

**Exploring Reading Fluency to Improve Socialization Skills and Self-Esteem
For 4th graders with disabilities**

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“My students have gone from fighting over who has to read to fighting over who gets to read.”- Teaching Journal, March 2013

School Context

This is my ninth year working at an urban public elementary school as a Special Education Teacher. My school is located in the North Center neighborhood on the North side of Chicago. The enrollment of the school is 713 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The school has a general education program, a regional gifted and an Instructional Special Education cluster program. In early 2000 the school's population was declining and programs were added to increase enrollment. The Instructional Special Education cluster program began in the early 2000s. The Regional Gifted program began in 2008 with one kindergarten and first grade class and each year a gifted class has been added. As of September 2012, there are six gifted classrooms K-5th grade.

In 2009, the population of neighborhood children began to increase and the school moved from single grade level classes to multiple grade-level classes. As in 2009, the school completed a 3.25 million dollar renovation. This included a state of the art science lab and library, new bathrooms, updated floors throughout the school and an outdoor classroom, ball field and playground. Since the school's enrollment has increased so dramatically, there are currently space issues. For the 2012 school year, three classes were added, gifted 5th, 4th grade and 1st grade. Every classroom space is in use and many enrichments travel to the classrooms. Special Education classes are doubling up and taking smaller repurposed office spaces.

The school's population is diverse in many ways. The demographic breakdown of the school is 53% white, 2% black, 35% Hispanic, 4% Asian and 6% other. Thirty-three percent of the students receive a free or reduced lunch. Fourteen percent of the students have limited English proficiency. Twenty-six percent of the students receive special education services. The percentage is high due to being an instructional cluster site for students with moderate disabilities, having a blended pre-kindergarten program, as well as accepting students outside of our attendance boundaries in previous school years. The school ISAT growth in the past four years has been 13.2%. Based on 2012 ISAT scores, 93.4% of students meet or exceed the standard.

The school has a very active parent population. We have a non-for profit group as well as a parent teacher organization, which very actively and successfully fundraise each year. The parents have focused these funds on enrichment programs, allowing the school to have a well-rounded curriculum. Students receive enrichment instruction in Spanish, Music, Drama, Library, Computers, Physical Education and Art.

The staff is highly qualified and many teachers portray themselves as lifelong learners. The majority of teachers have master degrees and six staff members are National Board Certified. The school has a culture of professional development with time built into the school day for weekly collaboration. The principal encourages faculty

to seek professional development opportunities and allows time to visit other classes for peer review. The Instructional Leadership Team has representatives from every grade level, special education and enrichment programs.

I currently work as a Special Education Resource Teacher servicing students in third and fourth grade. I have fifteen students on my caseload: twelve male students and three female students. The majority of the students I have worked with for the past few school years. Nine of the students are identified with Learning Disabilities, four students with Autism, one student with Down syndrome and one student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Two of the students I work with have behavior plans, which are part of their Individual Education Program (IEP).

Depending on the student's IEP, I work with them in the small group setting or in their classroom. The services I provide are focused on their IEP goals as well as ensuring the classroom content is modified to meet their needs. I work closely with the four teachers to modify lessons, homework, quizzes and tests. In addition to support from myself, the majority of the students on my caseload have different levels of shared paraprofessional support. I work with the paraprofessionals to oversee the accommodations and modifications and provide modified curriculum materials when needed.

As a Special Education Teacher, we are responsible for writing the majority of the IEP. In meetings, a variety of service providers are present depending on the student's identified needs. Many students on my caseload receive Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Social Work and Nursing services. The majority of the parents are very active members of the IEP team and seek outside services such as tutoring, social work, speech therapy for their child.

The vision of my school is "to become the premier neighborhood school in the North center community by encouraging its students to become scholars who reflect on their academic achievements, are motivated towards post secondary opportunities, seek new challenges and provide service to their community". As a teacher supporting that vision, I am a member of the Instructional Leadership Team and truly believe in collaborating as the means to improve our instruction and school. I also want to ensure the students I work with have opportunities for success at their level. As head coach of the Special Olympics at my school, students have many opportunities for physical, social and self esteem development. I work at a unique school, which focuses on providing opportunities for students of various learning and interest levels.

Rationale:

My third and fourth grade students have a range of disabilities including Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Learning Disabilities and Mild Cognitive Impairments. Though they enjoy being read to and love the illustrations in a book, the process for them to engage in the reading process themselves is very challenging. Most of their peers have mastered reading fluency and are focused on comprehension and vocabulary skills. Since my students are not all fluent readers, their fluency impedes

their ability to comprehend and learn new vocabulary. Fluency is an area that impedes their progress across all content areas. Their peers have made the shift from learning to read to reading to learn while my students continue to learn to read.

The students I work with realize their reading skills are below their peers and this has impacted their self-esteem and in some cases resulted in attention seeking behaviors to avoid reading. With my background as a Special Educator and a Reading Specialist, I am very passionate to continue to develop new ways for students to engage with texts and become better readers. I also have previous experience with fluency strategies and documented that progress through entries for my National Board Certification. This school year I chose to focus on reading fluency with an emphasis on socialization. The steps of implementation of the strategy will be further described on page seven.

In the past, I have documented how repeated reading fluency activities positively impact students' reading progress. I have always selected the reading materials for my students and did not have them choose their own materials when practicing their reading fluency. By incorporating student interest, I anticipate increased student engagement in the activities. I anticipate this because I think the students will be more motivated to talk about what they read or be more engaged in the reading when they have selected the reading themselves.

I have been working with the same groups of students for about three years. By knowing this group very well, I am able to identify that at this age of eight, nine or ten, they are starting to notice and be conscious of their disability. Since I am aware that their reading deficits are impacting their self-esteem, I want to explore how the strategies I use impact their self-esteem. I chose three students in particular to focus on and implement this strategy. All of the students are in 4th grade. I have worked with these students for a few school years and know them very well. I chose these particular students because although they all express an interest in listening to someone else reading, the act of them reading can be very grueling. Their reading is very choppy and has many errors when reading grade level text. When working in a reading group, they struggle with socializing over the text. One of the boys is very resistant to reading out loud. Further in the paper, I am going to further describe each learner individually, and analyze their progress in the data analysis section.

Literature Review: *The Research Supporting*

In my previous educational experiences preparing to become a Reading Specialist and becoming Nationally Board Certified as an Exceptional Needs Specialist, I have researched and documented how repeated reading fluency improves students' fluency levels. Now, I am exploring the connection between reading and students' socialization and self-esteem skills.

Fluency Importance for Students with Disabilities

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Fluency is the link between word recognition and comprehension. A recent large-scale study by the National

Assessment on Education Progress (NAEP) (Armbruster & Osborn, 2003) found that 44% of a representative sample of fourth grades were low in fluency. Students who scored low on fluency measures also scored lower on comprehension task. This study suggests that fluency instruction is often the missing link in many classrooms, which impacts in the long term reading comprehension.

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services report that 50% or more of students with disabilities (excluding speech and visual impairments) score at or below the 20th percentile on measures of reading. Eighty to ninety percent of students identified with learning disabilities are identified due to difficulties with reading (Welsch, 2007).

Fluency Strategies and Techniques

The following strategies are recommended by the National Reading Panel. I will be incorporating all of these components into my action research.

- Have students repeatedly read passages aloud with guidance. The best strategy for developing reading fluency is to provide your students with many opportunities to read the same passage orally several times. (My students will read each passage three times to develop familiarity and show growth from one reading to the next.)
- Model fluent reading, and then have students reread the text on their own. (After a student finishes a reading, I will model any sections they struggled with and will also re-read any words they miscued.)
- Partner Reading which is defined as reading aloud with a more fluent partner or a partner of equal ability who provides a model of fluent reading, helps with word recognition and provides feedback. (Once students are comfortable with the routine of reading with me, I will have them read with each other.)
- Fluency practice should also be leveled following fluency norms for the grade level and at the students' instructional level with the student being 90% accurate at reading the passage. (I will assess students every few months to see if their reading level has changed. All passages read students will be at least 90% as research indicates students show the most growth when not frustrated by what they are reading.)
- Fluency should be assessed regularly both formally and informally. Informal assessments include listening to students reading aloud. Formal assessments include timed tests recording errors and ensuring students are reading passages at their instructional level. (Formal and informal assessments are documented in this action research project. This is done by the formal assessment passages, the practice passages, and video clips of the students reading.)

(Armbruster & Osborn, 2003).

Socialization Skills for Students with Disabilities

Children with disabilities have a difficult time learning social behaviors without being explicitly taught those behaviors. Conflict resolution, monitoring, self-marketing and image development, collaboration and reading and acting on social information are all important social behaviors. In the context of my small group in which the strategy will be implemented, collaboration will be focused on. Collaboration is defined as the ability

to cooperate and work with others in partners or as a team. (Levine, 2002). I will focus on collaboration by having students read in partners and also reading in a group. Students will be assisted to collaborate by me modeling what they should say to one another and also have written cues on what they can say to their peer.

When students engage with a text and enjoy that text, the nature of the conversation becomes social in nature. According to Lucy Calkins,

“It is important to give our students the words that will help them read actively, but it is even more important to invite them to become active readers. If we want children to read with wide-awake minds, then we need to invite them to live this way in the dailiness of our classrooms. Teaching reading, then, is rather like teaching living.” (Calkins, 2001, 15).

My reading strategy becomes a great place to incorporate students’ socialization skills. When students are engaged on what they have read, they have opportunities to become excited and have something of a common interest to discuss.

Self- Esteem in Students with Disabilities

Students with special needs often have lower self-confidence and social anxiety. Students with special needs feel that many students do not like them. This could be the uneasiness brought about by the lack of social skills. Students with special needs need to be given increased opportunities for social interaction with their peers. This helps prepare them for the social situations they will encounter throughout their lifetime. (Cowden, 2011).

In order to facilitate students giving each other feedback, I based part of my strategy on a study where timed repeated partner reading was utilized. Students will analyze their own reading by monitoring the following reading skills: I remembered more words, I read more smoothly, I read faster, I read more expression. This will be monitored in a visual way for students to be able to connect with and easily see their progress.

Students will also be given choices of vocabulary to say to their partner during fluency activities. Some of the examples include: “You read that more smoothly, you read that more accurately, you stopped at the periods, you worked hard on that.” This feedback will allow students to socialize in an appropriate way over their reading. The partner will also be provided with sentence choices to respond. Examples include: “you helped me out when I was reading or you gave me real support.”

Students with disabilities typically struggle with reading fluency and socialization skills. Both of these skills need to be explicitly taught and repeatedly practiced in order to be improved. The literature I found supports that both reading fluency and socialization skills are areas of need for students with disabilities. The research also defines teaching strategies for both reading fluency and socialization skills, which will be incorporated in my action research. The research and my rationale support the questions that I have posed.

Question:

What will happen when students with disabilities engage in repeated fluency activities based on student interest level?

Sub-questions:

- What will happen to their socialization skills?
- What will happen to their fluency when visuals and self-monitoring are incorporated?
- What will happen to their self-esteem towards reading?

Implementation of the Strategy:

For my action research I took the following steps:

- The students I worked in my small reading group voted on a book to utilize. They selected “Dragonbreath” which is a graphic novel.
- I then determined each student’s reading level by using leveled assessments from the Six Minute Solution Program. (Instructional reading levels are determined by grade level norms as well as the student being at least 90% accurate on a passage).
- Students then worked with me individually on practice passages from the Six Minute Solution Program using passages at their level. (Passages are repeated three times)
- Gradually I moved students to working with each other and timing on another on their reading of one hundred word passages for students to continue to have reading practice as well as socialization during reading
- Students were given cues of what to say to each other to help promote socialization skills. For example: written on their paper would be phrases to say such as “I like how you read that,” or “You got faster the second time you read.”
- We read a graphic novel in our small group together and I documented their interactions with one another. I modeled appropriate interactions initially. For example, saying things like “who would like to act out Danny?” or asking questions about a motivating part of the story.

Tools for Data Collection

Data Sources:

1. Surveys
2. My Teaching Journal
3. Student Fluency Passages (Pre-Test, Mid-Test, Post- Test)
4. Student Work

- 1. Surveys:** After working for a few months on fluency with my students, I administered surveys. The surveys looked at how they felt about themselves as a reader, how they liked/disliked talking about the reading with their friends, if they liked to monitor themselves as they read. I asked five statements of the students. Students responded by circling their choice when I read the statement out loud to them. The statements were all supplemented with a visual to help describe what the statement was asking. The following statements were asked:

- *I feel good about myself as a reader.*
 - *I enjoy reading*
 - *I like to talk about what I read with my friends.*
 - *I like to track my progress and see how I improve as a reader.*
 - *Reading upsets me or makes me nervous.*
2. **My Teaching Journal:** My teaching journal has been a place for me to reflect on students' progress in relation to the strategy. Particularly, my teaching journal has documented two of my sub-questions
- What will happen to their socialization skills?
 - What will happen to their self- esteem?
3. **Student Work** I have various pieces of students work related to my main question: *What will happen when students with disabilities engage in repeated fluency activities based on student interest level?* I have graphs that the students have created themselves documenting their progress on repeated readings using leveled passages from Six Minute Solution. I also have their fluency practice passages with the errors that they made and the accuracy of each passage. For student work, I analyzed the charts that each student has been collecting of their progress with the Six Minute Solution Practice Passages.
4. **Student Fluency Passages:** In order to find out what instructional level my students were at in regards to their reading fluency, I used Six Minute Solution Reading Fluency Assessment Passages. I administered each student a 100-word passage to determine their instructional level. Three months later, I administered a mid-term check to determine if students were making progress. At the end of the strategy, I will administer the leveled passages to measure growth. Students in the fourth grade should be at a level 4 in the *Six Minute Solution Passages*. Students also complete practice passages at their reading level as determined by the assessment. Initially, I tracked the students' progress on the passage and then I taught a peer how to do this in order for students to give each other feedback on their reading.

Data and Analysis:

I implemented my strategy with the three chosen students and the data and interpretation were clearest when looking at each student individually.

Yani:

Yani is a student with a Learning Disability. Yani's fluency has greatly improved from 2nd grade when I previously worked with him one on one on reading fluency strategies. His reading level is below grade level. His fluency, although frequently accurate, often is choppy and without expression. Yani works well with other students, however often lacks what to say in certain situations. Yani no longer receives speech and language services, however some articulation and expressive communication delays are

still noted. For example, Yani will mis-pronounce th- blends. Yani is easily re-directed when he makes errors and works hard during school.

Yani’s Survey Results

STATEMENT:	YANI’S RESPONSE
<i>I feel good about myself as a reader.</i>	All of the time
<i>I enjoy reading</i>	All of the time
<i>I like to talk about what I read with my friends.</i>	All of the time
<i>I like to track my progress and see how I improve as a reader</i>	All of the time
<i>Reading upsets me or makes me nervous</i>	None of the time

The results of Yani’s survey did not surprise me too much. Though he does struggle with reading fluency, it does not appear to upset him too much. He does not seem to identify that his socialization with other students about reading materials is limited. Yani struggles with his vocabulary skills, which he does not always identify and this impacts being able to socialize with peers about reading materials.

I worked with Yani when he was in second grade on his fluency skills and taught him how to self monitor and track his progress. Yani truly enjoyed charting his progress and seeing growth.

Teaching Journal Excerpt: *What will happen to their self- esteem towards reading?*

2-8-13: *Socialization incorporated naturally into my strategy!*

After completing timed fluency tests, myself, Kane, Yani and Greg read the book “Dragonbreath.” Students have been really engaged with the graphic novel and taking turns reading the comics. The pages we read today had a lot of graphic print and the characters in the book talking, which the boys love. I then saw the boys getting really excited to read. When I said I would take a turn, Yani said, “aww, I wanted to read!” This also was a huge breakthrough. Student’s confidence to read was evidenced through really wanting to read.

Analysis: In context of the book, Yani was able to demonstrate confidence to volunteer to read and was disappointed when it was not his turn. In the past, I have found him reluctant to read aloud. This improvement suggests his increasing confidence in his abilities. I am happy to see this growth in confidence and growth in his reading ability. The two appear to be linked.

Student Work—Six Minute Solution Practice Passages- *What will happen to students’ fluency when visuals and self- monitoring are incorporated?*

Yani demonstrates steady growth from one reading to the re-reading of the same passage. He generally improves about 5 seconds when re-reading the same passage. Yani’s accuracy is consistently 97% or better. Yani gets stuck on certain words and often has difficulty remembering how to say that word the next time.

Student Fluency Passages: *What will happen when students engage in repeated fluency activities?*

Student	Pre-Test 11-6-12	Mid- Test 2-8-13	Final Test 5-17-13	Gains
Yani	Level 1- 86 wpm 97% accuracy	Level 2- 97 wpm 98% accuracy	Level 3- 115 wpm 99% accuracy	Advance two levels +29 wpm

Analysis: Yani is a student who demonstrates steady gains. His actual reading fluency is very accurate each time he reads a passage. Based on my observational notes, Yani can rush through a reading and will be choppy within sentences. In order to assist Yani to read sentences more smoothly, I model fluent reading for him. Modeling of fluent reading appears to make a big difference for Yani. Yani is a student with an identified learning disability as well as an English Language Learner. The combination of the two may impact his gains on his reading fluency. It makes sense that the gains in relation to reading fluency are steady versus very quick. This is also aligned to how Yani makes gains in his reading at other times of the school day as well.

Kane

Kane is a student with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder). He is reluctant to work on many adult directed tasks especially ones involving reading and writing. He is interested in Computers, Science and Math. He has an active imagination and is a good oral storyteller. When working in groups, he can be impulsive and will grab for something that does not belong to him or yell at other students if it appears to him that they are bothering him.

Kane' Survey Results:

STATEMENT:	KANE' RESPONSE
<i>I feel good about myself as a reader.</i>	Some of the time
<i>I enjoy reading</i>	Some of the time
<i>I like to talk about what I read with my friends.</i>	Some of the time
<i>I like to track my progress and see how I improve as a reader</i>	Some of the time
<i>Reading upsets me or makes me nervous</i>	Some of the time

The results of the survey are consistent to how Kane interacts during reading class. Kane can typically and accurately voice his feelings towards something. I was only surprised that Kane was only nervous or upset by reading some of the time. I expected that he might be upset most of the time.

Teaching Journal Excerpt

1-4-13: *Kane' New Year's resolution:* Kane is my most resistant reader (well student in general). He does not take any form of feedback well and wants to resist any sort of adult direction. Often aha! moments with Kane happen when I

least expect them to. When we returned to school after the holiday break, the 4th grade teacher was having the students write down resolutions. On his own, Kane wrote down “I want to read more.” When I asked him about it, he said, “Well yeah, I am starting to like reading more. Not all reading but magazines is fun. I really like magazines.” This was huge! I just listened and did not ask too many questions, as I knew he would deny the fact he said that he ever liked reading.

Analysis:

I was able to identify that when Kane is not prompted or pressured, he gives insights into how he feels about himself as a reader. The fact that he was able to identify that he is starting to like reading is huge. Kane is a student that for years would refuse to read. Even in the beginning of the year, Kane would not read out loud or want to take his turn reading. Fluency exercises indicate Kane is improving as a reader, which could impact why he likes it more and why wants to read more.

Teaching Journal Excerpt: *What will happen to their socialization skills?*

2-8-13: *Socialization incorporated naturally into my strategy!*

After completing timed fluency tests, myself, Kane, Yani and Greg read the book “Dragonbreath.” Students have been really engaged with the graphic novel and taking turns reading the comics. The pages we read today had a lot of graphic print and the characters in the book talking, which the boys love. The student who is most resistant to reading and socializing, was demonstrating that by incorporating something he really likes he can socialize appropriately in the context of the book. Kane was asking questions to his two classmates: “Who wants to be Danny (the character in the book)?” Normally, Kane will ask about things unrelated like when is it time to back to class, I am bored or will intentionally say something to upset his classmates. This simple question was huge growth in terms of his socialization.

The boys also engaged in conversations to brainstorm who was who for each graphic page. They would say “no, that is your line.” And “okay this line is yours, then that one is mine.” It was nice to see that in the beginning I really had to assign the boys characters or break up little fights of no it is Yani’s turn to be the serpent or Kane got to pick first last time, that now I was able to sit back and really let the boys problem solve and socialize in the context of the book.

Analysis: Kane demonstrated the ability to socialize appropriately with two peers over a book that is of interest to him. The graphics in *Dragonbreath*, the story itself and the fact the students’ selected the book, all make it very motivating for Kane to participate. I wonder also if his increasing confidence in his reading skills are at work as well. It is hard to know exactly what is at work here, but I am seeing an overall improvement in Kane as a result of all we are doing.

2-20-13: *Students Reading in the General Education Room: What will happen to their self-esteem towards reading?*

Part of my job is supporting students in the small group as well as in the general education room. I have been thinking about how my strategy can be utilized in the general education room. When I was working with a mixed group of students

(2 students with IEPs and one female student in the general education room), some amazing things happened. The students were reading a tough passage from “Odysseus.” With none of his usual resistance, Kane read the following passage:

“Aelous was right. Odysseus would suffer much bad luck and struggle mightily before finally reaching Ithaca. But these journeys proved Odysseus to be the craftiest, most clever mortals on Earth and his journey to become one of the greatest stories every told.”

Consistent to Kane’s reading fluency in leveled passage, he did skip a few words. I ignored this as he was reading in front of a group of kids and did not want to discourage his efforts. The girl in his class calmly read him a few words that he struggled with (Odysseus, craftiest). Kane did not seem to mind her help at all. Although he is not a student that is visibly proud or happy with himself, he was not resistant to the process at all. He willingly read in front of the whole group.

Analysis: In previous school years, or even earlier this school year, Kane would never volunteer to read out loud in front of other students. This tells me that his self esteem towards reading is showing improvements. Kane is now willing to read in front of the class which is a huge step towards his comfort level towards reading. Kane appears to really respond to his peer. He does not appear to be resistant to help from this particular peer. In the future for groupings, it may be powerful to pair Kane with her in order to make him feel more comfortable and continue growing in terms of his reading self-esteem.

Student Work—Six Minute Solution Practice Passages- *What will happen to students’ fluency when visuals and self-monitoring are incorporated?*

There is usually a growth of ten seconds between Kane’s first reading of a passage and his second reading of the same passage. Kane is very motivated by the timing but he consistently needs reminders to not skip sentence or omit chunks of words. In his effort to improve his speed, he will skip over words.

Student Fluency Passages: *What will happen when students engage in repeated fluency activities?*

Student	Pre-Test 11-6-12	Mid- Test 2-8-13	Post Test 5-29-13	Gains
Kane	Level 1- 75 wpm 98% accuracy	Level 2- 94 wpm 99% accuracy	Level 3- 107 wpm 97% accuracy	Advance two levels +32 wpm

Kane has demonstrated the most gains amongst the three students. His accuracy continues to be strong and his words per minute-have greatly improved. Based on observational notes, Kane still has a tendency of skipping words or sentences. For this, I gently remind him to take his time and read all the words. Now that it is later in the year, he is less reluctant to reminders and his tendency of skipping words has decreased. I anticipate Kane will continue to improve in his words per minutes as well as the amount of times he skips over words. I also think he has made the most gain amongst the three

boys since he was very reluctant to the reading process and now more willingly engages in reading activities.

Greg:

Greg was identified with a Learning Disability in 3rd grade. He was identified mostly for his struggles with written expression. He does demonstrate challenges across all academic areas including Reading Fluency and Comprehension skills. His reading fluency is often labored with choppiness within sentences. He is very friendly to other students however, and can occasionally engage in behaviors purposely to irritate particular students.

Greg’s Survey Results:

STATEMENT:	GREG’S RESPONSE
<i>I feel good about myself as a reader.</i>	Most of the time
<i>I enjoy reading</i>	Most of the time
<i>I like to talk about what I read with my friends.</i>	Most of the time
<i>I like to track my progress and see how I improve as a reader</i>	All of the time
<i>Reading upsets me or makes me nervous</i>	None of the time

Analysis: These results are very consistent to how Greg interacts during Reading class and small group sessions. Although, Greg does struggle with reading, he is a very easygoing student and not much upsets him. He appears to enjoy tracking his progress as a reader.

Teaching Journal Excerpt: *What will happen to their self-esteem towards reading?*

2-21-13: *Ms. Barrett the greatest thing happened...*

At an IEP for Greg, his dad was mentioning how his reading has really improved. He was also mentioning how much he liked reading the “I survive” series. Later that day, when I was working with Greg in math, he started talking to me about the books out of the blue. He said, “Ms. Barrett, the best thing happened, today I took an AR quiz on an “I survive” book and it was over my level (instructional reading level), and I got a 100%.” He was beaming ear to ear as he told me this. I thought it was great confirmation in one day that he and his dad were really noticing his reading improvements and referencing the same book that he really liked.

Analysis:

This re-confirms for me that when students are reading books that they enjoy, they can comprehend above their reading level. I do believe for the most part incorporating books that students love and are leveled to their instructional level is effective in building reading levels and successes. It is good to know that Greg was able to read a book out of his range and still do well. Greg had a choice over what he read which suggests that being

able to choose your reading is very motivating and promotes additional reading achievement.

Student Work—Six Minute Solution Practice Passages- *What will happen to students’ fluency when visuals and self-monitoring are incorporated?*

Greg shows steady progress from re-reading the same passage more than once. He will occasionally improve one or two seconds when he re-reads the same passage. Greg’s accuracy is consistently 97% or better

Student Fluency Passages: *What will happen when students engage in repeated fluency activities?*

Student	Pre-Test 11-6-12	Mid- Test 2-8-13	Post Test 5-17-15	Gains
Greg	Level 1- 83 wpm 99% accuracy	Level 2- 94 wpm 98% accuracy	Level 3- 107 wpm 99% accuracy	Advance two levels +24 wpm

Analysis: Greg continues to demonstrate steady gains. Greg is a student with a learning disability as well as an ELL (English Language Learner). These two factors impact his progress. Greg has definitely demonstrated gains; it is just at a slower, steadier pace.

Conclusion

When reviewing the data from the surveys, student work samples, fluency assessment passages and teaching journal entries, many trends can be observed.

All students have demonstrated growth in their reading fluency. Not only have they improved in the amount of words per minute but also have improved levels of difficulty. All students demonstrated gains ranging from 24 to 32 words per minute from the fall to spring. At the end of fourth grade, students should be reading at 123 words per minute. (In the beginning of fourth grade students should be reading 94 words per minute.) Although my students are not reading at 123 words per minute, they have exceeded expected growth rates due to the fact that the level of difficulty on the passages has increased. All three students are reading over 105 words per minute. They are now reading level three passages, and when they started, all were at level one. (At fourth grade they should be reading level four passages.) The gap in their reading fluency from same aged peers has decreased. Yani is only 8 words per minutes from 4th norm reading levels and Kane and Greg are 16 words per minutes from 4th grade norm reading levels. Given their unique needs and ability levels, they have made steady gains at their level.

Individually analyzing the students, they have demonstrated gains in their self-esteem and socialization skills. Kane has volunteered to read in class for the first time that I can ever remember. Greg’s self-confidence to read books that may be a little difficult for him has increased by trying to read the book he was interested in and being successful at the reading. Yani has demonstrated improved socialization skills by knowing what to say in small group reading settings and also wanting to read. It is refreshing to hear a student say, “Aaw but I wanted to keep reading!”

If a passage is too difficult for a student (i.e. if they making more than 10% of the words as errors, they will give up on the passage and not feel successful. I saw my students benefit from repeated reading fluency that was at their instructional level. My data indicated that practicing of reading the same passage more than once improved their speed and accuracy in reading, which also impact their confidence.

I also experienced that students also benefitted from hearing fluent reading from me. Often my students can be over 90% accurate in reading the passage but the reading is choppy and unnatural pauses are built into the reading. When students heard me modeling fluent reading, their own reading showed improvements and was less choppy.

Based on my research, it appears when the boys had the opportunity to select the book we read, they were more engaged in wanting to read the book. The students were more eager to read the book, which led to sounding out more complex words. Research indicates the more time spent reading, the better students will become as readers.

The book choices that I offered them all contained socialization opportunities within the books. For instance, a few of the books were graphic novels where they could take different roles when reading. It appears that when the students are interested in the topic or the book, they are more willing to read together. When talking about the book, they are more motivated to continue reading, which positively impacts their ability to read.

It appears that as my students become more confident in their reading ability, their self-esteem towards reading improves. For example, when Greg scored a 100% on his quiz on a self-selected book that he was interested in, he felt proud of himself and unsolicited shared this information with me. When students are provided those opportunities to read at their level as well as read things they are interested in, their self-esteem is positively impacted.

Next Steps for the Strategy: *What is next?*

After reflecting on the process and thinking about where I would go with the strategy next I have come to the following conclusions:

- Allow students to select another book once we complete *Dragonbreath* and consider each student selecting his-own book for the socialization involved in selecting different texts. I want to do this because I think students make take more ownership in sharing their book if they selected the book on their own versus voting on the book as a group.
- Continue to utilize fluency practice passages with the students at school as well as sending home for homework. I will ask the parents to keep track of the students' errors to see if trends at home and school are consistent. This school year, I only did the fluency practice passages at school. It could be anticipated that if the students also practiced at home, gains could be more significant.
- Talk to Mr. Kraft to generalize the strategy and the socialization aspect to include students in the general education room. From my teacher's journal, I have documented how well Kane responds to another student in the room. Continuing

to explore fluency and socialization in the general education room is a next step and natural progression to the strategy. I would also want to include general education students who could benefit from the fluency exercises into the group as a way to increase socialization opportunities.

- Utilize technology such as tape recorders or video cameras to allow students to listen to themselves read. I did not incorporate this and believe that this could have strengthened the strategy. I believe allowing my students the opportunity to listen to themselves read could assist with more fluent reading by being able to self- identify fluent versus choppy reading.

Policy Recommendations

School Level:

- For students who struggle with Reading Fluency, use a leveled program and repeated practice and teaching modeling of fluent reading to improve fluency skills at least 3 times per week
- Allow students time in their school day to discuss what they read and model how to have a conversation about reading at least once per week.

District Level:

- Allow students to select their own texts at their instructional level to read at some point throughout the school day for at least 20 minutes per school day.

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