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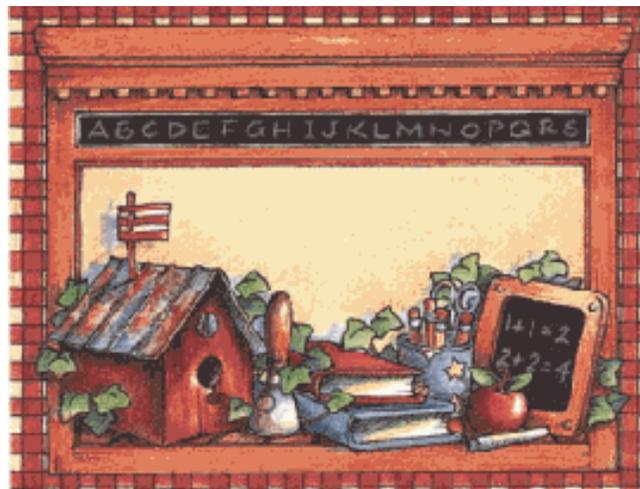
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Appendix

Teaching Context

My inquiry project took place in a self-contained, whole language second grade classroom at Gray's Woods Elementary School, State College Area School District. My classroom contained 25 heterogeneously grouped seven and eight year old children. Seven of the children receive Title One services, eighteen of the children are reading on grade level, four of the children are receiving pull out enrichment services in math and language arts, and four of the children are at some point in the Instructional Support process.

This inquiry project focused on seven developing to emergent second grade readers during Reading Stations in January, February, March, and April 2004. I was able to capitalize on the content of the current units of study, "Life Under the Sea" and "Wonderful World of Nature" and structured my lessons to give the children meaningful reading instruction. Together we learned about different types of crabs, whales, and frogs using non-fiction books, the Internet resources, and other district provided resources.



What led to this particular inquiry project and wonderings?

I was concerned about many of the children in my classroom and their reading abilities. Since I was beginning to take over the Guided Reading part of Reading Stations, I knew that I wanted to focus on a few key areas regarding beginning reading skills. After speaking with the Title One teacher, Mrs. Korman, I was better able to focus the direction and scope of my inquiry project to meet the needs of the children. Mrs. Korman gave me many different ideas to pursue to try which would hopefully strengthen the children's particular needs. Therefore, I chose to focus on chunking and comprehension skills.

I have also been interested in reading and reading instruction since I began my formal education at Penn State. It is my dream to become a Reading Specialist or Title One teacher after I have ample opportunity and experience teaching in a traditional elementary classroom. I feel that this inquiry project was an incredible opportunity to try new and different techniques and still being able to rely on other professionals for support. My mentor, Miss Bryan, my Professional Development Assistant, Mrs. Mitchell, and the Title One teacher at Gray's Woods Elementary School, Mrs. Korman gave me great ideas and strategies to try with my children.

Finally, after inquiring about a job in a particular school district, the Director of Special Education told me that he was thinking about creating a language development class in one of the elementary schools. While this class and the position are still in the planning phase, I became very intrigued at the idea of this job. I have always been interested in reading and language development and thought it would be an excellent opportunity to get my foot in the door in this particular school district. I began to wonder how I could plan my inquiry project around the children in my classroom and still give me some experience in this area in case I wanted to apply for this particular position. Also, I

wanted to give myself some background knowledge and experience in this field because I hope to further my education to become a Reading Specialist.

We teach small groups, whole groups, and one on one - depending on the needs of kids. We read literature to the whole class. Then, when we do reading instruction, we may put three children together who need the same thing. It's about finding out what children know and moving on to the unknown.

Each child comes to school with a backpack. And in that backpack, each one has something different. Some have lots of experience with books and magnetic letters. Others have been living in an apartment with 15 people. What drives me to teach is watching what goes into those backpacks over the years.

- Emelie Parker, 1st Grade Teacher,
Bailey's Elementary School, Fairfax County, Virginia

What do others think/know about this topic?

As I began to research the particular topic of reading strategies and guided reading, I immediately looked to the Language Arts Continuum provided by the State College Area School District to all new elementary teachers and Professional Development School interns. I first had to understand what it really meant to have guided reading in an elementary classroom. According to the LAC,

“it is not sufficient for the teacher to simply assign an activity and wander about giving vague moral support...the teacher’s role is threefold: ensuring that a range of material is available, the oral presentation of stories, and demonstrations of and guidance in a growing list of techniques for responding to pieces of literature, and individual guidance when children attempt to apply such techniques to self-selected books” (Johnson and Louis, LAC, Fall 2003, p. 4.2-3).

Guided Reading is explained by Michael Opitz and Michael Ford as a “planned, intended, focused instruction. Usually in small-group setting...” (Opitz and Ford, 2001, p. 2). Also “the purpose of guided reading is to show children how to read and to provide a scaffold (i.e., support) for them as they read” (p.3). A website also describes guided reading as “the teacher guides the students to use reading and writing strategies appropriately, the teacher helps students in small groups talk, think, and question their way through the reading process, and books are (chosen) at the students instructional level and the students do the reading” (www.gisd.k12.nm.us/reading/bestprac.html, 2004, p. 2). After I knew what guided reading was I was confident in my ability to instruct it, I then needed to teach the children some strategies. I searched to find good activities in which to implement with my children that would both teach them unit concepts and ideas and also help them become better readers.

I also wanted to make sure what I was trying to implement and the ways I went about implementing the different strategies were developmentally appropriate for the children. I chose to read about seven and eight year olds, since there would be both seven and eight year olds in my reading groups, in the book *Yardsticks* by Chip Wood. The seven year old curriculum should include “individual reading which becomes stronger than partner reading, phonics instruction intensifies through small group reading instruction, and reading comprehension assignments continue and include more written responses” (Wood, 1997, p. 78). The eight year old curriculum should include “reading groups based on trade books...around interests of children within reachable skill range and independent reading program introduced with simple independent assignments or projects designed to spur class interest in reading and show reading comprehension” (p. 90). I also read an excerpt from the book *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children’s Reading Successes* about what should be included in a second grade curriculum. They stated that it should include two main goals which are “to help children build automatic word recognition, spelling skills, and reading fluency (and also) to improve comprehension by building knowledge of words, language structures attitudes, and conscious strategies required for understanding and using text” (www.nap.edu/html/sor/sor-3.htm, p. 19). I found this very helpful in deciding the strategies to include in my inquiry project.

I wanted to find some information about how to help struggling readers and what were the best practices in reading instruction. According to *Every Child Can Read*, “a reader who draws on a variety of problem-solving strategies has more opportunity to construct meaning from a text than someone who relies on one or two strategies. Readers employ many strategies – using context or graphic cues, using graphophonic cues, and breaking words into smaller recognizable units – and

have many ways to figure out an unfamiliar text” (Baskwill and Whitman, 1997, p.13).

Therefore, I wanted to give my children some more practice with these types of skills. I then decided to focus my inquiry project on chunking and comprehension skills.

According to Carol Kirkham Martin, “studies have shown that children can read, spell, and comprehend more effectively when they look for familiar parts of words instead of sounding them out one letter at a time” (Martin, 2003, p.3). I decided to use Ms. Martin’s ideas in her book *Word Chunks* in order to help my children the chunks they needed to learn. This teacher resource book included activities for the 38 most commonly used chunks. Since my project was only going to be about four weeks long, I decided that I would start my children at the beginning of the book and use the first four “chunk” pages.

I was able to find an article on the internet that described best practices for effective reading instruction. Many of these best practices were implemented in the classroom by my mentor teacher and, once I realized they were grounded in research, I decided to continue implementing them in my Guided Reading instruction. For example, one of the strategies I used during my small group instruction was read aloud. The teacher read aloud “models fluent reading behaviors, familiarizes students with the language and convention of books, and exposes students to different types of literature”

(www.gisd.k12.nm.us/reading/bestprac.html, 2004, p. 1). Another best practice is a word study. A word study is an “active, systematic, and explicit exploration of words utilizing a wide variety of interactive decoding spelling activities”

(www.gisd.k12.nm.us/reading/bestprac.html, 2004, p. 2). An added best practice for reading is scaffolding instruction. Scaffolding instruction “is important to meet the diverse needs of students and the level of support provided by the teacher is based on the difficulty

of the task and the level of difficulty experienced by the student”

(www.gisd.k12.nm.us/reading/bestprac.html, 2004, p. 3). The final best practice I focused on during my inquiry project was explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. It is described as “the teacher specifically instructs students to utilize a variety of cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to comprehension before, during, and after reading. The goal is to create students who are competent self regulated readers” (www.gisd.k12.nm.us/reading/bestprac.html, 2004, p. 4).

My Wonderings and Questions

The first question I had was “Which strategies work best to improve language/reading development with developing/beginning second grade readers?” In the State College Area School District a developing reader

“sees themselves as readers and read independently book with predictable patterns such as *The Napping House*. Without adult guidance, they begin to figure out new words by applying various word study strategies, using phonics, meaning, and word and sentence structure clues. Developing readers merge print and illustrations to build meaning and can retell the main ideas of a story. These children demonstrate comprehension, through participation in guided literacy discussions about a variety of reading materials including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. They can contribute information about familiar topics through unit related activities and projects.” (LAC, Fall 2003, p. 1.5)

According to the State College Area School District Language Arts Curriculum a beginning reader is a child who

“takes a developmental leap as they begin to apply various word study strategies to identify new words using phonics, meaning, and word and sentence structure clues. They can independently read a range of early-reader books such as *Henry and Mudge* books and *Frog and Toad* books. During silent reading time, they are able to read for at least 15 to 20 minutes. Beginning readers rely more on print than on illustrations they read. They are able to retell the beginning, middle, and end of stories. These readers demonstrate comprehension through participation in guided literacy discussions about a variety of reading material including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. They can recognize story elements such as characters, setting,

problems, events and solution. They can contribute ideas and begin to organize information about topics related to units of study.” (LAC, Fall 2003, p. 1.6)

After thinking about this idea for some time I was able to further develop a list of sub questions that I thought would be important for me to consider while completing this project. Those questions include

How do I decide which strategies to work on with these children?

What strategies do I use now?

What do professionals have to say about these particular children and where they think they are in relationship to the “average” second grader?

What do these professionals think is most valuable in terms of strategies for these children to be successful readers in third grade?

I spoke to the Title One teacher extensively about these questions both before and at the conclusion of my project. She was able to give me valuable insight into which skills I needed to work on in terms of helping to make my children better and more successful readers.

Mrs. Korman gives a child a running record in order to determine his or her level. She then takes that information and determines the skills that the child needs to work on in order to become a better reader. She also explained to me that the running records are informal and take place using during guided reading.

Most professional believe that the children are slightly below grade level in relation to the “average” second grade reader. The professionals she told me about believe that some of the strategies the children will need to continue to work on decoding strategies – vowel patterns. All of the children will need to continue to practice strategies that help them with their comprehension through mapping strategies, making connections,

summarizing, visualizing, self questioning, monitoring, and evaluating activities. These skills will also help them to become better readers.

How was the inquiry carried out?

I started out by planning this inquiry around our current units of study, Life Under the Sea and Wonderful World of Nature, and my children's needs. I wanted to focus on two areas of reading instruction, chunking words and comprehension.

I began by testing my children using the same testing package that the Title One teacher uses when she assesses children (On the Mark Assessment Guide, Wright Group /Mc Graw-Hill, 2001). The battery of tests I gave to my children included running records; the levels were determined by the Title One teacher and a phonics assessment which included long and short vowels, consonant blends and digraphs, vowel digraphs, vowel diphthongs, r-controlled vowels, special sounds, segmenting and blending (decoding words), and nonsense words quick check. I also tested the children using a word family assessment which included making new words and a high frequency words quick check. I also checked the children's understanding of word chunks or rimes. I tested the children on the 37 basic rimes in the English language. According to Marilyn J. Adams, "Nearly 500 primary-grade words can be derived from the following set of 37 rimes." (Marilyn J. Adams, 1990, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print*, Cambridge: MIT Press).

Then, for six weeks, I worked on the 37 basic chunks and incorporated some reading comprehension strategies. I focused heavily on having the children learn and re-learn the chunks. Mrs. Korman informed me that she had drilled these same children everyday during the first half of the school year on the chunks and had done fairly well after intensive work. These children were involved in a program called, JumpStart, where they received rigorous reading instruction from the Title One teacher, Instructional Support Teacher, a classroom teacher, an intern, and many parent volunteers. This program was

implemented from September until November 2003. Mrs. Korman also explained to me that she believed the children needed to over learn the information in order for it to become automatic for them. She said, “Children need to be able to automatically know how the chunks sound in order to comprehend the text they read”. The results of the chunk tests

Student	# of Missed Chunks		
	March 3, 2004	April 2, 2004	April 9, 2004
Student A	3	4	3
Student B	8	3	3
Student C	2	2	0
Student D	6	4	3
Student E	4	0	0
Student F	3	2	3

I also realized that for these students to make strides and become better readers in third grade and for the rest of their educational career that they need to automatically know these chunks. I also knew that during Mrs. Korman’s station the children were completing chunking activities.

Second, I decided to focus my inquiry project on comprehension skills. I believe these skills will help my children become better readers in third grade and throughout the rest of their educational journey. This part of my inquiry was a little bit harder to plan and implement than the chunking portion. In order to assess the children’s prior knowledge of the particular topic we were studying I would ask them what they knew and what they would like to know. For example, before we began learning about frogs and toads, I had the children fill out a modified KWL chart including what they knew about frogs and what they knew about toads. I knew the children had some background knowledge about these animals because we had just taken a trip to Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center. One of the stations talked about frogs and toads and the similarities and differences.

Then I would look at the non-fiction books that were available in the primary book room. I also found a lot of information on Enchanted Learning (www.enchantedlearning.com). I had to decide how to scaffold the information to make sure my students could understand it. I had the children take a picture walk and silently read the article or book. Next I would read the book or article to them and we would talk about any words they did not understand. After awhile, I had the children highlight words they did not know while I was reading and we would talk about them after I was done reading. During the whale mini unit, I made vocabulary flashcards from the difficult words in the story *Whales*. I knew that many of the difficult words in this book would continue to be present in the rest of the information we would be reading about whales. We reviewed these flashcards everyday and talked about the meaning of each word. This seemed to make a difference when we would read other books and articles about the particular topic. The children's answers included more in depth information and the drawings they completed had much more detail after completing this process. I was also very intrigued when I asked questions about the children's drawings and they were able to verbalize many details we had learned about while reading the different books and articles.

Ways I Collected and Analyzed Data

I collected data in many different ways. I used assessment data that was gathered at the beginning and end of my inquiry project. I also formally assessed chunks three times during my inquiry project. I had each child read the list of chunks, in isolation, and would mark a check if he/she said it correctly. If he/she did not say the correct chunk I would write down (or tried my best) the word they said. We, however, practiced the chunks every day and the children got better at saying them in isolation and they were also to say a word that had that particular chunk in it. I noticed that over the weekend and some of the days we did not have Reading Stations, the children did not do as well with their chunks. I asked the children what we could do to make it easier for them to practice and they suggested I make a set of flash cards for each of them. I did and told them to practice them at least one time every night with a parent or older sibling. If they had no one available then they were to practice by themselves. This extra practice helped tremendously except towards the end of my project because many of the children were becoming involved in spring sports.

In regards to comprehension, I was able to assess many different ways the children learned the information. For example, the children in the green group were able to write and complete reports on different types of crabs. The children's learning was assessed by the amount of detail included in the web they completed, the depth of information included in the sentences, and also the features drawn in the pictures. These reports were attached to a Friday letter which allowed the children's parents to see what they were learning in school. The rest of the children were assessed in regards to the detail in the pictures of whales they drew and also the information they included regarding whales. All of the children were asked to complete a sheet and write down every thing they learned

about whales. We also studied many different types of whales and the different unique features of whales.

I also wrote a lesson sequence for the units because I was still accountable to my mentor teacher. I included these as pieces of evidence because it shows my thought process in regards to teaching and assessing chunks and comprehension skills. I found valuable teaching materials about chunking and the crab, whale, and crab mini units from veteran teachers and the internet (www.enchantedlearning.com) which also helped in teaching these mini units.

In addition to assessing the children's knowledge of chunks, I wanted to establish their reading level by using a running record. I assessed the children at the beginning and end of my inquiry project. According to NACEYC, "children need a wide variety of interesting, comprehensible materials, which they can read orally with about 90 to 95% accuracy" (IRA & NACEYC, 1998, p. 8). The results of the running records

First Running Record, March 4, 2004

Student A, Level K (The Sock Snatcher) (231 words) – Error Rate 1:21, Accuracy Rate 97%, Self Correction Rate 1:0

Student B, Level K (The Sock Snatcher) (231 words) – Error Rate 1:21, Accuracy Rate 95%, Self Correction Rate 1:3

Student C, Level K (The Sock Snatcher) (231 words) – Error Rate 1:19.5, Accuracy Rate 95%, Self Correction Rate 1:13

Student D, Level K (The Sock Snatcher) (231 words) – was not available at the time this running record was given

Student E, Level M (Midnight in the Woods) (254 words) – Error Rate 1:23, Accuracy Rate 96%, Self Correction Rate 1:4

Student F, Level M (Midnight in the Woods) (254 words) – Error Rate 1:23, Accuracy Rate 96%, Self Correction Rate 1:2

Last Running Record, April 15, 2004

***Student A*, Level L (A Mouse Story)(234 words) – Error Rate 1:58, Accuracy Rate 98%, Self Correction Rate 1:3**

***Student B*, Level L (A Mouse Story)(234 words) – Error Rate 1:14, Accuracy Rate 93%, Self Correction Rate 1:5**

***Student C*, Level L (A Mouse Story)(234 words) – Error Rate 1:29, Accuracy Rate 97%, Self Correction Rate 1:4**

***Student D*, Level L (A Mouse Story)(234 words) – Error Rate 1:29, Accuracy Rate 97%, Self Correction Rate 1:9**

***Student E*, Level M (Midnight in the Woods)(254 words) – Error Rate 1:31, Accuracy Rate 97%, Self Correction Rate 1:3**

***Student F*, Level N (A Guessing Game)(198 words) – Error Rate 1:24, Accuracy Rate 96%, Self Correction Rate 1:4**

The first time I assessed the children, they all scored independent on the appropriate level book. Not only did all the children move up a level, all but one of the children also scored independent on the second running record book. Mrs. Korman gave me the books, assessment materials, and levels for each of the children.

Finally, I wrote observations everyday which included the skill being taught, the seating arrangement, and any interesting observations I made during my time with the group. Each day I reviewed my observations and decided if I needed to change or add any ideas to my inquiry plan. Many days I was able to add new insights or ideas into my plan in order to make it more useful to the children.

Claim 1:

Graphic organizers and outlining techniques are important to help children to understand and organize information they have read.

Evidence:

Crab Reports

While taking over the Guided Reading portion of Reading Stations, I was in search of new and exciting ways to teach my second grade children.

I structured the lesson by first learning what the children knew about crabs. As a group, we read the book *Crabs* which talked about many different types of crabs.

I then made a graphic organizer, which allowed the children to organize the information they were to gather about the different crabs. The children then chose the crab they wanted to research and filled out the graphic organizer. When the children needed more information I went to the Internet and printed out information. Together we read the articles and highlighted the important ideas and concepts.

After the children completed the graphic organizer they then wrote sentences from the information they had gathered. The children wrote the sentences on a blank piece of paper so they were then able to cut the sentences apart. Together the child and I arranged the sentences into a logical order.

The children then wrote all the sentences into report form. This then allowed me to type their reports while the children drew pictures of their crab. We also made crabs using their handprints.

Finally, I printed their reports and mounted it on a piece of construction paper with their handprint crab and the crab they had drawn. Also, their reports

were included on the back of a Friday Letter so all the parents could enjoy the hard work they put into completing their projects.

This report process allowed me to use many different best practices for reading to better engage my children. The children were very excited about the project and were also able to tell any adults an abundance of information about their particular crab. They were also very proud of their work and could not wait to show their parents the reports. I was also very excited when many of these children chose to include the crab report for their permanent portfolio.

Highlighting

I found that highlighting allowed the children to learn important words and phrases. It also allowed the children to go back to the information they had previously read and draw on it to make connections to other things we were learning.

This skill seemed particularly helpful when writing the crab reports. I did not tell the children what we were doing; however, I told them that they needed to highlight important words and phrases. After I explained to them that we would be writing reports it made it very easy for the children to complete the graphic organizers.

When the children began reading about whales, they also used highlighting in order to make apparent the important information. After the children had learned a great deal about different types of whales, they were able to use the information they had highlighted to draw wonderfully detailed pictures of whales.

I believe highlighting is a technique that all children can use successfully. I will use this technique in my future classroom in order to help children better understand unit related topics and ideas.

Claim 2:

Silent reading, teacher reading, and paired reading leads to greater comprehension of informational stories and articles.

Evidence:

Frog Mini Unit

After listening to some suggestions from my mentor, I decided that I would change the way I implemented some comprehension skills into my inquiry project.

I first had the children silently read an article about Poison Dart Frogs and gave them ample opportunity to read the article silently. Following this process I read the article to them. Mrs. Mitchell suggested that I read to them in order for them to get the flow and pronunciation of the words correctly. Then I paired the students and had them read to each other. Finally, I called all the children back together and asked them some comprehension questions from the article. For example, I asked them where poison dart frogs live? Why they are brightly colored? Why they have poison in them? What do the South American Indians use the frogs for? I also had the children turn their papers upside down so they had to think about the information they read to answer my questions. All of the children did a nice job responding to and answering my questions. They were able to think and put thought into their answers. I noticed that the children retained much more information and were able to give me much more detailed answers when each child read the information three times.

I had tried a similar technique of just having the children read and then answering questions. Their answers were not as detailed. I believe that hearing the information three times allowed the information to sink in fully. They were more

able to attend to the information because I made them responsible for coming up with their answers.

Claim 3:

Chunking is an important skill that helps children with their decoding skills.

Evidence:

Chunking Activities

After assessing the students, I made a set of flashcards with all the chunks on them. Everyday the children would go around and say each of the chunks. I would also have them say a word that had that chunk in it. This seemed difficult for a few of the students; however, they seemed to catch on after we had done it a few times.

Two weeks into the assessing the chunks everyday, I noticed that the children were not doing as well. I asked them what they thought we could do to improve their skills. They decided that they wanted me to make them each a set of flashcards. I did and sent them home with each child. I had them practice every night with a parent or older sibling. I also said that if they did not have any one to practice with that they could test themselves. This seemed to make the children better at saying the chunks in isolation and also making words from them.

The second activity I began implementing was a chunking worksheet. The children had to cut out the chunk, cut out the letters on the paper, and write different words that had that chunk in it. The children seemed to really enjoy this activity especially when they were able to make more words.

Finally, as I stated before, I noticed a great difference in the children's chunking tests. Most of the children made steady progress when I tested the chunks in isolation. Also, I noticed the children were making more effort to look for smaller parts (chunks) of longer more difficult words. I was able to notice this more when the children were reading out loud during Reading Stations.

Claim 4:

As comprehension skills increase, children's ability to internalize and apply the new information also increases.

Evidence:

Detailed Drawings

After the children and I read about crabs, the children's sketches were amazing. They had some pictures to look at but made sure to add everything they had learned about crabs. I was very impressed with their drawings and made sure to add them onto the Friday letter with their reports.

I am always surprised when the student who I think is not interested or engaged draws amazing pictures. For example, I had the children draw pictures of whales. I was simply amazed by the products they produced. For instance the drawings included pictures of baleen. We had not really talked about this aspect of whales; however, the children drew on previous knowledge in order to represent it on their drawings.

Finally, while the children and I were studying frogs, I also had them draw a picture of a frog and a toad. One of the children did not know how to draw the frog's legs. Mrs. Mitchell was observing my lesson and had a great suggestion. We all tried to sit like a frog so the children would be able to see how to draw the legs. This was a great visual aide to give to the children. They were able to see what I wanted and how to draw the legs on a frog. After this demonstration, the children's pictures were amazing and very detailed.

Level of In-Depth Conversations

My children are always eager to share the knowledge they learn with the adults that help in the classroom. Any time Mrs. Mitchell walks in, they always have something new and interesting to tell her. She asks great probing questions and the children are now able to provide more details in their answers.

I have also noticed that when I conduct a discussion after we talk about a particular animal, the children are more able to provide detailed information. For example, while we studied poison dart frogs, the students were able to tell why the South American Indians use the poison on their darts. One of the students then made the connection between this use and the frog's name. I thought this was an amazing observation and inference made by my students.

Longer, More Complex Sentences

From the beginning of my project until the end, I noticed that the children's sentences have matured. They have become longer and have included more detail. I think one of the reasons this happened is because the children were instructed, by Miss Bryan during Writer's Workshop, to include more details in their sentences.

I also believe that my children were able to write more complex sentences because they knew more information about the subject. They were able to read more fluently, which in turn allowed their comprehension of the information we were reading to increase. Because their comprehension skills were increasing, the children were also more able to bring in previous knowledge and include that in their sentences. Finally, the children were more reading to learn instead of learning to read.

Claim 5:

Pre-reading activities allow children to focus on what is important to know and thus increases their comprehension.

Evidence:

Vocabulary Development

While looking for non fiction books for my children to read, I found that there were not many books for these children. I felt that the first grade books were too easy for the children and the second grade books were too difficult. I had to look for information that would challenge the children. I was able to look online and find some great websites to use with the children. I had discussions with the children about any difficult words they found in the book. I made sure to ask the children what words they did not understand. After the children learned the vocabulary, we practiced it everyday in our other readings and by looking at flashcards. I believe this work helped the children more easily understand what the passages were about. I made sure also that the children were immersed in the vocabulary everyday. We read the words everyday and talked about them when they came up during other readings.

Prior Knowledge

Assessing the children's prior knowledge is important for teachers to understand and use in planning classroom instruction. Before reading or talking about the different animals we studied, I had the children write down everything they knew about the particular animal.

This type of assessment allowed me to better plan the type of information I wanted to make sure to include in the mini units. I was able to take the information the children

already knew (or thought they knew) and either reinforce it or discover with them the proper information.

Prior knowledge allows children to write longer, more complex sentences. Not only will the children include what they just learned but they will also include information they already knew.

Claim 6:

Scaffolding instruction helps students read at their appropriate level and thus increases their comprehension.

Evidence:

Differences in Groups, Materials, and Assignments

While completing this project, I worked with two different groups during Reading Stations. Both groups included Title One children however they were very different groups. I saw the green group first; therefore, they were the guinea pig group. I would test ideas and if they worked I would do the exact same thing with the blue group. If they did not work or something needed tweaked I was able to do that for the blue group.

I also had different types of children in both of the groups. Some needed more assistance with reading the words while others just needed teacher reassurance when completing the assignments.

Therefore, as much as I tried to keep both groups together, inevitably I had to make adaptations even between the two similar groups. I do not believe these differences made a difference in the children's comprehension or chunk.

Finally, I could see that if I was teaching the same mini unit to all four of the reading groups in my classroom, I would definitely need to make adaptations between the materials used. I believe I would be able to extend and adjust the types and depth of information taught to each group of children. For example, if I were to teach the frog unit to the red and yellow reading groups, not only would we learn about the different types of frogs, I would have the children go on the internet and research the different types of frogs. I would also be able to talk about more difficult vocabulary words with them. We would

also work on higher level comprehension questions which would lead to greater understanding of the information.

Implications for Future Practice as a Teacher

I learned a lot from this project that I believe I will be able to use in my future classroom. I think that I will always have children who are struggling or just need some help. The practices and information I learned from completing this project will help me better help those struggling students. It has given me new ways of looking at different types of information. I was able to adapt and use non fiction books and internet resources, which are not generally geared for the reading level I was working with to meet the needs of my children. I believe this was an incredibly helpful skill for me because I feel confident that I can take any information and adapt it to any child's needs.

During this project, I read some very interesting research and information which I believe I will be able to use to structure my future classroom. I know that children will always need help and/or practice learning and using comprehension skills. The ways I taught my mini units allowed me to teach the content and assess the children's knowledge accurately. I believe this practice will help me reach all students regarding all areas of the curriculum.

Finally, I was able to practice some very valuable assessment skills. Not only was I able to practice running records (at least 14 times), I was able to take other assessment tools, administer them, and structure my lessons that deliberately hone in on skills that the children are lacking or need practice.

All the skills and knowledge, as well as the resources I used, will help me with my future classroom and any child I encounter. I feel that I am more capable of helping children with a wide variety of language/reading deficiencies after completing this inquiry project.

New Wonderings

After I started my inquiry project, I realized I had many more wonderings about my inquiry project and reading in general. I wondered what would have happened if I had started this project sooner. Would the children have met the district standard benchmark book for second grade sooner? What would have happened to the children's comprehension skills if this had been a year long project? How might this same project "work" with different children in a different district? Would these same children benefit from this type of intensive work in first grade? In third grade? If I am placed in a second grade class next year, will I see the same types of problems? If so, will the same strategies work?

On the broader scale I wonder if I will be able to scaffold instruction to meet the needs of different types of children. I was able to scaffold my instruction and tailor it specifically to a skill I wanted to work on for that day. How can I scaffold instruction when I am the only adult in the classroom? How can I get more volunteers into my classroom?

In conclusion, this project has given me much useful information for my present and future classroom. I was able to really develop some insight into the process of reading and the best practices that enable children to be successful. I believe I was able to help the students in my classroom become better readers. Hopefully this will allow them to become better readers in I enjoyed learning with the children about unit related concepts and also how to teach reading. If I have children in my future classrooms who are struggling readers, I will be able to use the strategies I began to explore during this project to help them become successful readers.

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