention: Breaking the Loop
Parental Consent Form

Following a meeting with Mrs. Manji, held on ______________, to discuss the overview of the project Reading Intervention-Breaking the Loop I ________________ give permission for my child ________________ to participate in a reading group for the purposes of this project. I give permission for Mrs. Manji to access information in my child’s school file, to collect information using journals, notes and audio tapings during the reading group, and for the tapes to be transcribed by a stenographer. I also agree to participate in an oral interview regarding my child’s reading history, and give consent for my child to participate in an interview regarding his reading experiences.

Parent/Guardian signature ________________________ Date: ________________________
Appendix D – Parent Interview Questionnaire
Uplands Elementary School
School District 82
4110 N. Thomas St., Terrace, B.C. V8G 4L7 ph. (250) 635 2721 Fax (250) 635 4972

July 6, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am the Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT) at Uplands Elementary School. I am working on completing a master's program in Multidisciplinary Leadership, with a focus in Special Education, through the University of British Columbia. I have a specific interest in reading remediation; consequently, I am developing a project based on reading intervention for struggling upper elementary readers.

I am using questionnaires to gather data. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information regarding your child’s reading experiences at home and in school. The information will be used to help your child and to help me learn more about what works best with struggling readers. I will be asking the questions orally and taping the responses. I will later write down the taped interview. You will have a chance to review it with me and correct it before I use it in my project.

Child’s Name: ___________________________ Parent’s Name: ___________________________
Date: ___________________________

Sample Questions

1. How would you describe your child’s reading experiences?
2. What did you notice that made you realize that he was struggling with reading?
3. How do his reading difficulties affect him in other areas? (e.g. social, emotional, and educational).
4. Has participating in the reading group changed your child’s reading behavior, or view of reading? How?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about your child and reading?

Liz. Manji (LAT Uplands Elementary)
Appendix E – Student Interview Questionnaire
Uplands Elementary School
School District 82
4110 N. Thomas St., Terrace, B.C. V8G 4L7 ph. (250) 635 2721 Fax (250) 635 4972

July 6, 2009

As the Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT) at Uplands Elementary School, I am working on completing a master’s program in Multidisciplinary Leadership, with a focus in Special Education, through the University of Northern British Columbia. I have a specific interest in helping students with reading.

I am using questionnaires to gather data. The purpose of this questionnaire is to ask you about your reading experiences at home and in school. The information will be used to help you and other students who struggle with reading. I will be asking the questions orally and taping the responses. I will later write down the taped interview. You will have a chance to review it with me and correct it before I use it in my project.

Student Name: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

1. How did you feel when you first started reading? How do you feel about reading now?
2. What are some of the difficulties you have experienced with reading?
3. Describe the reading that you do at home, at school and with friends?
4. Tell me your thoughts about working in the reading group?
5. Do you have anything else you want to say about reading?

Thank you for participating in this project and in completing this questionnaire.

Mrs. Manji (LAT Uplands Elementary School).