

Fostering Independent Reading in 2nd Grade: *Shifting from Chore to Choice*

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School Context

Mt. Vernon is a neighborhood school located in the Washington Heights community on the south side of Chicago. It is located on a sprawling campus adjacent to Jackie Robinson Park; which serves as a great partner to the school.

In 2015, the school enrollment was only approximately 260 students. The low enrollment led to budget cuts therefore creating spilt classrooms from the first through fifth grade levels at the onset of this school year. Recently, the school enrollment increased significantly leading to a need for a new teacher position. The school launched a recruitment plan of canvassing the neighborhood over the summer, which has appeared to be successful.

Per the 2015-2016 School Report, the school's data is as follows:

- School demographics-100% African-American students
- Low income students account for 93.4%
- Diverse learners make up 20.9% of the population
- Mobility rate is 36.7%

Mt. Vernon is on an upward trend in terms of School Rating, student growth, student attainment, and School Culture and Climate. The school is in "Good Standing" with a 2+ Level. Student growth is above average, particularly in Math. Student attainment is below average in comparison to the national norms.

The school has a strong leadership that is invested in the whole child. This is indicative of the school's yearlong theme, "On the Road to Success" based on the Wizard of Oz. While many schools are seeing an exodus of principals, Mt. Vernon's principal is in her second year as the

lead administrator, after previously being the assistant principal for six years. The current assistant principal has worked at Mt. Vernon for 20 years in various roles such as classroom teacher, Science Teacher, and Teacher leader to name a few. Their hard work and commitment to making Mt. Vernon a success is evident in the 2016 My Voice My School Survey, which went from “not yet organized” to “well-organized” within the last two years. Students and parents feel safe and secure in a neighborhood that has seen an increase in violence. This can be attributed to the school’s effort to treat Social Emotional Learning with the same value as the core subjects. Mt. Vernon has a standard of excellence on the Network and school level that is not for the faint at heart. Every staff member is held to the highest bar and made accountable for student success. Rigor is the norm daily. Excuses such as attendance, lack of parent participation, or SES are not allowed to justify the root cause of a school/class level problem.

I am honored to have been selected to teach at this school. I am tenured, NBCT, and I hold a Master’s in Educational Leadership and I have not been challenged professionally as I am today. This is my second year at the school after being at the same school for 14 years. My teaching practices are being honed in a demanding, yet supportive environment of likeminded peers. Mt. Vernon is truly a school where students and teachers “learn to soar.”

My class consists of 18 second grade students with a vast range of learning abilities. NWEA percentiles stretch from the 1st percentile to the 99th in Reading. TRC Reading levels begin at RB (reading behaviors) to Level P. In the area of Math, 15% of my students are meeting benchmark scores on mClass. 25% of the students are at attainment on NWEA. Parent participation is 77% based on Report Card Pick Up data and our parent communication tool Class Dojo. Overall, I have a cooperative group of students that are eager to learn and enjoy technology integration in whole group instruction.

Rationale

I began teaching 2nd grade at Mt. Vernon Elementary School in the 2015-2016 school year. This was my first time teaching 2nd grade in seven years. For those seven years, I taught 3rd grade. For many years, I've dealt with the pressures of teaching a benchmark grade. Over the years, these pressures had increased due to additional standardized testing and the district's measure of annual school performance. With that being said, I was not ready for the pressures of teaching 2nd grade at a single grade school. Much of the pressure comes from the fact that second graders account for 5% of a School's Quality Rating Policy. In the 2014-2015 school year, our second graders ranked in the 88th percentile for student attainment in the area of Reading. However, for the 2015-2016 school year, my second grade students only ranked in the 12th percentile. That drastic decrease began my personal journey to reflection and quest for improving Reading growth.

Last year our Network used the term "Attainment Group" to label students that needed our focus in order to increase NWEA test scores. The goal was to move more students to the 50th percentile to meet national norms for grade level proficiency. Students that had a Winter percentile score between 40-55 fell in this category. Most of my students were labeled "Students of Concerns" because their score fell below the 39th percentile. My data from the previous year showed significant growth for my "Attainment" students. However, my struggling students showed minimal growth. At the end of last year, I made it my purpose to develop a plan to support these group of struggling students. Many of these students ended the school year reading far below grade level.

This year, my school was required to test 2nd graders using NWEA and DIBELS. The DIBELS assessments gave me valuable information that I did not have last year. The assessment focused on text reading comprehension (TRC), sight word recognition, nonsense word fluency, and oral reading fluency. The test is much different from NWEA, where students are sitting in front of a computer. I can observe their testing habits but that doesn't provide me information on whether or not they are understanding what they are reading. For DIBELS, I have to test the students one-on-one, giving me insight into their reading abilities. I made many observations during the testing. I realized that listening to students read provided me with the opportunity to analyze their miscues. I wondered how many students had someone at home to listen to their reading. After analyzing the data I had 7 students at grade level and 7 students below grade level. I also noticed that the parents of the struggling students were constantly in contact with me and asked for ways to support their child at home. This communication birthed an interactive reading log with parents, which was a shift from how I previously documented students reading at home. In the past, I used the typical parent initialing next to the book or number of minutes read. The new version provided me with the opportunity to share strategies with parents as a home-school connection.

I am not alone in my struggles with low performing students making growth; it is a school-wide issue. As a member of the ILT, we tried to get to the root cause of our "Student of Concern" group not moving. We are also always looking for more opportunities to increase parental involvement. I believe this research will provide insight to the response that likes to place the blame of lack of student achievement on lack of parental support.

As I began my research, I initially started the year selecting student's books for them for their weekend book reports. I used Fountas and Pinnell leveled readers. I looked at the back of the

book to make sure it was fiction and assigned the books to students that fit their level based on their TRC score. I did this for 2 weeks, quickly realizing students were seeing this activity as a chore, and this was not my intention. After reading parent comments and hearing students say they liked the book I read during a mini lesson and wanted to take it home, I knew students needed to have choice in their book selection. Parental feedback also supported my changes. At the beginning of the year, my class started as a split 2/3rd grade due to a limited budget that could not fund an additional teacher. Split classrooms were in place for 1-5th grade. Additional funding was given to our school due to an increase in enrollment. So on November 14th my 13 3rd grade students transitioned to a 3rd grade only class. I received 5 second graders who had been in the first grade classroom. The students I received were all far below grade level with the exception of 1 student. I am even more motivated now to see if reading growth will occur for these students that are reading at a Kindergarten level now that they are in this environment of choice and celebration of reading through snapshots of students reading at home, being allowed to read in class with a special reading “buddy” from home. Will their parents “buy-in” to weekly 2-way reading logs? With my class of 20, I now have 8 students in need of intensive reading support, 3 students at the strategic level, 2 proficient students, and 7 above proficient.

I am conducting this research primarily hoping to increase reading motivation for all students. I feel that exposure to different levels of text, genres, and opportunities to read should have a positive impact on all students regardless of their labels (Far Below, Intensive, Student of Concern, Strategic, Proficient, On Track, Above Proficient, College Ready). These are all categories my students are placed in throughout the year. My goal is to move towards creating a school wide shift that celebrates students that are motivated to read. Thus leading me to the following:

Question: What happens when the classroom culture fosters a celebration of reading for enjoyment?

Subquestions:

What happens to students' attitudes about reading for enjoyment?

What happens to overall reading levels?

What happens to overall reading growth on a standardized test?

Literature Review

Parent Engagement

At the beginning of the year, I implemented a two-way reading log to engage parents with discussions around their child's reading abilities. The log is an extension to parents just signing a spreadsheet of book titles and minutes read. The log has those components but is also includes a parent and teacher comment section. I asked parents to listen to their child read and make a "wow" and "wonder" statement. Then I respond to the parent's comment. This is done every weekend. At the time, I referred to this as just a two-way reading log. Upon research, I have learned that this higher level of interaction was referred to as dialogic reading (Arnold & Whitehurst, 1994). This parent-child reading has three components: evocative techniques, parental feedback, and progress change. Dixon-Krause, et. al (2010) summarizes these principles as including parents asking questions, providing praise and increasing difficulty over time. After studying dialogic readings, researchers found that when conducted in the home and at school, vocabulary development for the participants increased (Dixon-Krause, et. al., 2010). When parents are actively engaged in listening to students read there are many benefits for all parties involved.

Reading Motivation

When I say, “it’s time to read,” I began to observe the verbal and nonverbal reactions. How many students were excited, happy, disengaged, upset, unbothered? Was their motivation to read connected to their ability to read? My research led me to a study by Guthrie, et. al. (2006) which closely looked at long-term reading motivation that was intrinsic based on a specific reading interest. The researchers identified that when students are engaged and supported by the classroom teacher their motivation even if it is situated on a particular genre may predict their overall motivation to read (Guthrie, et. al., 2006). This study helped me to see how important student surveys are for analyzing not only student interest, as in a reading interest inventory, but also for student reasons for liking a particular book. One of the surveys used for the study asked the students about their favorite books. Some of the options included personal interest, make teacher happy, or talk with friends. Personal interest (79%) had the highest percentage, then came it was an easy book, 67% (Guthrie, et. al., 2006). When I initially started the weekend reading logs, I selected the books for the students based on their reading level. I quickly discovered what I thought was a good fit for the student did not match their interest. Needless to say, I changed that method.

Reading Levels

Student choice has been at the center of my action research. During independent reading, I allow my students to select any book they want to read despite their predetermined reading level based on their NWEA score or text reading comprehension level. Independent reading at my school is scheduled within each classroom’s reading block. One of the requirements is that students should select books based on their Lexile level. According to Flanagan & Schwanenflugel (2017), this is an outdated practice based on common myths about reading levels. The authors state that it is a myth that every reader has precise reading skills or that each book has an accurate reading level

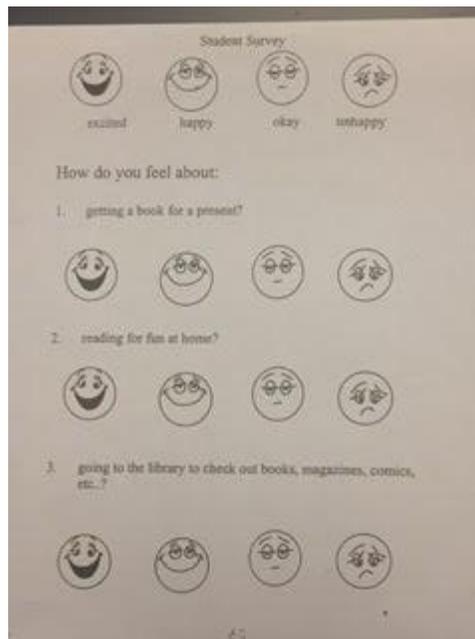
(Flanagan & Schwanenflugel, 2017). It was important to me that when fostering a culture for reading for enjoyment students were not forced to reading books that had to be close to their reading level, which was Flanagan & Schwanenflugel (2017) third myth. I am in agreement with Flanagan & Schwanenflugel (2017) when they say, “interest and motivation also great affect a reader’s ability to read a text.” This is evident when I see one of my struggling readers select a nonfiction snake book and are able to access the text because of their prior knowledge and passion for the topic.

Summary of data collection methods

Student Survey: In December, I had the Art teacher administer a student survey on reading for enjoyment. I plan to give this survey again at the end of May. The survey consisted of six questions-How do you feel about:

- getting a book for a present?
- reading for fun at home?
- going to the library to check out books, magazines, comics, etc.?
- reading instead of watching television?
- buying books to read for fun?
- when someone reads to you?

Students responded to the survey by circling emojis labeled excited, happy, okay, unhappy.



mClass: Reading 3D-Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC):

TRC assesses oral reading accuracy and comprehension using a set of calibrated benchmark books to determine each student’s instructional reading level at three time periods during the school year. Students results are given as Levels ranging from Reading Behaviors (RB) to Level Z.

Text and Performance Levels for Amplify Atlas by Grade and Time of Year

Time of Year	Proficient Level (Grade level)
BOY	Level I
MOY	Level J to K
EOY	Level L to M

NWEA: Standardized testing that assess students in Reading. Skills covered include Literature, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Informational text. The test is administered at the end of the year.

Our school has opted to test our second graders three times a year (Fall, Winter, Spring).

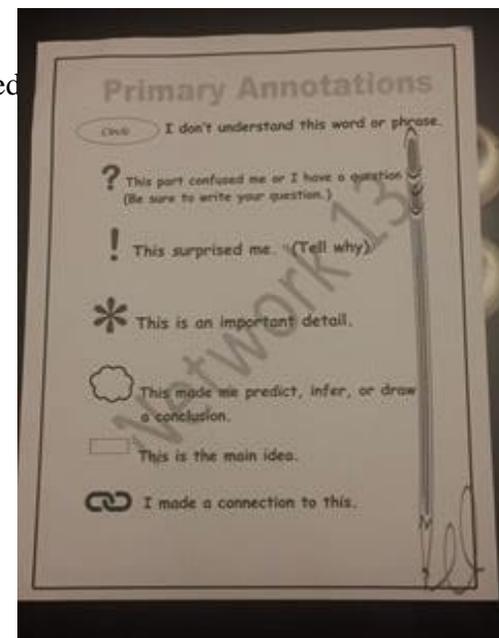
National Norms (RIT Scores)

	BOY	MOY	EOY
2 ND GRADE	176	184	190

Whole Group Implementations

I started the school with a goal of creating a class environment that fostered reading for enjoyment. I quickly learned that the enjoyment came through choice. Once I gave students choice, reading stopped being a chore. Students began to engage in books and different levels and genres. I taught mini lessons on book selections and finding that “just right” book. I felt it was important for students to know their reading lexile level. However, I made it clear that the choice was not restricted to just books that aligned to that level. I observed students selecting books and going back to the classroom library to switch the book. We had discussions about our reading moods and tastes for the day. I conducted several lessons on genres. In our classroom meetings, I set aside time to discuss how we treat books and discussed organization of the library.

Students responded to the books they read by completing daily independent reading logs. The first couple of months of the school year, students used primary annotations to make comments on their self-selected books. After reading, “The Doorbell Rang,” a student responded with a question: *why do they need so much cookies?*



I engaged parents in this process as well with the introduction of weekend reading logs that invited parents to comment on their child's reading at home. The two-way communication tool was a way to share and reinforce reading strategies that we were using in the classroom.

Weekend Reading Log

Name: _____ Month: _____

Lexia Range: _____ FSP Reading Level: _____

Date	Title of Text	Pages	Comments

Parent comment-Wows/Wonders:

Teacher Comment:

Here is an excerpt from a Weekend Reading Log dated 10-30-16 and 11-5

Parent Comment: “I wonder how can I help him (Shawn) with his fluency.”

Teacher Comment: “Let’s try having Shawn read poetry books. The poems are short and will help him with phrasing.”

Parent Comment: “Wow, the poems were good for him to read. I’m going to have him read a poem a day.”

Teacher Comment: “This weekend try recording Shawn reading a poem. Have him listen to the recording. Then have him practice the poem a few times and record him again. This would be good for him to hear the difference of his first read compared to his second recording.”

I made it a point to show others that reading could be enjoyed at home by having parents post their child getting caught reading at home on our school-wide app.

Reading instruction was intentional and I used a balanced literacy approach. I conferenced with students with the assistance of my aide. I took notes during the conference. With each student, I selected one of four areas to “check-in” with the student as they discussed their books. The areas were comprehension, accuracy, fluency and expression. I recorded my observations and created a next steps/goal. Below is an example of a conference I conducted with a student:

Book title: Bugs, Bugs, Bugs (nonfiction-easy read)

Conference focus: Accuracy

Teacher Observations: “read accurately; self-corrected but needs support with inflected endings.”

Next Step/Goals: create an inflected ending word list for student to practice on Spelling City website.

I was given resource support for my struggling readers. Guided reading groups were flexible and learning centers offered peer collaboration. I utilized online resources in addition to the paid technology programs offered by the school.

Case Study Rationale

When I analyzed my MOY data, I looked closely at the students that were in my classroom since September. The students that came to my class in November did not take the NWEA at the beginning of the year. So that left me with 12 students that had comparative data from BOY to MOY. 67% of students that had two data sets met their projected growth. It was at this point that I decided to focus on the four students that did not meet their targets. I asked myself, “What happened?” The class culture of reading for these students led to minimal growth

if any growth at all. When I looked closely at the students there were not many common factors for this group. Their reading ability, parent participation, motivation, achievement level, and learning styles all varied across the spectrum. Each had their own unique story.

Shannon is a model student. She is very attentive in class. She makes a commitment to complete her assignments even though she struggles academically. She is performing well below grade level. The first grade teacher and her parents had concerns about her reading skills last year. However, their concerns faded as she performed well on her end of the year assessments in first grade. Because of her growth, she was not placed in the first/second grade split classroom with other low performing second graders. Shannon had a difficult time adjusting to the second grade curriculum. Her text reading comprehension level was B. She scored at the 19th percentile on the beginning of the year NWEA assessment. Shannon's performance in reading needed a deep dive to find her deficits.

Tione's behavior in the previous years had been difficult to manage according to the first grade teacher. From the first day of school, I immediately liked Tione. I did not see any of the behaviors I was told about from others. I saw a focused student. He engaged in lessons, committed to completing his work accurately and remained on task without redirection. Had everyone misjudged him? But then around a month into the school year, I began to see a change in his overall behavior and attitude. Getting to know him, I learned that he was more misunderstood than misjudged. He likes to be the center of attention in both positive and negative ways. He'll take it anyway he can get it. Tione is the highest achieving student in the group. His NWEA score in reading for BOY was at the 84th percentile which was the highest for my class. Although he still scored above grade level on the MOY test, he still fell 3 points away from his projected score. Even though he knows he's close to his goal, he is not motivated to

push himself. His has not turned in any weekend parent logs.

Janet has to be reminded on a daily basis to be respectful. She says whatever comes to her mind and doesn't care if she hurts someone in the process. She does not complete classwork, homework, or anything else she doesn't want to do. She is not motivated by incentives, class points, etc. She is also unfazed by a missed recess, gym ,or computer class. She reads on grade level, TRC Level K, but she comprehends below grade level. Working with her is a challenge. She does not work well independently, in a small group or one-on-one. She rushes through assignments and even took her NWEA Reading test in 15 minutes resulting in a score at the 5th percentile. Her mother is responsive when I reach out to her about my concerns, but there is still no improvement. She also does not complete the weekend reading parent log. She was referred for our school's Check-In/Check-Out behavioral intervention but still no changes.

Shawn is a hard case to crack. He reads orally like a first grader but he comprehends like a third grader. He lacks focus and is easily distracted. He is the most talkative person in the classroom. He does not raise his hand and he constantly interrupts me when I am talking. He takes twice as long as the class to complete even the simplest task. He often fails class test. When given the opportunity to correct his mistakes, his score increases about 70% of the time. He is an only child. His mother is one of the handful of parents that consistently returns the weekend reading logs. She has chaperoned every field trip and knows her son's strengths and weaknesses, which puzzles her as well. On February 19th, she wrote "He's doing better. It's like he has to be forced to read some things. He doesn't think he's a good reader. I just wished he'd try harder."

Common Trends

Although the students selected for the case study had unique stories there was a common trend in

their growth across both the TRC and NWEA test, it was minimal. The one exception was Shawn who increased 4 reading levels on TRC. The TRC lack of growth can be attributed to lack of comprehension skills. With so many assessments, I did not focus many of my lessons on students verbally responding to text. This caused me to change my practices to ensure I was reading aloud to my class. This was something I cut back on due to time constraints. Another pattern that I observed after looking at the MOY scores for NWEA was that 3 out of 4 students area of weakness was literature.

NWEA-MOY Data

Student	RIT Score	Goal Area of Concern
Shannon	164	Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
Tione	195	Literature
Janet	160	Literature
Shawn	154	Literature

I thought it would have been informational text because most of our whole group lessons were in this genre. But the students that performed low in this area prefer nonfiction text over literature based on their book selections from independent reading logs.

Interventions

Shannon needed a lot more support than the others. She was included in a pullout group that meet with a resource teacher three times a week. She was instructed using the Pearson intervention program, My Sidewalks. Additionally, I partnered with the 8th grade teacher and she provided 4 of her students to become “writing buddies” for my students. Shannon met with

her buddy once a week and received support on her daily journal writing. Shannon's mother and I communicated frequently on the two-way reading log about the lack of her progress. Below is an excerpt from my teacher journal dated 10-28-16 summarizing a strategy that I shared with Shannon's mother:

"One of the "wonders" Shannon's mother had on our 2-way reading log was about her spelling. Her mom wrote, "Shannon did okay reading this book by herself. Didn't don't have to do with the book but I need to know how can I help Shannon with Spelling to study so she can past her tests." My response was to have Shannon use the Elkonin boxes at home as we do in class. I wrote her mom and explained how to use the boxes to help Shannon to "chop" the sounds of each word. I sent home an Elkonin handout that had boxes for each spelling word. Our skill for that week was short vowel words. I modified the list for Shannon and made sure each of the 10 words that she would be tested on had only 4 phonemes. The next comment from Shannon's mom thanked me for the suggestion and stated she would work on it and let me know if it worked out. I assessed the student's on 10-27. Shannon spelled all 10 words correctly. On her previous test she had misspelled all the words wrong. The list was more challenging and focused on vc/cv short vowel words. She also spelled one challenge word right (snack). Some of her misspelled challenge words were sap-scrap; sub-scrub, spast-splash. The challenge words show Shannon is making progress, but there is still work to be done. My next steps is to work with Shannon on blended sounds. I am also wondering if she is transferring the "chopping" technique into her daily reading and writing. Next week, I will conference with Shannon during Journal Writing to see if her phonemic awareness skills are evident in her independent writing. I shared Shannon's success with her mom on our 2-way log."

Even though Shannon was showing growth, she still was not making adequate gains and remained far below grade level After months of inconsistent progress in Reading and Math, Shannon's mother requested a Pre-Evaluation meeting on 2-22-17 with our school support team to determine if Shannon qualified for special educational services. Based on the data I provided from the interventions that were in place for Shannon, the team decided to move forward and evaluate Shannon to identify whether or not she needed special education services. Upon completion of the evaluation by the school psychologist, it was determined that Shannon has a learning disability and qualified to receive 800 minutes a week for support with her Language Arts Skills and 200 minutes of services in Math.

In order to increase literature skills for **Tione** I placed him in a chapter book study group. He is

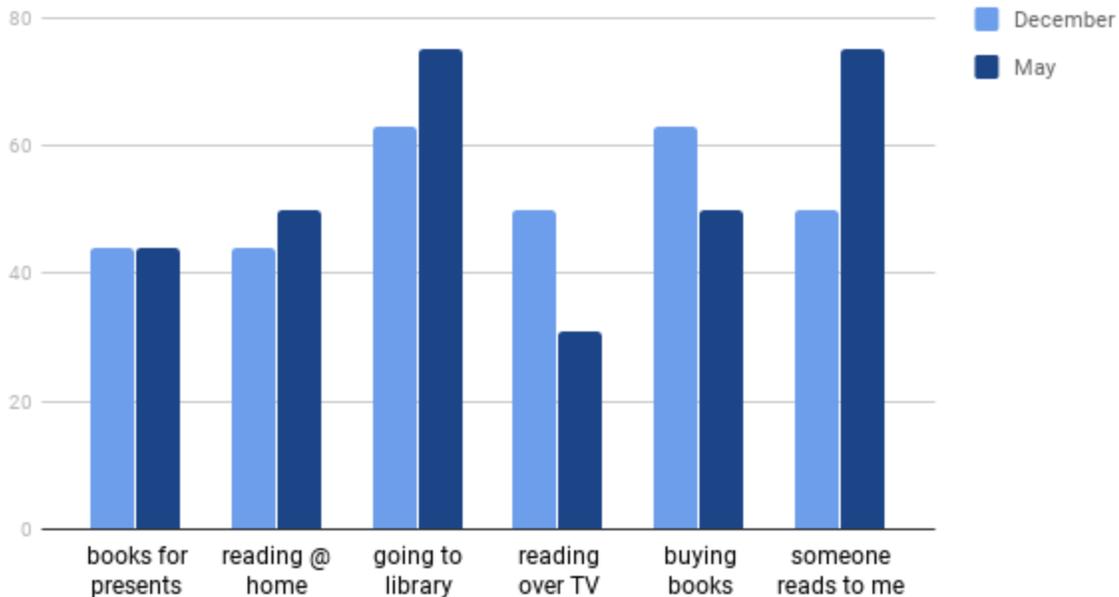
currently reading his second chapter book after completing Donovan's Word Jar. I selected the first chapter the book for the group. Tione is the only one from the case study that is in this group. When it came time to select the next book, I gathered several chapter books that covered different genres and interest. After previewing the books, Tione selected to read "The Stories Julian Tells." He works with another student and they support each other through the reading and responding of the book. I check in with the group at least once a week. Additionally, Tione was enrolled in my after-school tutoring class that focused on reading comprehension and vocabulary using the Wordly Wise curriculum. Tione was often late to school and missed independent reading time at least twice a week. He enjoyed reading but he rarely completed his reading logs. To further foster literacy in my class, I introduced my students to an online reading program called Epic Books. This free website provided my students with access to over 20,000 digital books and educational videos. Tione really enjoyed this program. On days that he was late to school, he still had a chance to select the technology center during rotations. He often opted to go on Epic books and read. He mostly read nonfiction books on topics such as animals, sports and biographies. Tione was beginning to show more motivation to read. As the year went on, his attendance hindered his progress. His attendance average went from 93% to 85%. His mother and I communicated often using the school-wide communication tool. But there was never any follow through on her part. Tione did not complete homework assignments. He attended the after school program at the park district next door to the school. He would often leave his homework there without completing the assignments. Other students in my class that attended the same program consistently turned in their homework. I tried to place Tione on the "Check-In/Check-Out" program conducted by the school counselor to support Tione with creating goals to improve his work habits, but his mother did not complete the paperwork.

Janet and Shawn's needs were similar. Janet read more fluently than Shawn. However, Shawn's comprehension was stronger. The students were in my after-school tutoring class. They also received additional support in a pullout program that meets 3 times a week. I made sure the students were pulled out at a time that did not interfere with our whole group lessons. The schedule also allowed me to meet with them for guided reading groups and independent reading conferences. Both students were selected to use ReadWorks digital to improve their reading comprehension. **Shawn** enjoyed reading nonfiction text and had a great depth of prior knowledge that made the difficult text more accessible. **Janet** enjoyed the fact that she was being challenged and had a competitive spirit that pushed her drive to want to do well. Students tracked their progress on a weekly basis by completing a graph with their scores. The goal was 70% or higher. The higher level text also increased their stamina for reading longer passages.

Final Data Results

Student Survey

Attitudes about Reading



From the **survey**, I learned that from the December survey to the May survey, students' attitudes for reading at home, going to the library and having someone read to them increased. 14% more students were excited to read at home in May. Student excitement for going to the library showed a 12% increase. The highest gain was being read to, which had a 25% growth. My findings were the increase in student attitudes can be attributed to the implementation of read alouds, two-way parent-teacher reading logs and author studies. My students learned to appreciate reading for enjoyment. We ended the school year with a culminating activity of having a reading picnic. We spread out blankets on our campus field. Students read their favorite book along with a reading buddy and a snack. I also read my favorite book as well. My goal is to make this a school wide practice to celebrate reading at the end of the year.

Text Reading Comprehension

Reading Level

Student	BOY	MOY	EOY
Shannon	B (Independent)	C (Instructional)	D (Independent)
Tione	J (Independent)	K (Independent)	M (Independent)
Janet	I (Instructional)	K (Independent)	K (Instructional)
Shawn	G (Instructional)	K (Instructional)	N (Instructional)

Key = Far below grade level = Below grade level = At grade level

From the **TRC**, I learned that read alouds are so important for helping students gain oral reading comprehension. Many students were not able to move to a higher level text due to their inability to make inferences or draw conclusions. Even though I used turn-talk techniques during my read alouds, the frequency of this practice was inconsistent. I tended to focus on more paper-pencil activities as opposed to using questioning techniques to assess student's understanding of text. My findings were that three out of four of the case study students showed at least a two level increase from the middle of the year to the end of the year. My students learned to become fluent readers by reading independently on a daily basis. They were exposed to models of fluent reading through shared readings, read alouds and audio books.

NWEA-RIT Score

Student	BOY	MOY	EOY

Shannon	161	164	174
Tione	190	195	192
Janet	155	160	194
Shawn	154	154	183

Key = Far below grade level = At grade level

NWEA-Projected Growth Target Index

Student	BOY to MOY	MOY to EOY
Shannon	-8	4
Tione	-3	-7
Janet	-7	28
Shawn	-12	23

From the **NWEA data**, my findings were that three out of four of the case study students met their targeted growth score on the EOY assessment. The student that did not meet his growth target scored above the national norm. Tione and Janet weakest area was literature again. However, Tione’s score increased significantly in the goal area of informational text. While Janet and Shawn’s goal area of strength was vocabulary acquisition and use. Shannon continued to struggle with her ability to acquire and use grade level vocabulary. As a whole, my class mean RIT score was 188.2, which is above the district mean of 186.8. 64.7% of my students met their projected growth targets. Both data points are an increase from the 2015-2016 NWEA scores. Last year only 41.7% of my students met their targeted growth. A benefit of being at a single grade school is that I can collaborate with the third grade teacher during vertical planning and share my insights on the five students that did not meet their projected score,

especially for Tione. My students learned that by reading everyday you are getting exposure to different kinds of genres, cultures and interests.

Conclusions

To conclude, I have learned that just solely creating a culture that fosters a love for reading is not a guarantee that students' attitudes will change about reading or that test scores will increase overnight. The classroom culture coupled with differentiated instruction, parental support, and resources can lead to an upward shift. Looking ahead to next year, I still ended the school year with 8 students reading below grade level. So I feel I am right back where I started at the end of the last school year. There are a few areas for further questioning that I have based on my findings. I am interested on the effects that me looping would have with this class. I am also questioning whether or not the students that performed below grade level would have benefitted from more heterogeneous grouping. Lastly, will this culture of reading for enjoyment endure during the summer months.

Limitations

The limitations in my research include but are not limited to sample size, lack of available data and time limitations. The research sample consisted of only 17 students. A wider sample size would be needed to further validate my findings. Additionally, not having enough time was a factor that limited the reading growth over an extended amount of time.

Policy Recommendations

School level: Independent reading is a school-wide practice. I will encourage the use of student choice without limiting students to books that are only at their lexile level. The next steps are to discuss library organization by genres in addition to the lexile level. I would like to see the school participate in a get caught reading campaign to encourage recreational reading for the students, staff, parents and community. Another step will be to provide parents with workshops sharing the benefits of daily reading.

Next Steps

Moving forward I plan to continue to foster the celebration of reading for enjoyment by giving students choice. I have been awarded the Rochelle Lee Teacher Award for the 2017-2018 school year. I will utilize this award to enhance my classroom library providing students with more opportunities to read engaging books independently. I will share the strategies that I receive from the professional development workshops to my departmental team during our common planning time. I will also make a commitment to increase the number of read alouds I conduct on a weekly basis.

References

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