LITERACY GROUPINGS FOR READING SUCCESS

by

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Abstract

This two-phased study looked at the effectiveness of ability grouping children for literacy instruction at a time when current literature has mixed reviews on the concept of grouping in this manner. The Phase One participants were kindergarten-level children and the Phase Two participants were Grade 1-level children. The students were assessed at the beginning and ending of each phase, the kindergarten-level students with the locally developed Reading Group Assessment and the Grade 1-level students with the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment instrument. The DIBELS scores were compared to Prince George School District Grade One Norms. This comparison determined that the Grade 1-level students in this research made a statistically significant amount of improvement in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and a smaller amount of improvement in Nonsense Word Fluency over their Prince George counterparts. Overall, student assessment scores indicated reading improvement. Results of this study allowed me to conclude that ability grouping children for literacy instruction was an effective strategy that should be repeated.
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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

I have been a primary school teacher for twenty five years. Each year it has become more apparent to me how important a good basis in pre-reading skills is for young learners to achieve future reading success. As students are beginning to learn to read, I believe they need to possess pre-reading skills such as determining whether or not words rhyme, generating rhyming words, identifying most of the letter names and sounds, identifying initial and final phonemes (sounds) in simple words and segmenting or deleting syllables in words. I teach at a school in a small northern community in British Columbia where many children in Grade 1 and beyond do not possess these important pre-reading skills and therefore struggle with reading. This lack of reading readiness may originate from a variety of reasons. Lack of proficiency in English language skills due to socioeconomic factors or developmental delays may play a part. Whatever the case may be, the primary (kindergarten to Grade 3) teachers at my school and I set out to change some of what we had been doing in the past in order to address the reading deficits in our learners. As stated by Allington (2001), we had to “think about teaching and learning differently....take professional risks and teach differently” (p. 95). With the support of our principal and school district upper administration, we set out to restructure our reading programs and began a new initiative of grouping learners for reading instruction based on their instructional needs. This initiative was named Everybody Reads!

Background

The school where I teach is a newly expanded school. Owing to government cutbacks in education and declining enrolment in my small northern community, the school in which I taught kindergarten for eight years was closed at the end of the 2010 school year.
The students were moved to the intermediate school which went from being a Grades 4 to 7 school to a kindergarten to Grade 7 school. Along with the change of buildings for the children who moved was the change in teaching staff. Of the seven teachers who taught in the primary school, only three moved with the students. The fall of 2010 was riddled with the settling-in challenges of trying to adjust to the move. Our school staff was dealing with a few very difficult children with extensive learning and behavioural issues who found the change very difficult. Coupled with this, it was noted that there was a high number of children in the primary grades not meeting expectations in reading according to the British Columbia Performance Standards in Reading (BC Ministry of Education, 2009; hereafter the Performance Standards). It soon became apparent that our school was a school in crisis in the area of reading.

With support from school district administration, the teaching staff banded together to look at the reading deficit in a large number of its population to determine what could be done to ensure reading success for all students. The teachers, principal, assistant superintendent, and district literacy support teacher collaborated in December of 2010 to determine a plan-of-attack to support the primary-aged learners at our school and to include them all in learning to read. Students were assessed with a locally developed early reading skills tool and a locally utilized reading benchmark tool and placed in reading groups that best suited their reading abilities and learning needs. Six main groups were set up and ranged from a kindergarten-level reading group which focussed on teaching pre-reading skills, all the way up to a Grade 3-level reading group. Beginning on January 11, 2011, the students received 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction each day. I taught the first group which focussed on early pre-reading skill instruction at the kindergarten level until the end of
the 2010-2011 school year. During the 2011-2012 school year, I taught the Grade 1-level reading group.

Opportunity

I began taking a master's degree in Multi-Disciplinary Leadership from the University of Northern British Columbia in the spring of 2009. A component of this degree was a “Leading for Learning” certificate which needed to be completed as part of my master’s program. A requirement for the Leading for Learning certificate was to complete an action research-style inquiry project. What started out as a problem at the school at which I taught (many children not meeting expectations in reading) and the solution my staff and I developed as a means of addressing the reading problem (to group students for literacy instruction) turned into a study opportunity and the basis for this inquiry project assignment. Once I completed my inquiry project in the spring of 2011, I found that I continued to be interested in and committed to studying grouping and monitoring student progress in the reading group that I taught. I chose to expand my initial Leading for Learning inquiry project into this graduate project, and renamed the initial inquiry project Phase One. In the fall of 2011, when my teaching assignment changed to teaching the Grade 1-level reading group, I began Phase Two of the project. Phase Two was concluded in January 2012. Both phases will be described in further detail in Chapter Three of this project and are the focus of this body of research.

Overview of the Project

When considering the scope of this project, I reflected on a number of points. I first sought to answer the question, did a problem exist or was it only an artefact of my experience in the school? Then I asked, did the teachers at my school have a solution? In answer to the first question, yes, a problem existed. My fellow primary teachers and I agreed that too many
students at our school were not meeting expectations in reading according to the Performance Standards (2009). In answer to the second question, after much collaboration and manipulation of teacher schedules and teaching assignments, our school staff, beginning in January 2011, set to work on improving student reading scores. We formed reading groups and implemented focussed instruction, based on the instructional needs of the students. I became interested in studying the topic of reading groups and how they work. We grouped students for reading instruction to reduce the range of reading levels within a group of children. It seemed logical to me that in reducing the range of reading abilities within a reading class, focussed attention and instruction could be given to a more homogeneous group of children and thus, improve their reading achievement.

My reasons for undertaking this project were two-fold. My primary purpose for completing this project was to investigate whether or not placing students in reading groups based on their instructional needs improved their reading ability. My secondary purpose for completing this project was to consider if there was improvement, how much improvement?

Summary

In Chapter One, I began with a discussion about how a good basis in pre-reading and reading skills is essential for future reading success. I went on to describe that in the small northern community school where I taught, a large number of our primary school-aged students were not meeting grade expectations in reading. Coinciding with this realization was the fact that our students and staff were in the middle of a change process as our primary school had closed and we had moved to a former Grades 4 to 7 school over the summer. My staff, administrators, and I formed reading groups as a means to addressing the reading deficits of many of our students. Chapter One described the study opportunity this reading group initiative offered, and how this study was broken down into two phases. Phase One
covered the January to May 2011 time period when I taught the kindergarten-level reading group and Phase Two covered the September 2011 to January 2012 time period when I taught the Grade 1-level reading group. My reason for completing this research was to determine how much, if at all, does ability grouping for instruction improve students' reading outcomes?
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The goal of this project was to determine whether grouping students for literacy instruction leads to improvement in their reading skills and, if it does, how much improvement. In the first section of this literature review, I explore current views on and various methods of ability grouping. I reflect on how this information relates to the method of grouping that my colleagues and I have been doing at my school. In the next section of my literature review, I examine what current literature has to say about components of and approaches to an effective reading program.

Ability Grouping

Slavin (1987) stated, “Ability grouping is one of the oldest and most controversial issues in education” (p. 293). During a comprehensive review where he combined features of meta-analytic and narrative reviews, Slavin did a best-evidence synthesis that looked at hundreds of studies of ability groupings that have been done over the past 90 years (Slavin, 1987). Slavin began his study by defining ability grouping as “some means of grouping students for instruction by ability or achievement so as to reduce their heterogeneity” and categorized the ability grouping studies he researched into “Ability-Grouped Class Assignment,” “Regrouping for Reading and Mathematics,” “Joplin Plan,” “Nongraded Plan” and “Within-Class Ability Grouping” (Slavin, 1987, pp. 294, 295 & 296).

In the Ability-Grouped Class Assignment grouping plan, students are placed in a self-contained class, based on their ability or achievement, for all of their subjects, all day long. Results from various studies of Ability-Grouped Class Assignment grouping plan were contradicting. While some studies showed that Ability-Grouped Class Assignments increase student achievement for high achieving students and have a detrimental effect on lower-achieving students, after comparing these studies to other reviews and meta-analyses,
Slavin’s findings did not support this view (Slavin, 1987). Slavin concluded that there were two main arguments against ability grouping that had to do with creating groups or classes of low-achievers (Slavin, 1987). One argument is that when high achievers are with high achievers and low achievers are with low achievers, low achievers “are deprived of the example and stimulation provided by high achievers” (Slavin, 1987, p. 296). The other argument noted by Slavin was that in some of the studies he examined, the instructional pace was slower and the quality of instruction was lower in the lower achieving classroom assignments (Slavin, 1987).

Many elementary schools use Regrouping for Reading and Mathematics instruction while placing students in heterogeneous homeroom classes for the rest of the day. Slavin found contradictory findings when reviewing the studies which looked at this type of student grouping. While some studies showed some differences in achievement, other studies showed no sizable differences between regrouped and non-regrouped student assessment scores (Slavin, 1987).

The Joplin Plan of ability grouping is grouping across grade levels for reading instruction (Slavin, 1987). According to Slavin, this grouping plan ensures that students “are working at the same or at most two reading levels, so that Within-Class Ability Grouping may be reduced or eliminated” (p. 311). Findings of grouping studies favoured the Joplin Plan in terms of student achievement more consistently than for any other grouping strategy (Slavin, 1987).

The Nongraded Plan is a form of regrouping in which grouping is flexible and students are grouped according to their performance. Slavin (1987) indicated that “full-scale Nongraded Plans might use team teaching, individualized instruction, learning centers, and other means of accommodating student differences in all academic subjects” (p. 295). Many
of the studies that Slavin examined had similar results to the Joplin Plan of grouping, possibly due to the fact that the grouping is multi-graded, as is the Joplin Plan.

In the Within-Class Ability Grouping Plan, teachers assign students to groups within their classroom, mainly for reading and mathematics instruction (Slavin, 1987). In his research, Slavin found that the only Within-Class Ability Grouping model that supported this type of grouping was for mathematics instruction in the upper elementary grades.

The form of ability grouping used at the school where I teach would fall under Slavin's category of the Joplin Plan, which, as he defined it, is "one special form of regrouping for reading...in which students are assigned to heterogeneous classes most of the day but are regrouped for reading across grade lines" (Slavin, 1987, p. 295). In the Joplin Plan, student placements are reviewed frequently so that if students need to be reassigned to a different reading group, they will be, depending on their instructional needs. The other reading group teachers and I collaborate every two or three weeks to discuss student progress, program planning and other concerns that arise. Students are moved to different groups, depending on their current instructional needs.

Slavin (1987) discussed arguments for and against the practice of ability grouping. One main argument against ability grouping is that it creates classes of low achievers. With the Joplin Plan, students are in a more homogeneous grouping for reading only, with the rest of the day being spent in a heterogeneous class of varying achievers. In the past, some people equated the low achieving group with a group also receiving slow, low quality instruction. In the school where I teach, each reading group falls somewhere along the continuum from kindergarten to third grade reading levels and each teacher is doing his/her best to teach a best-practice reading program guided by latest reading research. Our teachers collaborate regularly to discuss our programs, groups, and individual students, with the
intention of ensuring that students are receiving quality reading lessons at their instructional levels. Slavin supports this sentiment by stating, “Clearly, any effects of grouping on achievement are mediated by teacher behaviours.” (Slavin, 1987, p. 297). Ability grouping itself is not the only factor to affect student achievement in reading; the quality of reading instruction is also very important. The teachers involved with our literacy grouping program strive to provide such quality.

After reviewing the various models of ability grouping, I can understand why it has been such a controversial issue in education. As suggested by Slavin (1987):

Ability grouping is supposed to increase student achievement primarily by reducing the heterogeneity of the class or instructional group, making it more possible for the teacher to provide instruction that is neither too easy nor too hard for most students. Ability grouping is assumed to allow the teacher to increase the pace and level of instruction for high achievers and provide more individual attention, repetition, and review for low achievers. (p. 296)

Using the Joplin Plan model is a very efficient means to teaching reading as it includes multi-grades and is flexible according to student achievement.

I suspect that it is the other grouping models that give grouping a bad reputation. There are draw-backs with Within-Class Ability Grouping in that a teacher has to spread her/himself very thin trying to meet all of the instructional needs of the various abilities in a heterogeneous class. This may result in the highest performing students not being challenged in ways that they might and the lowest performing students not getting all of the help they need with their learning.

The most compelling argument against grouping according to ability that Slavin (1987) found while doing his research had little to do with achievement. A large number of
the studies showed that “ability groupings often parallel social class and ethnic groupings” and result in an “increase [of] divisions along class, race, and ethnic group lines” (p. 297). The Joplin Plan ability grouping that we follow at our school ensures heterogeneous instruction for the majority of the day so these drawbacks of grouping students do not occur. At our school, 85 to 95% of the children in our classes are Aboriginal and this demographic is reflected similarly in our reading groups. To the experienced, long-term teachers in the community, there do not appear to be social class or ethnic grouping divisions as the majority of the children in each of the literacy groups are Aboriginal.

**Reading Programs**

Slavin, Lake, Chambers, Cheung and Davis (2009) wrote, “From the first day of kindergarten to the last day of elementary school, children substantially define themselves as readers, and this has enormous influence on their development as learners and as members of society” (p. 1391). Children who are successful readers have a much greater chance at succeeding in school and life, while children who are weaker, reluctant readers have a lesser chance of this success (Slavin et al., 2009). The National Reading Panel (NRP) in the United States produced the *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* in 2001. In this report, the NRP listed five essential components that beginning reading programs should emphasize: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2001). While much research has been done on how children learn to read, less research has been done on evaluating practical programs available to schools that ensure the success of early readers (Slavin et al., 2009). Slavin, et al. completed a best-evidence synthesis which reviewed achievement outcomes research on four types of approaches to improving reading success for elementary school children (2009). This synthesis, for the purpose of this study, grouped all kinds of approaches to teaching
reading into four categories: (a) reading curricula, (b) IT (programs that use technology to enhance reading achievement), (c) instructional process programs, and (d) combinations of reading curricula and instructional process. From their research and synthesis of 63 beginning reading studies, these authors provide information that can be used by teachers when selecting programs which will make a difference with their students (Slavin et al., 2009). I have highlighted their findings as I investigated proven components of a sound reading program. As this project is focussed on kindergarten-level reading instruction in Phase One and Grade 1-level reading instruction in Phase Two, findings from this study will represent beginning reading programs, even though the study does go on to look at findings in upper elementary grades as well. The first important pattern in the findings of this study, in the authors’ own words, was “that successful programs almost always provide teachers with extensive professional development and follow-up focussed on specific teaching methods” in particular, with cooperative learning as their core (Slavin et al., 2009, p. 1413). The second important pattern found in effective beginning reading programs is that they “have a strong focus on teaching phonics and phonemic awareness” (Slavin et al., 2009, p. 1413), however, the study found that while an early reading program may emphasize phonics, it is not the only reading program component that will ensure meaningful reading gains (Slavin et al., 2009). The final comment Slavin et al. made when observing the patterns in their research was that there was much support for programs that integrate curriculum, pedagogy and thorough professional development. The findings during this study were similar for high-poverty schools (schools where at least 50% of their students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches), except that there was particular encouragement for providing extensive professional development to teachers in specific classroom strategies.
in order to make a difference in the achievement of students in these schools (Slavin et al., 2009).

In the concluding discussion of the research by Slavin et al. (2009), it was reiterated that there was extensive evidence which supported forms of cooperative learning where students work in small groups and help one another master reading skills. It was noted that the success of the small group team depends on the individual learning of each member of the team. Slavin et al. concluded that this research supports reading programs which are "characterized by extensive professional development in classroom strategies intended to maximize students' participation and engagement, give them effective metacognitive strategies for comprehending text, and strengthen their phonics skills" (p.1453).

Time to Read

Allington (2001) stated, "If I were required to select a single aspect of the instructional environment to change, [in regards to accurate, fluent, high-comprehension reading programs] my first choice would be creating a schedule that supported dramatically increased quantities of reading during the school day" (p. 24). When writing *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers: Designing Research-Based Programs*, Allington provided evidence that supported the notion that in order for children to become good readers, they need to read a lot (Allington, 2001). We had this in mind when allocating 90 minutes per day to reading instruction when we began our reading grouping initiative, Everybody Reads!, in January 2011. Our teaching staff was strongly committed to the sentiment that in order to become a better reader, one must read often.

Another point that Allington (2001) made is that the reading lesson time must be guarded as uninterrupted blocks of instruction. This was a very important detail for us when we set up our reading groups. Schedules were created so that no other subjects conflicted
with the 90 minute reading block time. The office staff was asked to keep classroom interruptions and notices to a minimum during this time.

A third important argument that Allington (2001) raised was that we must match books to the children's ability level and ensure that children have a lot of appropriately levelled books available for them to read. According to Allington, children improve in their reading when they read books “with a high level of accuracy (95+ % correct words) and at least a fair level of fluency” (p. 53). Allington also noted that when children have a lot of practice reading books at their level, it aids in the development of fluency (2001).

Summary

In Chapter Two, I presented a literature review on topics relating to my study. I first discussed current research on grouping students for learning. I related how Slavin (1987) completed an extensive review of hundreds of studies on ability grouping. Slavin analyzed his findings and categorized his information into five main types of grouping. He described these five grouping models and the drawbacks of each of these. Of the grouping models that Slavin (1987) described, the one that best matches the type of grouping my teaching colleagues and I are doing at my school is called the Joplin Plan. In the Joplin Plan, students are in heterogeneous classes for most of the day, except for reading instruction when they are placed in more homogeneous groupings (Slavin, 1987). Collaboration among the teachers of these reading groupings is another feature of the Joplin Plan grouping structure with fluid movement of students between groups as their learning needs change. In the next section of my literature review, I described components of a good reading program and looked at a “best evidence synthesis” of four types of approaches to improving reading success for children. In this synthesis, Slavin et al. concluded that teacher professional development helps lead to successful reading programs, a strong focus on teaching phonics and phonemic
awareness is important in a successful early primary reading program, and that cooperative learning activities help improve reading success (2009). In the final section of my literature review, I discussed Allington’s (2001) findings that children should be provided with a lot of uninterrupted time to read good fit books in order to improve their reading skills.
Chapter Three: The Project Plan

My project plan has been divided into three sections: participants, instruments, and procedures. The participants in my project were the kindergarten-level students I taught during Phase One and the Grade 1-level students I taught during Phase Two. The instrument that I used to measure student achievement and progress during Phase One was the Reading Group Assessment and during Phase Two was the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). These instruments will be described in greater detail in the second section of this chapter. The procedures that I followed during Phase One and Phase Two of this project will be described in section three of this chapter.

Participants

The participants in this study were the children that were placed in my literacy group for reading instruction. My Phase One participants were kindergarten reading-level children and my Phase Two participants were Grade 1 reading-level children. There was some overlap of students between Phase One and Phase Two as nine of the students in my Phase Two reading group were in my Phase One reading group. Four of my Phase One students transferred out of our school. Another two of my Phase One students were not ready for the Grade 1 program and so were placed in a kindergarten-level reading group while I was working on Phase Two of this project.

Phase One. During Phase One of this project, 18 students were enrolled in my kindergarten/Grade 1 homeroom class. Thirteen of these students were registered in kindergarten and five were registered in Grade 1. Based on assessment and teacher observation, 12 of the 13 kindergarten students from my homeroom class were placed in my kindergarten-level literacy group. One of my kindergarten students and the five Grade 1 students from my kindergarten/Grade 1 homeroom went out to two other teachers to receive
reading instruction designed for their levels. Three Grade 1 students from another classroom joined my literacy group, which brought my enrolment to a total of 15. Of the 15 students in my literacy group, 13 were Aboriginal (86%), one was Caucasian (7%), and one was Indo-Canadian (7%).

**Phase Two.** During Phase Two of this project, 21 students were enrolled in my kindergarten/Grade 1 homeroom class, 4 of whom were in kindergarten, and 17 of whom were in Grade 1. For my literacy group, I started off the year with 13 students working at the Grade 1 reading level. Eleven of these students were Grade 1 students from my class and two were Grade 2 students from another classroom. Shortly after Christmas, one of these Grade 2 students moved away which left me with 12 students in my literacy group. Nine of these remaining students were Aboriginal (75%), two were Caucasian (17%) and one was Indo-Canadian (8%). Six of the Grade 1 students and the four kindergarten students from my homeroom class were sent out to work on kindergarten-level skills with other reading group teachers.

**Instruments**

The assessment instruments used during Phase One and Phase Two of my project provided me with three types of information. The assessment information guided my fellow teachers and I when forming our literacy groups, informed my instruction so that I knew what to focus on when teaching, and provided me with data which could be used to analyze the effectiveness of my literacy program.

**Phase One: Reading Group Assessment.** Approximately nine years ago, my school district created an assessment tool, the *Early Kindergarten Assessment*, to assess all of the kindergarten children within our school district. The Early Kindergarten Assessment was produced by a team consisting of district staff, speech and language pathologists,
kindergarten teachers, and principals. It was created to assess children coming into kindergarten to guide instruction and assess children leaving kindergarten to test their knowledge of kindergarten concepts. As a kindergarten teacher, I have administered the Early Kindergarten Assessment to kindergarten students in my class in September and at the end of May for many years. The assessment tool I used to assess the students in January and May of 2011 for the purpose of Phase One of this project was an adapted version of the Early Kindergarten Assessment. I entitled the assessment page “Reading Group Assessment” (see Appendix E). I used this instrument to assess student knowledge of letter names and sounds, receptive and expressive rhyming, initial, final and medial phoneme identity, receptive fluency, and syllable segmentation and deletion.

**Phase Two: Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills.** The assessment instrument I used while working on Phase Two of my project was the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). As in Phase One of this project, I required a tool that could be used to screen my students and track their progress. In Phase Two, however, I also wanted to compare the assessment results of my students to norms to determine if, when my students showed progress, they showed progress as compared to a control group. The norms to which I compared my assessment results were created by the Prince George School District Number 57 in 2003 and published in the *Curriculum-Based Measurement and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills in School District No. 57 Guidebook*. I have chosen to compare my reading group scores to these norms as the Prince George School District has school populations that are similar to my school population, the difference being that the percentage of Aboriginal students in my school is higher than in the Prince George School District norming sample.
DIBELS has four important characteristics which make the use of this assessment instrument informative and user friendly. According to Hall, (2006) “(1) they have met minimum research criteria as valid and reliable in identifying at-risk students, (2) they are teacher-friendly, (3) they provide valuable information, and (4) they take the shortest time possible to administer” (p. 29). DIBELS is an instrument that can be used principally in three ways: (a) it can be used to screen students to determine whether they have all of the major skills in place for reading at grade level by the end of Grade 3, (b) it provides progress monitoring assessments that may be used to measure whether intervention instruction has been effective, and (c) it can be used as an outcome assessment to measure how effective a school’s reading instructional program has been (Hall, 2006). For the purpose of this project, I used DIBELS in the third way, to assess how effective my reading instructional program had been during Phase Two of this project.

Each of the letters in the acronym DIBELS stands for an important component of this assessment instrument. DIBELS is *dynamic* in that it measures changes over time to match the developmental progress which evolves in early reading (Hall, 2006, p. 31). DIBELS contains subtests, referred to as *indicators* which quickly and efficiently provide an indication of a child’s progress or performance in acquiring literacy skills (p. 32). DIBELS assesses *basic* skills which need to be mastered to provide the foundation of future reading fluency and comprehension (p. 32). DIBELS assesses skills which are important *early* on in reading development (p.32). DIBELS assesses *literacy* skills (p. 32). DIBELS looks at the foundational *skills* which are important when learning to read (p. 32).

As described by Hall (2006), DIBELS measures the following seven skills:

- Initial Sound Fluency (ISF)-ability to recognize and produce initial sounds in words
• Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)-ability to recognize and name a random mixture of uppercase and lowercase letters on a page, including several fonts
• Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)-ability to segment a spoken word of two to five phonemes into the individual sounds
• Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)-ability to read two-letter and three-letter nonsense words, primarily consonant-vowel-consonant patterns
• Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)-fluency (speed and accuracy) in reading grade-level passages aloud, as measured by words read correctly per minute
• Retell Fluency (RTF)-ability to retell information from a passage just read, as a measure of comprehension
• Word Use Fluency (WUF)-measures vocabulary by a tally of the number of words spoken in accurate utterances or definitions in response to target words. (p. 37)

Procedure

The procedures for Phase One and Phase Two of this project have some similarities and some differences. They are similar in that they follow a test, teach, re-test format, grounded on the principle of providing a reading program to children based on their instructional needs. Some of the components of the Phase One and Phase Two reading programs are similar, as well. The main differences between Phase One and Phase Two of this project are the levels of instruction (kindergarten-level versus Grade 1-level) and the assessment instruments used.
Phase One. Phase One began as an inquiry project. It was an action research assignment that was required as part of the coursework for the Leading for Learning Certificate component of the Multi-Disciplinary Leadership master’s degree I was pursuing at the University of Northern British Columbia. I chose to study literacy grouping and my kindergarten-level reading group, more specifically, to try to determine whether grouping for literacy instruction would improve the reading achievement of my students. My teaching colleagues and I had collaborated and felt that by reducing the range of reading levels within our classes during reading instruction time, we could better meet the learning needs of our students. We began a new grouping for reading instruction initiative at our school called Everybody Reads! in January 2011.

I chose to do a test, teach, and retest format of research method for my inquiry assignment, which, in turn, became Phase One of this project. I felt this quantitative form of doing research was the most efficient short-term way to analyze the new reading program. Beginning on January 4, 2011, each student was assessed, one-on-one, using the Reading Group Assessment (Appendix E). The assessment was administered orally. I asked questions as stated on the assessment form and recorded the students’ responses. I then provided uninterrupted reading instruction for 90 minutes a day, five days a week in specified areas to my reading group and continued to do so for approximately four months. At the end of May, I re-administered the Reading Group Assessment.

Everybody Reads! program: Kindergarten-level. I provided 90 minutes of reading instruction to my kindergarten-level reading group five days each week. Our lessons began with independent reading time which we called “Read to Self” time (Boushey & Moser, 2006, p. 46). Research has shown that one of the best ways to improve reading in children is to give them plenty of time to read books that are “just right” (Allington, 2001, p. 44) or
“good-fit” (Boushey & Moser, 2006, p. 29) books that are at a level that children can read independently. At the Illinois State Reading Council Conference in March 2005, Allington reported that current research indicates that an independent-level or good-fit book for children is one they can read with 99% accuracy (Boushey & Moser, 2006, pp. 29). As Allington (2001) stated in his book, *What Really Matters for Struggling Readers*, “there exists a potent relationship between volume of reading and reading achievement” (p. 33). I saw Read to Self time during my reading lessons as a time for the pre-reading level children to practice independent engagement with books and a time for my beginning readers to practice reading. All of the reading groups in our Everybody Reads! program utilized daily Read to Self time. The length of this time depended on the level of the reading group and the age of the children. The older children were able to participate in Read to Self time longer due to maturity and developed stamina (Boushey & Moser, 2006). The Read to Self time in our kindergarten-level group increased from three minutes to five minutes between January and May.

An *Animated-Alphabet* (Stone, 2005) lesson followed Read to Self time. This lesson format alternated between the introduction of a letter name and its corresponding sound (using a story, song and gesture) on one day and a guided drawing activity the next day. Over the years, I have found the Animated-Alphabet (Stone) program to be invaluable. It includes such a variety of activities to teach pre-reading and reading skills that children of all abilities gain something fun and educational during the lessons.

After the introduction of a new letter, I introduced that letter in printing using the *Handwriting Without Tears-Kindergarten Program* (Olson & Knapton, 2008). This printing program provides multisensory lessons for teaching letter formation and fit right in with my play-based reading program.
Once a week, we broke into small groups and did activities from a kit called *Talking Tables: A Kindergarten Oral Language Development Program* (Clifton, Crowley & McCubbin, 2005). *Talking Tables: A Kindergarten Oral Language Development Program* is a rich oral language development program which helps kindergarten learners develop oral language fluency and build phonological skills such as rhyming, blending and segmenting compound words and syllables, and recognizing initial and final phonemes (Clifton et al., 2005, p. I-1). I ran Talking Tables sessions one to two times a week, depending on adult volunteer time.

The balance of my literacy program included journal writing, literacy centers and games, and interactive whiteboard work that allowed for practice of early reading skills in an engaging, interactive way. Students worked on activities that focussed on letter names and sounds, rhyming, initial and final sounds in words, segmenting and deleting syllables in words, and counting the number of syllables in words.

**Program Adaptation.** Prior to the start-up of Everybody Reads! in January, I attended meetings which informed me about the special needs of three of my students. One of these students was diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Another student had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The third student discussed at the start-up meetings was on a wait list to see a paediatrician (suspected of having ADHD or a similar type of learning need). I had two educational assistants (EAs) to help me meet the special needs of my students.

I had to adapt my reading program for my student who was diagnosed with ADHD. He did not have a long attention span and sometimes needed to go out into the hall with an EA for a break. This student was not able to complete all of the tasks the other students in our reading group did but he completed what he was able to.
**Phase Two.** Phase Two took place from September 2011 to January 2012. During the second phase of this project, I taught the Grade 1-level literacy group. Students were placed in my group based on their scores from The Reading Group Assessment in May 2011 and teacher observation. Most of the students in my Grade 1 reading group had been in my kindergarten reading group the year before, in Phase One. I provided 90 minutes of reading instruction to my Grade 1-level reading group four days each week. The amount of time for literacy instruction decreased in Phase Two from five days a week to four as classroom teachers became responsible for teaching writing outside of reading group time.

During Phase Two, I collected quantitative data. The quantitative set of data I collected helped me to monitor my students' reading progress and inform my instruction. Similarly to Phase One, Phase Two followed a test, teach, and retest format. However, the assessment instrument that I used in Phase Two was DIBELS. I administered the DIBELS assessment in early October 2011 and early January 2012. I compared the results of my students to students of the same grade in Prince George School District #57 to determine whether my students made significant improvement in their reading skills.

**Everybody Reads! program: Grade 1-level.** Our sessions began with a lesson from the Successful Sight Reading Part One (Roberts, 2004) sight word program. We reviewed previously introduced words before new sight words were introduced as the program indicated. Students then completed an activity that required them to work with the new words to gain familiarity with them.

A phonics-based activity followed the sight word lesson, which covered word families, long vowel sounds, and digraphs, to aid the children in sounding out words that were unfamiliar to them. These lessons were developed from the Reading A to Z Phonics
Program (Hall, n.d.) or the Animated-Alphabet (Stone, 2005) program, depending on which phonics concepts I planned to work on at the time.

Read to Self time, as discussed during the Phase One procedures, followed the phonics activity. Read to Self time increased from 5 minutes at the beginning of Phase Two to 20 minutes by the end. During this time, an EA would move from child to child and listen to children read from right-fit books while I led guided reading lessons with small groups of two to four students.

The small-group guided reading lessons began with a book-walk where children were encouraged to look at the pictures in the story they were given and to make predictions about what they thought the story might be about. New vocabulary words were introduced to students before the children did a quiet reading to themselves or an oral group reading of the story. The story was then discussed and re-read as a group or with a partner.

Time permitting, the reading lesson ended with a literacy center time when the children had choices about what activity they would do. One popular activity was practicing creating words with play-dough. The children also enjoyed spelling words with magnetic letters or doing crossword puzzles, word search puzzles, or playing BINGO with sight words they had been working on.

Program Adaptation. Two of the students with special needs who were in my reading group during Phase One moved away. The remaining special needs student was the one that had been diagnosed with ADHD the previous year. He received a diagnosis of FASD during the early stages of Phase Two. I directed an EA to help me meet the special needs of this student. I sometimes modified or adapted the reading activities that this child worked on during reading group time by reducing the amount of work he was assigned.
Summary

In Chapter Three, I discussed the project plan, including its participants, instruments, and procedures. In the participants section I described the students who were selected to take part in this study. This included 15 students in my kindergarten-level literacy group during Phase One and 12 students in my Grade 1-level literacy group during Phase Two. The second section of this chapter described the assessment instruments I used to assess the students in my literacy groups. I used the Reading Group Assessment instrument to assess the students at the beginning and at the end of the four month Phase One time period and the DIBELS assessment instrument near the beginning and at the end of the four month Phase Two time period. In the third section of Chapter Three, I described my kindergarten-level and Grade 1-level reading programs and the various activities we completed during our literacy-group time blocks.
Chapter 4: Results

Teaching a literacy group since the Everybody Reads! reading group initiative began in January 2011 has been interesting and engaging for me as a teacher. Assessing students, placing them in appropriate literacy groups, teaching students, and re-assessing them has shown me interesting results during Phase One and Phase Two of this master’s project.

Chapter Four focusses on presenting the data collected during the two phases of this project.

Phase One-Reading Group Assessment

I was very pleased when I compared the results of the children’s Reading Group Assessment scores from January to May 2011. Table 1 illustrates these results.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
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<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 15.14 29.93
Standard Deviation 7.58 10.33

Note. The means and standard deviations were calculated for the 14 students who had a January and May score. Student 15 was away and missed the January assessment.
In order to display the students' results, and to differentiate the progress of each student, I assigned numbers to students using a pseudo-random process, ensuring that individual students could not be identified. While some children improved more than others, every one of the 15 children assessed showed growth in the four month instructional period from January 2011 to May 2011 as shown in Figure 1. The class average score out of 40 grew from 15 in January to 31 in May. Apart from the quantitative growth in pre-reading skills alone, I observed qualitative growth in the confidence that the children displayed when expressing their knowledge.

![Reading Group Assessment Results](image)

*Figure 1.* Assessment results for kindergarten-level students in January 2011 and May 2011. A score of 40 is the maximum score a child could attain during this test that reported on the areas of expressive and receptive rhyming, initial, final and medial phoneme identification, receptive fluency, syllable segmentation and deletion, and letter name and sound identification. Refer to Appendix F for a breakdown of the Reading Group Assessment results, depicted with line graphs.

Although not calculated at the time of the Phase One study, later analysis confirmed that the mean differences between January and May are statistically significantly different
and that this difference is of practical significance \( (d=1.95, \text{ large}) \).

It was later recognized that these results supported the view that important amounts of
growth had occurred and would likely be seen to occur with another similar group of
kindergarten students placed in a similar reading group situation. Phase Two addresses
issues such as student maturation.

When the individual growth patterns of my learners were observed, one particular
student, Student 12, stood out to me. Her birthday was in November. As well as being one
of my younger learners, Student 12 lacked confidence in her academic skills for the first half
of the school year. She actually seemed amazed when she realized she knew most of the
answers to the questions I asked her during the May assessment. Her score rose from 16 out
of 40 in January to 36 out of 40 in May. She no longer was the quiet student who often
daydreamed during circle time and small group time. Student 12 became a confident and
active learner in reading group time and throughout the kindergarten day.

Another student who showed a similar growth pattern to Student 12 was Student 13.
He was also a younger kindergarten student (he had a December birthday), and grew in his
pre-reading skills since he was first assessed in January. His confidence had always been
high but a huge change for him was his interest level. In the beginning of the year, he was
not very interested in the academic portion of kindergarten. I guessed it was because of his
young age so I focused on making him feel welcome and making sure his experience at
school was safe and enjoyable. I suspected his interest in the academics would come with
maturity; I was pleased when my prediction came true. He began to see himself as a
confident learner, well on his way to becoming a reader.

Another interesting learner I had this year was Student 4. This student’s birthday was
also in December but s/he was one year older than most of her/his kindergarten peers.
Student 4 moved into the home of her/his current guardians' a year and a half earlier after living in what I was told was a non-stimulating environment. His/her current guardians suspected s/he had FASD and were in the process of having her/him assessed. It was because of Student 4’s early upbringing and possible learning needs that his/her guardians chose to hold him/her back until this past year to start him/her in kindergarten. This was a wise decision as Student 4 made remarkable progress in many areas. His/her assessment score rose from 12 out of 40 in January to 38 out of 40 in May. Student 4 became one of the most confident learners in the class and the first to share information during class discussions. While this student’s gender is not ambiguous, and more specific details are known about the guardians, this information is not included here for reasons of confidentiality.

Three students in my reading group were from a Grade 1 class and came into my classroom for reading instruction. When assessing these students to determine reading group placement, it was determined that their instructional needs would best be met in my reading group. Student 1, Student 9, and Student 11 all showed progress with January to May assessment scores of 23 to 30, 19 to 36, and 10 to 29, respectively. Each of these three learners appeared to benefit from this kindergarten-level reading instruction.

Student 14 showed very little progress according to his/her assessment scores. With a score of 5 out of 40 in January and 8 out of 40 in May, I determined that developmentally, Student 14 was not ready for the kindergarten-level reading material. I provided her/him with some small group activities that reinforced the pre-reading concepts that I taught during our reading lessons. While I suspected Student 14 had some special learning needs that I had begun to explore with his/her parents and our school’s special education team, I believe school attendance for Student 14 was also a huge factor that affected her/his learning as s/he
missed at least 50% of his/her kindergarten school year. This student’s gender is not included here for reasons of confidentiality.

**Phase Two-Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills**

In order to compensate for the unpredictability of results due to maturation or growth that is common to non-ability grouped classes, a standardized measure from an appropriately similar population was employed. I used DIBELS as my assessment instrument for Phase Two to determine student growth and reading improvement. I assessed my reading group students early in October 2011 (Fall) and then again in January 2012 (Winter) and compared their results, first to the DIBELS benchmarks as set out by the University of Oregon (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills™ 6th Edition, 2002), and then to the 2003 DIBELS norms that had been created by the Prince George School District (School District No. 57, 2003).

As with any new educational undertaking, such as my school’s Everybody Reads! initiative to improve the reading skills of our students, I wanted to compare my students’ assessment results to a reliable norm to ensure that my students were making progress. I chose the Prince George School District Number 57 DIBELS norms as I felt they were valid in that the population of students reflected in the Prince George School District is somewhat similar to the school population at my school, except that our ethnic mixes differ. For example, my school has a higher percentage of Aboriginal students than the Prince George School District. However, the school populations are similar in socio-economic status and in geographical region and for these reasons the Prince George School District seemed to be a reasonable control group for comparison of DIBELS assessment scores.

**DIBELS Benchmarks.** Before I compared my students’ assessment results to the Prince George School District norms, I compared them to the *DIBELS™ Instructional*
**Recommendations:** *Intensive, Strategic, and Benchmark* that has been created as a compilation of the DIBELS "decision rules for intensive, strategic, and benchmark instructional recommendations" (Good & Kaminski, 2002, p.48) at the University of Oregon. Table 2 presents the DIBELS results for my Grade 1 reading level students in Phase Two.

**Table 2**

*Grade One Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Results-October 2011 and January 2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>LNF Oct Status</th>
<th>PSF Oct Status</th>
<th>NWF Oct Status</th>
<th>ORF Jan Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>59 Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32 Emerging</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43 Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33 Emerging</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45 Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15 Emerging</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37 Established</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44 Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25 Emerging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45 Established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19 Emerging</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>67 Established</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The status categories are At Risk, All Risk, and Some Risk.
The DIBELS benchmarks were established so that educators could determine which students had increased odds of achieving literacy success and which students would need some sort of intervention for them to succeed in their reading (Good & Kaminski, 2002). DIBELS provides descriptors for student DIBELS scores. The descriptors at risk, some risk and low risk are used before the skill being tested should be established (Hall, 2006). Once the skill being tested should be established, the terms change to deficit, emerging and established (Hall, 2006) as depicted on Table 2.

When I compared my students’ Letter Naming Fluency results to the DIBELS benchmark in October, 10 of my students scored well below benchmark and were given the status at risk as indicated on Table 2. The remaining two students’ scores were higher and placed them in the some risk category. These results informed my instruction and I added letter naming games to my program to ensure that my students would become more fluent in this area. Letter naming fluency was not assessed in January.

In the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency assessment in October, five of my students were deficit in their scores as compared to the benchmark. Five students were emerging and two were established in their phoneme segmentation fluency. Based on these results, I formed a small intervention group that met for 20 minutes, three times a week to work on phonemic awareness skills with the students who were deficit in their DIBELS scores in this area. I also added more phonemic awareness activities to my daily literacy instruction blocks. The results of the small group intervention and the increase in phonemic awareness activities affected the January results for Phoneme Segmentation Fluency which resulted in all but one student having reached an established assessment score. This one moved from a deficit to an emerging assessment score.
In the Nonsense Word Fluency assessment, when comparing their scores to the benchmarks, seven students were considered at risk and five were considered as having some risk in October. In January, seven were considered deficit and five were considered emerging. However, the seven deficit and five emerging were not all the same children that had scores that placed them in the at risk and some risk categories in October. A closer look at the assessment scores on Table 2 shows that there was student growth, even if there was not enough growth to move up from one category to the next, when comparing children to the benchmarks.

In the category of Oral Reading Fluency, 10 of my students were rated at risk when being compared to the benchmark while two rated as at some risk. I added an oral reading activity to my literacy group time and am interested to see how my students will do when I assess them again in the spring on their oral reading fluency. The results of this category will not be reported on in this project.

Prince George School District norms. In order to look at the reading skill development of the students who received reading instruction in my Grade 1 literacy group, I compared the DIBELS results of my students to the DIBELS norms that were developed by the Prince George School District in 2003. The DIBELS assessment routine is to assess Letter Naming Fluency, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency in the fall and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency and Oral Reading Fluency in the winter. The Letter Naming Fluency assessment in the fall and the Oral Reading Fluency Assessment in the winter were two areas that I could not assess twice during my study time to look at student achievement. However, when I looked more closely at my students' assessment scores and the Prince George School District norm scores as compared to the DIBELS benchmarks, I made some interesting observations. Of my 12 students, 83%
of them were considered *at risk* according to the DIBELS benchmarks for Letter Naming Fluency in the fall while 36% of the Prince George School District students were considered *at risk*. Similarly, 83% of my students were considered *at risk* according to the DIBELS benchmarks for Oral Reading Fluency in the winter while 35% of the Prince George School District students were considered *at risk*. While the intention of this study is to look at how grouping for literacy instruction can help improve reading achievement for the learners at my school, it is of particular interest to me that 83% of my students were benchmarked *at risk* in at least two of the DIBELS indicator categories while only 35 to 36% of the children in the Prince George School District were benchmarked *at risk* in these same categories. At the same time, 75 to 85% of my reading group populations are Aboriginal while the percentage of Aboriginal students in the Prince George School District is lower than at my school.

While looking to other schools that have high Aboriginal populations and group students for reading instruction would be interesting from an educational standpoint, it is beyond the scope of this particular study.

There were two categories with which I could compare my students in a before-and-after format to the Prince George School District norms. These categories were Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency. I compared my individual students’ DIBELS scores in each of these two categories to the percentile norms that were developed by the Prince George School District in order to check for individual student growth and reading group growth. Each category, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency, has been analyzed separately in the following section.

**Phoneme Segmentation Fluency.** Table 3 lists the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency scores of each of my 12 students for October and January in columns two and three, respectively. I compared each score from the October assessment to the Prince George
School District Grade One Norms and determined in which percentile each of my students was for the fall. I did the same with each score from the January assessment to determine in which percentile each of my students was for the winter. Columns four and five from Table 3 reflect this information.

Table 3

*Phoneme Segmentation Fluency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>PSF Oct</th>
<th>PSF Jan</th>
<th>%ile Oct</th>
<th>%ile Jan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
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<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>88</td>
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<td>76</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 19.08 49.17 42.75 74.00
Standard Deviation 14.05 12.83 23.69 21.11

Every student from my literacy group improved in the area of Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and moved up in percentile rank from the October assessment to the January assessment according to the Prince George School District norms. To determine the statistical significance of this improvement, I compared the percentile results, using a dependent *t*-test. The mean percentile score for October was 42.75 with a standard deviation of 23.69. The mean percentile score for January was 74.00 with a standard deviation of 21.11. The Pearson correlation for this *t*-test was .32, *t* = 4.12 and *df*=11. I looked at the two-tailed value for determining the statistical significance which turned out to be *p*=.0017.
Cohen's $d=1.32$, a large effect. These results showed that grouping for literacy instruction appeared to offer a learning situation which resulted in increased achievement for my learners as compared to the Prince George School District norms in the area of Phoneme Segmentation Fluency. The $t$-test and Cohen's $d$ calculations were repeated for the raw scores as these results would be indirectly comparable to the Phase One results. Again there was a statistically significant difference, $t=6.37$, $df=11$, $p=.00005$ with Cohen's $d=2.3$, a large effect.

*Nonsense Word Fluency.* Table 4 lists the Nonsense Word Fluency scores of each of my 12 students for October and January in columns two and three, respectively. As with the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency section, I compared each score from the October and January assessments to the Prince George School District Grade One Norms for Nonsense Word Fluency and determined in which percentile each of my students was for both. Columns four and five from Table 4 reflect this information.

Table 4

*Nonsense Word Fluency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>NWF Oct</th>
<th>NWF Jan</th>
<th>%ile Oct</th>
<th>%ile Jan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>31.67</td>
<td>38.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>22.06</td>
<td>11.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As I did for the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency assessment, I determined the statistical significance of my students’ percentile rankings as compared to the Prince George School District norms. I compared the percentile results, using another dependent t-test. The mean percentile score for October was 31.67 with a standard deviation of 22.96. The mean percentile score for January was 38.42 with a standard deviation of 11.54. The Pearson correlation for this t-test was .14 which indicated that the rank order of my students’ scores in January bore little to no resemblance to their scores in October. This is an unusual result in educational achievement and will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this study. The t observed for this t-test was .99, the df= 11. I looked at the two-tailed value for determining the statistical significance which turned out to be p=.34. Cohen’s d=0.31, a small improvement. Using percentile ranks from the Prince George School District norms, the dependent t-test results showed that my reading group did not make a statistically significant improvement for Nonsense Word Fluency. The statistically non-significant effect (d=0.31) suggests a lack of sensitivity of the t-test likely due to sample size. See Chapter 14 of Hurlburt (2006) for further clarification.

While, as a whole, my students did not make a statistically significant improvement in terms of percentile ranking from the Prince George School District norms in the area of Nonsense Word Fluency, eight of the 12 students from my literacy group showed improvement and moved up in percentile ranking. The four students who showed a decrease in percentile ranking from the fall assessment to the winter assessment still showed some progress in how fluent they were in reading nonsense words. However, they did not make enough progress in this fluency to remain in the same percentile rank or move up. Of these four students who moved down in percentile-rank, two only dropped two or three percentile points. These two, Student 8 and Student 15, still made some progress in the area of
Nonsense Word Fluency, just not enough to remain in the same percentile in the Prince George School District norms or move up. Student 1, Student 7, Student 13 and Student 17 made a lot of progress and moved up at least seventeen or more percentile points. I performed a dependent t-test on the Nonsense Word Fluency raw scores. The dependent t-test results and Cohen’s $d$ for these raw scores indicated growth that was statistically significant and would be considered a large amount of growth ($t=6.81, df=11, p=.00003$ with Cohen’s $d=2.57$).

Returning to the Phase One (kindergarten) results, the dependent t-test results calculation ($t=8.02, p=.000002, df=13$ and Cohen’s $d=1.95$) indicate that the amount of growth measured using the locally developed test was very similar to that found with the Grade 1 DIBELS measures. This suggests that the program was equally effective for the kindergarten group as it was for the Grade 1 group.

Summary

In Chapter Four of this study, I presented the data that I collected during the assessment periods of Phases One and Two. I began this chapter by describing how I ensured my students’ anonymity by assigning them pseudo-random identity numbers for the purposes of this study. I provided brief discussions of my findings. In Phase One, I compared the final assessment results of the students to their initial assessment results to illustrate the reading improvement that took place. In Phase Two, I compared my students’ DIBELS assessment results to the benchmarks provided by DIBELS and to a set of norms that has been developed by the Prince George School District in 2003 in order to determine if reading improvement took place. I found that the results from my students’ assessments from Phase One and Phase Two showed affirmation, some with statistical significance, that
grouping for literacy instruction was positively affecting the reading skills of the students in my reading groups.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This final chapter forms a conclusion for the study Literacy Groupings for Reading Success. I begin by summarizing my reasons and methods for completing this study. Then I look at conclusions I have drawn from my study. In the third section of this chapter, I look at the limitations of my project. I next look at implications for practice; what difference will my study make and to whom? I end this chapter with a review of points that have arisen for possible future research.

Project Summary

This study began as a result of an important catalyst: the primary teachers at my school and I were very unhappy with the low reading achievement of many of our students. The fall of the 2010-2011 school year was very tumultuous. Owing to declining enrolment and government financial cutbacks, the kindergarten to Grade 3 school I had taught at for eight years was closed down and the students, three teachers and many educational assistants were moved to what was formerly a Grades 4 to 7 school during the summer of 2010. The 2010-2011 school year was a transition year for those of us who moved into the new school. Amidst the settling in challenges of adjusting to a new setting, it was determined by the teachers early in the fall that a large number of our primary students were not meeting grade expectations in reading as set out by provincial reading guidelines. The teachers and administrators from our school collaborated to look at this reading deficit and work toward finding a solution. We determined that if we assessed the children and divided them into literacy groupings designed for their instructional levels, we could better address the learning needs of our students. By grouping these students for literacy instruction, my fellow teachers and I felt we could reduce the large ranges of reading abilities that existed within our original classes and provide targeted instruction.
I chose to complete this master's project on my experience teaching the kindergarten-level literacy group (Phase One) and the Grade 1-level literacy group (Phase Two). I wanted to study how grouping for literacy instruction would help my students' reading skills. While current literature has shown mixed results for ability grouping, my teacher colleagues and I felt the benefits of grouping our students for literacy instruction outweighed the negative effects which may or may not occur. The concept of grouping in order to narrow the range of abilities in reading made sense to us and meant that we would be able to plan for and teach a more homogeneous group of children the most important school subject - reading. Within this literacy group setting, I wanted to look at designing and teaching a high quality reading program to my kindergarten reading-level students during Phase One and to my Grade 1 reading-level students during Phase Two. I looked to current literature when planning my reading programs to ensure I was providing quality reading instruction to the children within my reading groups.

This study has been broken into two phases with Phase One covering the time period from January 2011 to May 2011 when I taught the kindergarten-level reading group and Phase Two covering the time period from September 2011 to January 2012 when I taught the Grade 1-level reading group. I assessed students near the beginning of each of these phases. I used the Reading Group Assessment instrument and teacher observation during Phase One and the DIBELS instrument and teacher observation during Phase Two. The use of the DIBELS system allowed me to correct for the inability in Phase One to adjust for effects of student maturation and to interpret the amount of learning that occurred. With the English Language Arts Integrated Resource Package for Kindergarten (BC Ministry of Education, 2006) during Phase One and the English Language Arts Integrated Resource Package for Grade 1 (BC Ministry of Education, 2006) during Phase Two as the bases for my program
planning, I designed lessons for and taught the reading group that was assigned to me during each of the phases of this project. I assessed my students again, using the Reading Group Assessment instrument in May 2011 for Phase One and the DIBELS instrument in January 2012 for Phase Two and analyzed the results. The overall results from both the Phase One and Phase Two sets of data show that my students made progress in their reading skills. In Phase Two, in addition to comparing their fall and winter DIBELS scores to look for reading progress, I compared my students’ Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency results to norms that were created by the Prince George School District 57 in 2003 and conducted dependent t-tests to determine the statistical significance of my students’ reading progress in those areas. My Grade 1-level students showed a statistically significant amount of improvement in the area of Phoneme Segmentation and an overall non-significant improvement in the area of Nonsense Word Fluency as based on the Prince George School District norms (School District No. 57, 2003).

Conclusions

I drew a number of conclusions as I wrapped up Phase One of this project. When thinking about the students who had made the most gain in their Reading Group Assessment scores, for example Student 4, Student 12 and Student 13, I felt that their growth was partly developmental – they had gained maturity and it was their time to learn the concepts that were presented to them. However, I felt the lengthy uninterrupted regular pre-reading skills instruction moved these students even further than they would have been moved otherwise with a shorter and less focussed pre-reading program.

When looking at Student 1, Student 9 and Student 11, the three students who came in from a Grade 1 class, I saw that they were well suited to the learning activities that took place in my kindergarten-level reading group. They were challenged by the material I offered and
made progress in their pre-reading skills. These students were waiting to be assessed to determine whether or not they have specific learning disabilities and I suspected that learning pre-reading and reading skills may proceed more slowly for them than for other children their age. This is exactly the reason why we began this type of reading initiative – to meet the children where they are and guide them forward in their learning.

When I looked back at the original focus of Phase One of this project, I felt that my questions were answered affirmatively. Grouping students based on their instructional needs and providing uninterrupted classes of reading instruction in specified areas for 90 minutes a day had a positive effect on the pre-reading skills of the young learners in my class. The first term of the reading group initiative, Everybody Reads!, was very successful. With the skills that they attained, the learners in my kindergarten-level reading group began to see themselves as readers or soon-to-be readers. They became more confident in their abilities as they developed their pre-reading skills. Group results were of the same magnitude as the statistically significant and practically significant results found in Phase Two.

Phase Two of this study, which looked at my Grade 1-level reading group students, many of whom were formerly in my kindergarten-level reading group, continued to produce good results. I chose the DIBELS assessment instrument for Phase Two of this study to assess and track my students’ progress. I compared my students’ results to a control, the Prince George School District Grade One Norms, so I could determine if they showed any statistically significant progress as a result of participating in my literacy group. The two categories of assessment that I analyzed using a dependent $t$-test were Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency. The result of the Phoneme Segmentation Fluency dependent $t$-test showed that my students made a statistically significant improvement in this area ($p=.0017$). In Nonsense Word Fluency, my students did
not show a statistically significant improvement in percentile ranking as based on the Prince George School District norms. The result of this dependent t-test indicated a statistically insignificant improvement ($p=.34$). However, as discussed in Chapter 4, eight of the twelve students in my literacy group moved up in percentile ranking in Nonsense Word Fluency and, overall, there was a slight mean improvement in percentile scores for my group. In conclusion, I feel there was sufficient statistical evidence to indicate that ability grouping for reading appears to offer a learning situation for increased achievement for primary students.

**Limitations**

A variety of independent variables may have affected the results and posed as limitations of this study. If the students showed improvement in their reading, was it the grouping itself that caused the improvement? Or was it the reading intervention - the actual activities I did with the students in my reading group that caused the improvement? Was the novelty of the new reading group initiative and initial enthusiasm on the part of the teacher responsible for the improvement?

As an experienced teacher and an educational researcher, I find the lack of correlation between my October and January Nonsense Word Fluency scores ($r=.14$) unusual. I have no understanding of why this occurred. The size of my test samples may have been a limitation during this study with only 12 students in Phase Two. My results may have been different if my sample sizes were larger or if more reading groups besides my own participated in this study. The length of my study may have been another limiting factor that affected my results. If my study in Phase Two had been extended to the end of the school year, the results may have looked quite different and been more statistically significant when compared to the Prince George School District norms in Nonsense Word Fluency.
Another limitation of this project was that while it was not intended to specifically study Aboriginal students and their reading progress while working in literacy groups, the subjects in this study were 75 to 85% Aboriginal. Therefore, the results from this study may be more applicable to schools of similar populations and of more interest to teachers teaching in such schools.

I used DIBELS for the first time while conducting this study. When my students' scores indicated that they were at risk according to the DIBELS' benchmarks (Good & Kaminski, 2002), I added activities to my reading lessons and created small group activities as outlined in Hall (2006) to help strengthen their skills in their areas of weakness. While this practice of teaching to student areas of weakness may have affected the results of this study, it is part of my regular practice and not something I did differently during this study. These interventions cannot be separated from ability grouping.

Unknown information is an additional limiting factor for this study. While it is known that students at our school were grouped for literacy instruction according to their reading ability, it is unknown whether or not or if any of the Prince George School District schools grouped their students for literacy instruction. I may have compared ability grouping in my classes with an unknown number of ability grouped classes in the Prince George School District. Had there been no ability grouping at all in the Prince George School District, the differences between the norms and my reading group scores may have been larger.
Implications for Practice

The students at my school made good to excellent progress in the smaller reading groups where they received more focused instruction based on their reading ability. Completing this study has highlighted for me how important it is to teach children pre-reading and reading skills at their level and that grouping them for literacy instruction can be a powerful means of facilitating this. I have always felt that an eclectic approach to teaching reading should emphasize phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NRP, 2000) as essential reading program components. I have also felt that teachers who keep current in the area of best teaching practice are strong proponents of student achievement. Combine the eclectic best-practice teaching approach with a setting of focused instruction created by grouping children based on their instructional needs and the result is an ideal environment in which to nurture reading success. For the students at my school, grouping for literacy instruction, as described in this study, is a means for promoting reading success. I recommend ability grouping for the purpose of reading instruction to fellow educators.

Implications for Future Research

While completing this study, a number of points have arisen for possible future research. The duration of each phase in this study was only four months long. It would be interesting to do a similar study for a whole school year. If this were the case, more DIBELS indicators could be compared to the Prince George School District norms for a more detailed look at the program effectiveness of literacy grouping. If measured at multiple time points, assessment results may show how different kinds of learners respond to interventions. A second year of this study would allow for comparison by the same teacher between two groups of same level students at the same school. Studying the reading achievement of
several literacy groups during the same year would be of interest and would provide a more rounded look at the benefits of literacy groupings for reading success. Working with a partner school and/or teacher who was implementing reading groups similar to our grouping model, then sharing teaching strategies and assessment results, would be another area of interest to determine the benefits of such grouping.
References


MEMORANDUM

To: Colleen West  
CC: Peter MacMillan  

From: Henry Harder, Chair  
Research Ethics Board  

Date: October 3, 2011  

Re: E2011.0912.093.00  
Literacy Grouping For Reading Success

Thank you for submitting the above-noted proposal 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,

Dr. Henry Harder  
Chair, Research Ethics Board
November 15, 2011

Colleen West
Box 365
Burns Lake, BC
V0J 1EO

Dear Colleen:

Your request for permission to continue your research on the effectiveness of the initiative Everyone Reads! during the 2011-2012 year was approved at the meeting of the Board of Education, School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes), on Monday, November 14, 2011.

I have reviewed the project and look forward to seeing the results. Please ensure once that again participation of students and teachers is voluntary and that confidentiality is adhered to. Good luck on your project, Colleen.

Sincerely,

Charlene Seguin
Superintendent of Schools

cc: Lisa Ketto, Principal of William Konkin Elementary
Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you have been informed, our school has begun a new initiative called “Everybody Reads!” to improve the reading skills of our primary learners. As you also know, students have been assessed and placed in reading groups that best suit their learning needs in reading.

I am currently taking my Master’s Degree in Education at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and am working on an inquiry project with the group of students I teach. The purpose of this project is to track student progress during the first ten weeks of our newly formed reading groups to determine program success.

Your child was chosen to be part of my study as he/she is in the reading group that I teach. Your child was given a two page oral assessment in early January and, according to the results, was placed in my reading group. Over the next few weeks I will be teaching your child a variety of pre-reading and reading skills by using sound educational programs such as Animated Literacy, Road to the Code, and Handwriting Without Tears to name a few. After receiving reading instruction for ninety minutes five days a week, your child will be retested, using the same assessment form, to determine pre-reading skill progress. This study poses no risk to your child. He/she will actually benefit by having his/her reading progress monitored so closely.

The responses that your child gives during the two assessment times will only be accessible to me. No names of students will appear in my research results. Any raw data collected will be kept safely locked in a filing cabinet or in a password protected computer and will be shredded or deleted by the end of 2011. Using the information gained from assessing your child is voluntary and if you wish that the results for your child not be used in my project please let me know. If you choose to withdraw your child from the study, assessment results will not be included in the inquiry report.
If you have any questions about this project, you can call me at 250-692-3146, or either of my instructors, Jane Anderlini at 250-960-5319 or Dr. Willow Brown at 250-960-6262. If you have any complaints about the project, contact the Office of Research (reb@unbc.ca or 250-960-6735). If you wish to receive a copy of the research results, please contact me at William Konkin Elementary School in September of 2011.

Sincerely yours,

Colleen West

Please keep the Information Letter. Return the Consent form below.

Everybody Reads! Assessing Progress in an Early Literacy Intervention
A UNBC M.Ed. (MDL) Leading for Learning Certificate
Inquiry Project by Mrs. Colleen West
Parent/Guardian Consent Form

My child, ________________________________, may participate in Mrs. Colleen West’s inquiry project as outlined by the attached information letter. I understand that my child’s name will not appear in Mrs. West’s research results and if at any time I decide to withdraw my child from the study, I may do so by contacting Mrs. West.

Name: _______________________________ Signature: _______________________________

Date: _______________________________
Appendix D – Phase Two Information Letter and Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Literacy Groupings for Reading Success

A UNBC M.Ed. (MDL) Master’s of Education

Project by Mrs. Colleen West

Information Letter and Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am currently taking my Master’s Degree in Education at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and am working on a project with the group of students I teach. The purpose of this project is to track student progress in their reading groups during the first term to monitor student improvement and program success.

Your child was chosen to be part of my study as he/she is in the reading group that I teach. Your child will be assessed, using the DIBELS assessment tool, in October. Over the next four months I will be teaching your child a variety of early reading skills by using sound educational programs such as Animated Literacy, Reading A to Z, and Handwriting Without Tears to name a few. After receiving reading instruction for ninety minutes five days a week, your child will be retested, using the same assessment tool, to determine reading skill progress. The results will be analyzed as part of the data collection portion of my project.

This study poses no risk to your child. He/she will actually benefit by having his/her reading progress monitored so closely. The responses that your child gives during the two assessment times will only be accessible to me. No names of students will appear in my research results. Any raw data collected will be kept safely locked in a filing cabinet or in a password protected computer and will be shredded or deleted by the end of 2012. Using the information gained from assessing your child is voluntary and if you wish that the results for your child not be used in my project please let me know. If you choose to withdraw your child from the study, assessment results will not be included in the project report.

If you have any questions about this project, you can call me at 250-692-3146, or my supervisor, Dr. Peter MacMillan 250-960-5828. If you have any complaints about the
project, contact the Office of Research (reb@unbc.ca or 250-960-6735). If you wish to receive a copy of the research results, please contact me at William Konkin Elementary School in April of 2012.

Sincerely yours,
Colleen West

Please keep the Information Letter. Return the Consent form below.

Literacy Groupings for Reading Success
A UNBC M.Ed. (MDL) Masters of Education
Project by Mrs. Colleen West
Parent/Guardian Consent Form
My child, ____________________________, may participate in Mrs. Colleen West’s project as outlined by the attached information letter. I understand that my child’s name will not appear in Mrs. West’s research results and if at any time I decide to withdraw my child from the study, I may do so by contacting Mrs. West.

Name: ____________________________ Signature: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________
Appendix E – Reading Group Assessment

Reading Group Assessment

Name: ________________________  Date: ________________________

**PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS** (/20)

Phonological awareness is a critical building block for learning to read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Rhyme Generation/Discrimination:</strong> /6</th>
<th><strong>Receptive Fluency:</strong> /3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 pt for two-three rhyming words</td>
<td>Put 10 blocks on the table. The child is to take a block for every word that he/she hears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pt for fewer than two</td>
<td>Demonstrate by saying the sentence, “You can see the puppy”, then repeating it while moving a block for each word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 pt for no correct response</td>
<td>• “Now it’s your turn. Here are some blocks. Take a block for every word that you hear.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Let’s make up some rhyming words (or words that sound the same at the end) like this: goat, coat, tote... red, med, bed.”</td>
<td>Check mark above each word. No prompting if mistakes made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Now I want you to say all the words that rhyme with ball /2</td>
<td>1 pt for each word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Now I want you to say all the words that rhyme with day /2</td>
<td>□ I am smart. (no pts/practice item)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I’m going to say some words. Two of the words rhyme (or sound the same at the end) and two don’t. I want you to tell me which words rhyme.”</td>
<td>□ We are happy. (0 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pt for each correct response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ cat-mat.............. cat-car /1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ pig-mop.............. pig-wig /1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Phoneme Identity:</strong> /6</th>
<th><strong>Syllable Segmentation/Deletion:</strong> /5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 pt for each correct response</td>
<td>1 pt for each correct response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell the child if his/her answer is correct and give the correct answer if the child gives an incorrect response.</td>
<td>Use the arm segmenting technique, clapping, hand chopping, or any other method you are comfortable with to demonstrate syllable segmentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the actual response below the word. If a child cannot complete the first task, likely she won’t be able to complete the next two.</td>
<td>• “I’m going to say a word then I will repeat it and [clap] out each part of the word... jumping...jump-ing. Let’s practice. I want you to repeat the word after me and then say it again [clapping] for each part: pizza, caterpillar, computer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I am going to say a word, and you are to tell me what sound the word starts with. I’ll show you: Jack...Jack starts with J.”</td>
<td>□ Monkey (/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial: mom sleep /2</td>
<td>□ Banana (/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I’m going to say a word and you are to tell me what sound the word ends with. I’ll show you: food...food ends with d.”</td>
<td>• “I am going to say a word then say it again leaving out part of the word. Let’s practice... farmer. Now I am going to say farmer without the farm. (Say -er). Now you try.” Use blocks to represent each syllable.</td>
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<td>Final: dog truck /2</td>
<td>□ Say mailbox. Now say mailbox without the box. (The child should say mail) (/1)</td>
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<td>• “I’m going to say a word and are to you tell me what sound is in the middle of the word. I’ll show you: sat...the middle sound in sat is a.”</td>
<td>□ Say picnic. Now say picnic without the pic-(The child should say nic) (/1)</td>
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<td>Medial: van keep /2</td>
<td>□ Say cucumber. Now say cucumber without the cum-(cu, ber) (/1)</td>
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LETTER NAME/SOUND IDENTIFICATION (/20)

Use the Letter Identification Score Sheet and the Alphabet Letter Sheets. If child makes 4 errors in a row, stop. You can have the child look through the rest to see if they recognize any others.

Upper Case: /10
1 pt for every five letters (max pts 5)
Letter Names /5
Show the upper case letter sheet. Point to each letter going across the line and ask the child to name each letter.
Letter Sounds /5
Point to each letter going across the line and ask the child to give the sound of each letter.

Lower Case: /10
1 pt for every five letters (max pts 5)
Letter Names /5
Show the lower case letter sheet. Point to each letter going across the line and ask the child to name each letter.
Letter Sounds /5
Point to each letter going across the line and ask the child to give you the sound of each letter.

Letter Identification Score Sheet

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<td>1 point for every 5 correct</td>
<td>Letter/Sound Grand Total (/20)</td>
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Appendix F – Phase One Figures (F1-F11)

Expressive Rhyming

Figure F1. Expressive rhyming for kindergarten-level students in January and May 2011.

Most students progressed or maintained their ability to express rhyming words except Student 1 who continued to be unable to generate rhyming words, and Student 3 who refused to participate during the second assessment period (see note below).

Receptive Rhyming /2

Figure F2. Receptive rhyming for January and May 2011.

All students showed progress or maintained the ability to state whether or not word pairs rhymed in the area of receptive rhyming except Student 3 and Student 6. Student 3 may have been in one of his oppositional moods and Student 6 is a student who sometimes lacks confidence in her abilities.
All students improved in or maintained their ability to identify initial phonemes in simple words except Student 3 and Student 14 who showed no progress in this area.

All students improved in or maintained the ability to identify final phonemes in simple words except Student 2, Student 3, Student 6 and Student 14 who showed no progress in this area. Student 1 did better on her January assessment than in May in this area.
Students 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 15 showed improvement in this Grade 1 levelled reading skill.

Most students improved or maintained their ability in the area of receptive fluency except Student 3, 14 and 15. Student 14’s skill ability is very low so understanding what was required of her during this task may have affected how she answered the assessment questions. Student 2 and Student 12 made the most progress in this area compared to their peers.
All students showed improvement in the area of syllable segmentation and deletion except Students 3, 10, 11 and 14. Student 3’s results may reflect the mood he was in on assessment day or may represent his true ability in this area.

Student 2 showed no observable improvement in learning capital letter names according to this graph. When looking at the actual raw data from this assessment, this student did make some improvement in her knowledge of capital letter names.
All students showed improvement in identifying the sounds of the capital letters except Student 8.

All students showed improvement in identifying the names of the lower case letters except Student 2 who showed no progress.
Figure F11. Lower case letter sound results from January and May 2011.

All students showed improvement in identifying the sounds of the lower case letters except Students 8 and 14. Student 8 forgot some of the letter sounds she knew and Student 14 made no observable progress in this area.

Notes.

*Student 3 is under the care of a paediatrician and has received a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Student 3 behaves in a very oppositional manner most of the time. For this reason, some of the data collected on this student may be inaccurate as they may not reflect his/her actual ability but the mood s/he was in at the time of assessment. Behaviourally, Student 3 performs at the developmental age of 2 or 3 and academic age of 5 or 6. At the time of this study write-up, s/she was 7 years old.

* Student 15 joined our reading group at the beginning of week nine in Phase One. For this reason, there is only the May 2011 assessment data set for Student 15.