

**Read it Again, Sam: Using Repeated Reading during Guided Reading Instruction  
to Promote Fluency, Comprehension, and Vocabulary**

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The names of students in this paper are fictitious.

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## **Background Information**

### **Description of the Teaching Context**

I am an intern in first grade at Lemont Elementary School in the State College Area School District. There are two other adults in my classroom: my mentor and a paraprofessional. My classroom is comprised of seventeen students – eight girls and nine boys.

At the beginning of this school year, four children in this class were reading at grade level. The other children were reading below grade level. Of the thirteen children who read below grade level, four students were considered to be “minimally” at risk. Four were considered “moderately” at risk. Five students were considered “severely” at risk.

During the course of my inquiry, I provided reading instruction for the four on-grade-level children (red reading group), the four minimally-at-risk children (white reading group), and the four moderately-at-risk children (yellow reading group).

My first grade classroom is one of three first grade classrooms in the building. At Lemont Elementary there are two classrooms for kindergarten, therefore two kindergarten teachers. First and second grades are composed of three classrooms each. In total, there are eight classroom teachers in the building. Third, fourth, and fifth grades are housed at Houserville Elementary.

There are 172 students attending Lemont Elementary.

### **The Impetus for and Importance of this Inquiry Topic**

I chose the topic of Reading for this inquiry because I strive to provide the best reading instruction possible. I believe that effective reading instruction is crucial in first

grade. The importance of reading instruction at the primary level is highlighted by the national attention given to the subject.

### **Research Supporting this Topic**

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE] (2000), “The ultimate goal of reading instruction is comprehension.” Furthermore, PDE (2000) cites that “Comprehension is essential not only to success in reading, but in all academic learning and to lifelong learning” (p. 3.11). It is incumbent upon primary teachers to identify the most effective methods for helping their students to read for comprehension.

Assisting teachers in meeting this obligation, the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) sets a course for effective reading instruction. From the National Reading Panel’s (NRP) report of 2000, CIERA (2001) identifies five areas of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Based on the NRP’s examination of scientific evidence, CIERA reports the effective practices of teaching in these five areas and emphasizes the importance of vocabulary study and reading fluency with regard to reading comprehension.

“Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly” (CIERA, 2001, p. 22). According to CIERA (2001), there are three hallmarks present in the reading of fluent readers: they “recognize words automatically,” they “group words quickly to ... gain meaning from what they read,” and they “read aloud effortlessly and with expression” (p. 22). Most importantly, fluency allows readers to focus on comprehension of text (CIERA, 2001). In support of this viewpoint, PDE (2000) cites fluency as a prerequisite to text comprehension.

Fluency depends “on what readers are reading, their familiarity with the words, and the amount of their practice with reading text” (CIERA, 2001, p. 23). CIERA (2001) reports that “repeated and monitored oral reading improves reading fluency and overall reading achievement (p. 24). In support of this claim, Timothy Rasinski (2003) concludes that repeated reading is a “powerful instructional tool” (pg. 77) for developing reading fluency and comprehension.

There are several strategies available for implementing repeated reading in the classroom. According to CIERA (2001), repeated oral reading can be achieved in three ways: student-adult reading, choral reading, and partner reading. In student-adult reading, the adult reads first to model fluency and the student reads afterward. In choral reading, the student reads along with the teacher. In partner reading, a pair of students reads orally the same passage of text, one student then the other. PDE (2000) also cites choral reading, partner reading, and repeated reading as “helpful activities” for developing fluency (p. 3.10).

Just as fluency is cited for its importance with regard to comprehension, vocabulary is important for the comprehension of text. “Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean” (CIERA, 2001, p. 34). “Direct vocabulary instruction aids reading comprehension (CIERA, 2001, p. 35). PDE (2000) says that “When vocabulary is taught through direct instruction, there is a need for ... active learning by the student” (p. 3.12).

### **Wonderings and Questions**

My research question was originally stated as “How can I effectively promote reading fluency among my first grade readers?”

The following questions were my original set of subquestions.

- ◆ What are the skills that comprise reading fluency?
- ◆ Is there a set of skills that must be mastered before fluency occurs?
- ◆ Is it reasonable to expect that first grade students have the skills necessary to concentrate on fluency?
- ◆ Since fluency is defined as rapid, accurate reading of text, how can “rapid” and “accurate” be defined?
- ◆ Since repeated oral reading is defined in the research as a strategy for promoting fluency, what are the various activities designed to implement repeated oral reading?

From the first subquestion, “What are the skills that comprise reading fluency?” I eventually found that vocabulary comprehension became an important element in my inquiry. (Please refer to **The Inquiry Plan: Steps in Carrying Out the Inquiry Plan**, paragraph #5.)

As I started to collect and analyze data, I revised my research question to “How are reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary effectively promoted with first grade readers?”



## **The Inquiry Plan**

### **Steps in Carrying Out the Inquiry Plan**

I began my inquiry with an interest in reading instruction. I consulted the resources from my Language and Literacy Education courses. One of those resources was *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (CIERA, 2001). Of the five areas of instruction described by the publication, I was most intrigued by the area of fluency. I wondered if first graders were “ready” to have fluency as a major instructional goal. Did they have the phonemic awareness and phonics (decoding) skills necessary to concentrate on fluency? I decided to try to find an answer to this question.

After reading CIERA’s publication and Rasinski’s (2003) *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency, and Comprehension*, I was convinced that repeated oral reading offered great promise for promoting fluency and comprehension. I decided that I would use various repeated reading strategies in my reading lessons. Throughout this paper, I refer to “repeated reading” and “repeated partner reading.” Repeated reading refers to one of several strategies as described below. Repeated partner reading is a specific repeated reading strategy. Rasinski (2003) describes this specific strategy as student partners taking turns reading the same passage of text. Rasinski refers to this strategy as useful during independent reading. However, I decided to implement this strategy during guided reading for various benefits described later in this paper.

Repeated reading refers to several different strategies. During the course of my inquiry, I used various methods for implementing repeated reading. Almost all of my

lessons used repeated read aloud (Rasinski, 2003), a technique that combines read aloud and repeated readings. I also used choral reading with the teacher, choral reading without the teacher, silent reading, repeated partner reading, and round robin reading (only after students were well acquainted with the text). Responses to my Teacher Survey (Garbrick, 2005A) supported my selection of repeated reading strategies in that responding teachers indicated that teacher read aloud, choral reading, repeated reading and round robin reading promote fluency. (Please find a copy of my teacher survey in Appendix A.)

Not every lesson plan incorporated all of these methods. Rather, each lesson plan used a specific mix of these methods. Two lesson plans are included in Appendix B so as to provide examples of how lesson plans incorporated these methods.

As my inquiry progressed, I also became interested in the issue of vocabulary instruction. Again, my interest originated from CIERA's (2001) publication. My interest was strengthened as I observed my students and reflected on my own teaching. I decided that I had to include vocabulary in my inquiry. What's more, I had to address a troubling thought.

“As I wrote my lessons, I identified words within the text, page by page, that I thought would be challenging to the students [with regard to pronunciation or meaning]. As I wrote the lessons, I struggled with the notion as to whether I was truly identifying *every* word that might present a challenge to my young readers. Then, it seemed logical to me that I should ask my students for *their* input as to what words were challenging. After all, I cannot know what's going on in a student's brain nearly as well as the student” (Garbrick, 2005B, pg. 1).

I realized that, if I wanted my students to identify challenging vocabulary and then use our vocabulary discussions to strengthen reading, I could easily use repeated reading as a means to that end. In other words, repeated reading offered the perfect opportunity to 1) acquaint students with text, 2) have students identify challenging vocabulary, 3) discuss challenging vocabulary, and 4) have students use their new knowledge of challenging vocabulary as they read text again. In this way, the students could extract maximum meaning from the text.

As lessons progressed and students became comfortable with the idea of identifying challenging words, I could not “help but believe that it gives [gave] the readers some ownership over their own learning. Furthermore, it makes [made] sense to me that this strategy is even more powerful if the students utilize it on their own in future reading” (Garbrick, 2005B, pg. 3).

In this student-centered approach to the study of text vocabulary, my students were asked to identify challenging words. Challenging words were defined as 1) words that the students had difficulty in decoding or pronouncing or 2) words that the students did not know the meaning of. (These definitions are important in considering *Claim #5* and *Claim #6* in *Learning from the Inquiry*.) As one second-grade teacher indicated in response to my teacher survey (Garbrick, 2005A), students must be able to pronounce words and understand words. In addition to student selection of challenging vocabulary, I, too, selected vocabulary for study. The lesson plans in Appendix B provide an example of how the study of vocabulary was pursued for the red reading group and the yellow reading group.

In summary, all of my lessons incorporated some mix of repeated reading and student identification of challenging vocabulary. Each week, I wrote reflections concerning the implementation of these lessons. I supported my reflective analysis with literature and teacher surveys.

### **Methods of Collecting Data**

During the course of my inquiry, I wrote weekly reflections concerning my teaching of reading. (Please see Appendix F.) My teaching originated with lesson plans that incorporated repeated reading strategies and student identification of challenging words. (Please see Appendix B.)

I collected data from teachers in the form of a teacher survey. (Please see Appendix A.)

I also collected data in the form of observations made by my mentor and my PDA. (Please see Appendix D.)

### **Method of Analyzing the Data**

My analysis of data began with a re-reading of all of my reflection journals. As I re-read, I identified themes or similar ideas that could be found throughout most or all of the journals. From this analysis, I identified what I had learned from this inquiry.

I wrote down all of my learnings. Then, I attached pieces of evidence from my journals, teacher surveys, and observations from my mentor and PDA that supported all of these learnings.

## Learning from the Inquiry

### *Claim #1*

*Some students resist repeated reading; some students do not.*

#### **Evidence #1 for Claim #1**

When I first introduced the strategy of repeated partner reading, the red group balked at the idea of having assigned partners (Garbrick, 2005C). For example, Lee and Jamie moaned. Lee commented that her assigned partner “reads too slow” (pg. 1). Jamie commented that she is the “fastest reader” (pg. 1), indicating that her partner was not. It became obvious to me that Lee and Jamie thought that their respective partners would hold them back from reading the text speedily.

When Amber commented that she reads chapter books at home, indicating that such reading somehow distinguished her from her peers, I came to the conclusion that these students are competitive. Furthermore, the students viewed good reading as speedy reading without regard to accuracy and comprehension. Students in the red group did not want to be “held back” because their partner lacked (speedy) reading prowess.

#### **Evidence #2 for Claim #1**

As the students of the red group accepted the idea that they had assigned partners for repeated partner reading, they continued to voice dismay at having to re-read passages of text that had already been read. For example, on February 23, 2005, Jamie exclaimed, “Oh, we’re not going to read it [a previously read section of the book] again, are we?” (Garbrick, 2005D, pg. 2). Jamie was not objecting to her assigned partner any more; rather, she was simply objecting to re-reading previously read material. Her peers moaned along with her. This group of students did not find a benefit to repeated reading.

**Evidence #3 for Claim #1**

As data collection for my inquiry began, I was not yet instructing the yellow group in guided reading. However, my mentor decided to use repeated partner reading in her instruction. (Her introduction of repeated partner reading with the yellow group followed my introduction of the strategy with the red group.) I observed the instruction that my mentor provided on the first day of using repeated partner reading. I was surprised and happy to observe that “The students in the Yellow group did not object to the notion of having assigned partners. More importantly, they did not object to reading a page and having a partner re-read the same page” (Garbrick, 2005C, pg. 3).

As my inquiry progressed, I began instructing the yellow group. I was always delighted at this group’s response to repeated partner reading. From my journal of March 18, 2005, I observed, “I continued to use the strategy of repeated partner reading during my instruction. This is the [yellow] reading group that, from the beginning of my inquiry, has not resisted the idea of repeated partner reading. In fact, the students seem to look forward to repeated partner reading. For example, if one pair of students finishes before the other, I will ask that pair to go back and re-read the same section of text again until the other pair finishes its initial repeated partner reading. Upon such requests, the students do not protest. In fact, on Thursday of this week, when I gave that direction to Cary and Susan, both students replied, ‘Yeaaa’” (Garbrick, 2005E, pg. 1).

**Evidence #4 for Claim #1**

On March 22, 2005, I asked the yellow group to repeat partner read. Again, there was no hesitation on the part of the members of this group to repeat partner read. In fact, Cary immediately replied, “Okay” (Garbrick, 2005E). I asked him why he seemed so

happy to comply with my request. “Why is it good to read the same part of a book two or three times?” I asked. Cary responded, “Because you get better at it.” Susan chimed in, “You know the words better” (Garbrick, 2005E, pg. 3).

### ***Claim #2***

***The teacher must provide continual reinforcement of the benefits and, otherwise, motivating reasons to engage in repeated reading, especially for students who resist repeated reading.***

### **Evidence #1 for Claim #2**

With regard to the red group, I realized that, upon my PDA’s suggestion, I had to reinforce the rationale behind and benefits of repeated reading. During the week of January 28, 2005, I explained to the red group that repeated partner reading helps the reader to “read all the words carefully and correctly and to understand what the story is telling us after we read all the words” (Garbrick, 2005C, pg. 2). Thereafter, I continually reminded the students that repeated reading helps a reader to become better – at reading the words and understanding the meaning of the text. I believe that the red group came to accept this idea slowly. By February 4, 2005, one student in the red group said, in response to the purpose of repeated partner reading, “It [repeated partner reading] helps you to understand [the text]. Practice makes perfect” (Garbrick, 2005B, pg. 5).

### **Evidence #2 for Claim #2**

Repeated reading can help the reader to understand the text. This was an idea that I wanted to emphasize with the red group so as to provide the red group with a motivation for repeated reading. The opportunity presented itself the week of February 18, 2005. I sent the red group to the independent reading station to silently read an

unfamiliar portion of text in *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie* (Roop & Roop, 1985).

(Please find this portion of text in Appendix C1.) The group was instructed that we would examine this portion of text the following day for vocabulary (or “challenging” words, a concept that is discussed in [Claim #5](#) and [Claim #6](#)).

When the students came back to me for guided reading the following day, “I told them to keep the books shut and to tell me what had happened in the story in the part of the text they had just read the day before. Not one student gave me an accurate account. I simply said that their accounts did not fit with my understanding of what happened ... I asked them who Patience was in the story, as well as Charity and Hope. All students agreed that Patience, Hope, and Charity were the names of Abbie’s sisters. I said nothing. Then, I asked them to tell me what ‘ruffled’ means, a word that appears lower on the same page. No one knew ... I explained the concept of ruffled, and I asked them to read the sentence in which the word appears. ‘Charity ruffled her feathers.’ I said, ‘Abbie’s sister has feathers. Okay, let’s read on.’ The students just looked at me. No one read. I asked them why no one was reading. Jamie said, ‘No, Mr. Garbrick, her sister doesn’t have feathers.’ Of course, I summarized our discussion to this point and asked them to tell me ‘What’s wrong?’ ... Finally, Mary said, ‘Charity is her [Abbie’s] chicken.’ I agreed” (Garbrick, 2005F, pgs. 3 & 4).

We re-read this assigned section of text (pages 16 to 23) until the members of this group understood that Patience, Hope, and Charity were chickens – not sisters. I pointed out to the students that their re-reading had helped to make meaning from the text. This meaning had not been established in the initial reading, which, I proposed to the students,

had been rushed. I tried to help the students to understand that repeated reading serves to help us understand more clearly all the details we might miss in an initial reading.

**Evidence #3 for Claim #2**

Again, I wanted to point out to the red group that re-reading helps the reader to make meaning from text, thereby providing the red group with a motivation to re-read. The opportunity presented itself the week of February 25, 2005. I asked the students to answer question #5 from the comprehension worksheet from my *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie* lesson plan (Appendix B). The question from this lesson reads, “How did Abbie’s father know that Abbie was doing okay even though he wasn’t home?”

“Only one student, Amber, volunteered an answer. She said, ‘Because he could see the lights burning.’ ‘So?’ I asked. Amber responded, ‘Abbie burned the lights.’” (Garbrick, 2005D, pg. 3). The other three students in the red group did not know whether to agree or disagree with Amber’s answer. Clearly, re-reading of the text [excerpt in Appendix C2] was in order so that these three students could decide if the answer was correct. Upon our re-reading, the students agreed that Amber was correct. At the time I reflected on this experience, I was not sure if the group came to realize re-reading’s valuable role in text comprehension. However, as similar experiences followed in future lessons, I believe that the students of red group came to this realization.

***Claim #3***

***Repeated partner reading provides an opportunity for the teacher to listen in on student reading; thereby providing an opportunity to reinforce good reading and to differentiate instruction.***

**Evidence #1 for Claim #3**

“In using repeated partner reading with the red group this week, I found that the technique allows me to listen in on the students as they read to identify ways in which I can reinforce expressive, fluent reading ... With regard to reinforcement, I was able to listen in on a student, Mary, reading the sentence, ‘Against his mother’s warning, he took a shortcut through the woods ... . (p. 32)’ This student did a great job of reading this sentence as she paused at the comma before continuing on. Without pausing at commas [and stopping at sentences], some of my readers tend to blend the end of one sentence with the beginning of another sentence. My reinforcement not only applauded this student’s efforts, but it reinforced the reading as a model for this student’s partner” (Garbrick, 2005G, pgs. 2 & 3).

**Evidence #2 for Claim #3**

Repeated partner reading allows me to differentiate instruction for each student as it presents an opportunity to hear individuals read orally. “In using repeated partner reading with the red group this week, I found that the technique allows me to listen in on the students as they read to identify ways in which I can ... differentiate instruction ... Mary read the following passage without inflecting her voice for the question: “‘What might you be doing in these woods?’” asked a gruff voice. John was spun around before he could answer.’ [Excerpt of text included in Appendix C3.] Her reading sounded as if she had combined ‘asked a gruff voice’ with the following sentence. I asked her to go back and to pay attention to the question mark and to read the question as a question. Her second reading was much better. The inflection of her voice truly sounded like a question, and she smiled. She noticed the difference. In her observation, my PDA

agreed that Mary had re-read this passage much more like a question” (Garbrick, 2005G, pgs. 2 & 3).

### **Evidence #3 for Claim #3**

Repeated partner reading allows me to differentiate instruction for groups of readers. “As I listened to one reader pause at commas, I became more aware that other readers were not doing the same. In fact, I found that I was sensitized to listening for this skill in the students’ reading. I discovered that my red group needs instruction on how to pause at commas and periods so that the complete thoughts in sentences remain in tact and do not blend together.

“The students’ oral readings allowed me to listen in so that I could provide guidance. When I noticed that one student performed quite well in one skill (pausing at commas), I became more aware of other students’ lack of performance. In noticing this lack of performance, my future teaching was informed in as much as I realized that I had to focus instruction on punctuation [for the red group]” (Garbrick, 2005G, pg. 3).

### ***Claim #4***

***Repeated reading promotes fluency.***

### **Evidence #1 for Claim #4**

Taken from the findings of the *2000 Report of the National Reading Panel*, CIERA (2001) claims that scientifically-based research supports the conclusion that “repeated and monitored oral reading improves reading fluency and overall reading achievement” (p. 24). Rasinski (2003) cites several benefits of repeated reading, including fluency and comprehension. While Rasinski (2003) claims that repeated reading leads to improvement in reading of familiar text, he also states that repeated

reading leads to improvements in reading “of passages the students had [have] not previously seen” (pg. 76). “As students became more fluent in their reading of one passage, their improved reading at both the word and sentence level transferred to new passages” (Rasinski, 2003, pg. 76).

#### **Evidence #2 for Claim #4**

Classroom teachers at Lemont Elementary, the Title I teacher, the special education teacher and the curriculum support teacher for elementary language arts for the State College Area School District were asked to complete a Teacher Survey (Garbrick, 2005A) concerning reading fluency. With regard to the question “What strategies and activities do you use to promote fluency in your readers?” seven out of nine survey respondents cited re-reading and repeated reading strategies.

#### **Evidence #3 for Claim #4**

With regard to fluency and repeated reading, my PDA and I made several observations. This specific piece of evidence relates to the white reading group and an observation that I made in my journal of February 4, 2005, concerning one student’s repeated oral reading of an excerpt of text. The excerpt to which this journal refers can be found in Appendix C4 (Fischer/Hansen, Date Unknown).

“With regard to the strategy of repeated reading, I observed how one student became very fluent on a short passage of text when he understood the passage’s meaning and then rehearsed the passage several times. The text was from *Jack and the Beanstalk* and read, ‘Master! Master! Please awake! Or this boy your harp shall take!’

“I believed from the student’s initial reading that he was unsure of the passage’s meaning. So I asked the group to consider that the words were out of ‘regular’ order so

that they would rhyme. I asked them to consider the text as ‘Master! Master! Please awake! Or this boy will take your harp!’ All the students agreed that this translation just didn’t sound as nice. I then re-read the passage as written. They agreed that it rhymed and that it meant the same thing as my ‘translation.’ I asked the student-reader to read the passage again. Still, the reading was somewhat stilted. However, when he re-read a third time, the reading took on a much more lyrical quality, as intended by the writer. In her written observation of the instruction, my PDA agreed that this student’s third reading was ‘read fluently.’

“Even though this student was hesitant to re-read the passage for a third time, I believe from the smile on his face that he, too, heard the lyrical quality of his third reading” (Garbrick, 2005B, pgs. 4 & 5).

On January 25, 2005, my PDA observed the red group engage in repeated partner reading while being instructed with the trade book, *Barney Bipple’s Magic Dandelions* (Chapman, 1977). After hearing the students re-read, my PDA wrote, “This [repeated partner reading] seems like a great strategy to improve fluency; the girls clearly improve their speed and inflection” (Mitchell, 2005). (This observation is included in Appendix D.)

#### **Evidence #4 for Claim #4**

With regard to fluency and repeated reading, my mentor made several observations concerning the fluent reading of students who had participated in repeated partner reading. For example, during the week of March 18, 2005, my mentor commented that she was pleased with the fluent reading of the yellow group while re-reading *The Statue of Liberty* (Penner, 1995).

“After stations, I turned to my mentor, who was listening in, and I said, ‘Some days you really feel like it’s all coming together for them [the students]. Did you hear how they [the students] were reading?’ My mentor replied that she was very happy with the students’ fluent reading of the text” (Garbrick, 2005E, pg. 2).

Upon observing my instruction of the red group in *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie*, (Roop & Roop, 1985), my mentor commented, “Fluency is much better” (Mentor, 2005). My mentor’s observation was made as students engaged in repeated partner reading. (Please find this observation in Appendix D.)

#### *Claim #5*

*A student-centered approach to the study of text vocabulary, as supported by repeated reading, enhances student engagement in the lesson and the text.*

#### **Evidence #1 for Claim #5**

Participation in the discussion of text increased among the students of the yellow group. During the week of February 18, 2005, I made the following observation. “I believe that student identification of challenging words has given some of my students a true sense of self-direction in their learning and has encouraged the students to become more actively engaged in the learning opportunities that present themselves during guided reading. For example, in the yellow group, I have two students, Susan and Steven, who are often inattentive and somewhat reluctant to participate in the group’s discussions.

“Since I implemented the strategy of having students identify challenging words, both Susan and Steven have participated much more. They eagerly volunteer challenging words for the group’s consideration. When I ask students to give me challenging words, these two students raise their hands for nearly every page that we cover during any given

class. Overall, management issues have declined for these students. In fact, participation in this group is so high that I have to rotate the order in which I call on students so that I don't miss anyone's input. If I miss any student, he or she is quick to tell me that he or she has a word to share with the group" (Garbrick, 2005F, pg. 1).

### **Evidence #2 for Claim #5**

At first, students in the red group were hesitant to identify challenging words. I believe that the students resisted initially because they thought that identifying words as challenging would diminish their status as readers. However, I found a way to motivate the students to identify challenging words. Once the students started to identify challenging words, they truly engaged in the text to find out what words presented challenge in either pronunciation or meaning.

"I decided to challenge this thinking [that identification of challenging words reduces a reader's status] by pointing out to the students that the words they reluctantly identified [as challenging] were actually words that *I* had identified as challenging. I quickly showed them that I had a list, but I did not give them time to examine the list for any detail. Thereafter, the students were not shy about identifying words as challenging. They were pleased to be able to identify the same words that the teacher had identified. What's more, they went further and identified words that I had not" (Garbrick, 2005B, pg. 2).

### **Evidence #3 for Claim #5**

During the week of February 25, 2005, I incorporated a word find activity into the lesson for red group. (Please find the *Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie* lesson plan in Appendix B.) In this activity, the students had to create a word find using their lists of

challenging words. The students found this activity very stimulating and, consequently, engaged in the text so as to find challenging words for their word finds. Since the students would ultimately have a peer solve their word find, the students were especially interested in finding words to challenge their friends. (Please find student word finds in Appendix E.)

“The creation of a word find challenged the students to use their word lists, and it was an activity that created interest and enthusiasm among the students. As my PDA wrote in her observation of the initial word find lesson, one student commented, ‘This is so fun!’” (Garbrick, 2005D, pg. 2).

#### *Claim #6*

*A student-centered approach to the study of text vocabulary, as supported by repeated reading, enhances word pronunciation and comprehension.*

#### **Evidence #1 for Claim #6**

Student identification of challenging vocabulary deepens understanding because words are identified that the teacher might not identify for discussion. I came to this conclusion the week of February 11, 2005.

“In my lesson planning for *Buttons for General Washington*, I had not identified any challenging words on page 39 (some words on this page had been identified as challenging on previous pages). [Please find excerpt of text in Appendix C5.] However, one of my students, Lee, identified ‘moment’ as a challenging word. She pronounced the word with a short o instead of a long o. Her peers agreed that this would be the correct pronunciation. When I questioned why they would pronounce this word in this way, they

all agreed that the word 'mom' appears in the word 'moment.' They seemed to be using a chunking strategy to decode the word.

"I informed the students that, in this case, we cannot chunk the word so as to look at 'mom' as a word inside of a word. I told them that 'moment' is pronounced with a long o. The students didn't seem immediately convinced that the strategy of finding a smaller word in a bigger word would not always work. So, I talked to them about what a 'moment' is. They seemed to understand that a moment is a very short period of time. One student, Jamie, held up her hand with her thumb and index finger close together and said, 'A moment is this big. It happens right now.'

"If I had not given my students an opportunity to identify their own challenging words, I would not have had this conversation with them concerning the word 'moment.' More importantly, I would not have had the conversation concerning the reliability of chunking words, or finding small words in big words. This teachable moment provided the opportunity for this group of students to understand that no strategy is infallible. Even when I questioned them as to whether moment (with the short o) sounded right, they said it did. They were willing to accept an odd pronunciation of a word because that pronunciation conformed to the strategy. It was my instruction that gave the students 'permission' to not accept any one strategy as foolproof.

"Additionally, the students identified words that had no meaning for them. Again, these words were not words that I had identified as challenging. The students did not understand the word pistol. So, I explained that a pistol is a small gun. The students did not understand what 'spun around' meant. Again, I explained the phrase. Had the students not identified these words, we would not have had the opportunity to clarify

meaning. Thus, some of the meaning of the text would have remained mysterious to the students.

“Overall, I identified thirty-seven challenging words in the red group’s book. The students identified an additional twenty-seven challenging words. Therefore, the red-group students identified 42% of the words that were brought up for discussion”

(Garbrick, 2005G, pgs. 1 & 2).

### **Evidence #2 for Claim #6**

Again, as I instructed the students using *Buttons for General Washington* (Roop & Roop, 1986), I found that student identification of challenging vocabulary deepens understanding of text. Even though I had identified “thee” and “thy” as vocabulary words to be discussed, the students in red group self-identified these words as challenging. (Please find excerpt of text in Appendix C6.)

“For example, in *Buttons for General Washington*, the author uses ‘thy’ and ‘thee’ in characters’ dialogue. I suspected that my young readers would not be familiar with the meaning and use of these words. I first gave my readers a clue to their usage when I explained that ‘And go the way I told thee’ could be translated to read, ‘And go the way I told you.’ I emphasized that I was only substituting one word in the ‘translation.’ Then, we came to the sentence, ‘Do as thy mother asks.’ I challenged the students to figure out what ‘thy’ means. I told them to think of a word that could be substituted for ‘thy.’

“At first, one student reconfigured the sentence as, ‘Do as she mother asks.’ I repeated the sentence aloud and asked if it made sense. All of the students agreed that it did not. I told them to think about the other sentence that we had just deciphered. I repeated the earlier sentence using ‘thee’ and using ‘you.’ Students continued to make

attempts to bring meaning to the word, ‘thy.’ By the time I was beginning to fear frustration on the part of the students, one student exclaimed, ‘your.’ I repeated the sentence using this student’s suggested word as a substitution for ‘thy.’ The students all agreed that it made sense. From the smiles on the students’ faces, I knew that they felt a real sense of accomplishment” (Garbrick, 2005B, pg. 4).

### **Evidence #3 for Claim #6**

CIERA (2001) states that “Direct vocabulary instruction aids reading comprehension” (pg. 35). Early in my inquiry, I “struggled with the notion as to whether I was truly identifying *every* word that might present a challenge to my young readers. Then, it seemed logical to me that I should ask my students for *their* input as to what words were challenging. After all, I cannot know what’s going on in a student’s brain nearly as well as the student” (Garbrick, 2005B, pg. 1).

“I instructed the red group using *Abe Lincoln and the Muddy Pig* [Krensky, 2002]. After an initial choral reading, the students identified ‘champion wrestler’ as challenging vocabulary. [Please find excerpt of text in Appendix C7.] The students did not have an understanding of either term. This led to a discussion of what a wrestler is and what a champion is. The students then had a clear concept of Lincoln’s physical prowess and how that prowess would be useful in rescuing the pig from its predicament. With this new understanding, the students comprehended the humor of the story as they imagined Abe rolling around in the mud with a pig that is more of a wrestling competitor than a grateful recipient of assistance” (Garbrick, 2005H, pg. 1).

## **Conclusion & Future Direction and References**

### **Implications for Future Teaching**

In my classroom next year, I will begin using repeated reading strategies, especially repeated partner reading, at the beginning of the year. In this way, I might avoid some student resistance to the strategies.

As mentioned above, some of my students were hesitant to engage in repeated readings. I believe that some of this hesitation was due to the fact that the students had not been asked to engage in repeated readings (to the extent that I required) until I started teaching in January. I believe that if the students had been involved in repeated reading to such an extent from the beginning of the year, they would not have resisted. They would have viewed repeated reading as “just the way reading works in Room 11.”

I will, however, definitely use repeated reading strategies. I found several benefits as mentioned previously in this paper. I will use repeated partner reading for the benefits mentioned. One of the greatest benefits is the “listening in” opportunities that repeated partner reading provides.

Next year, I will continue to have students identify challenging words. However, I will need to find a way to curb the amount of time spent on vocabulary discussion. As mentioned earlier, the yellow group truly embraced student identification of vocabulary – to the extent that, sometimes, too much time was spent on vocabulary discussion as opposed to time spent reading.

### **New Wonderings**

How can I allow student identification of challenging words without also allowing “too many” words to be covered in the guided reading session? In other words, when my

students identify words, I find that I spend a lot of time on vocabulary and not enough time on reading. As PDE (2000) cites, “In general, it is more productive to focus on fewer words and teach them in more depth than to attempt to ‘cover’ too many words” (p. 3.12).

How can I effectively help students, such as red group, to see that comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading and that re-reading helps to achieve that goal? If I begin extensive repeated reading from the beginning of the year, will students resist less?

How do I help a student to realize that he or she is reading for meaning? Even with repeating reading, I had one student omit words and substitute words. She would seldom self-correct. How do I get this student, or any student, to “listen” to his or her own reading?

Can I use the strategies of repeated reading to help a student prepare for reading to the class? Will having students read aloud to the class motivate those students to eagerly participate in repeated readings? Perhaps pairing my students with “book buddies” from another classroom will provide incentive to “practice” a book – that is, engage in repeated reading?



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