READING COMPREHENSION

IN THE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM:

A PILOT STUDY

by

Christina Yvonne Contreras

A PROJECT

Submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee
of the School of Education of
California State University, Bakersfield
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

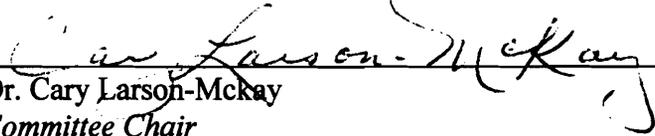MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION

Spring 2009

Copyright

By

Christina Yvonne Contreras

READING COMPREHENSION

IN THE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM:

A PILOT STUDY

By: Christina Yvonne Contreras

This thesis has been accepted on behalf of the Department of Education by their supervisory committee:

_____

Dr. Cary Larson-McKay
Committee Chair

_____

Dr. Barbara Bartholomew
Committee Member

_____

Kathy Philley
Committee Member

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my fellow classmates, I can only wish the best for you and all that you will soon accomplish. We have worked hard, shared obstacles, and are living proof that anything is possible. Good luck to everyone!

To my closest and dearest friends, I could not have asked for a group of people more supportive and loving as you all are and have been. Whether you have known me for less than a year or since childhood, you have never given up on me, have been patient enough through my hectic schedules, and have loved me for both what I have achieved and what I have become. I am thankful to still have every one of you in my life and love you all.

Most importantly, I want to thank my family for more than they know. There have been situations in which I have taken on too much for my own good, but you have all continuously stuck by me. Although I took my frustrations out on you at times, you were still here for me. Your support has helped me through even the most difficult times in which I was not sure I would be okay. Dad, thank you for loving me as much as you do for you are a role model in more ways then one. You have taught me the value of hard work, dedication, love, and making sure others are taken care of before my own. Even when times seemed difficult, you never gave up on me and have made me into a strong young woman willing to take on any challenge. Mom, thank you for the time you have spent listening to my "complaints and frustrations" about life. I know I may not always express my appreciation for what you have given me, but I greatly value it. Steven, yes I do love you despite our "differences" as siblings. I have always admired your "patient outlook" on life and wish that I could do the same. I wish you the best in what you choose to pursue in the near future. Christopher, you are one of my best friends and what I consider to be one of the strongest people I have ever met. I love you for all that you have done in which you have never

doubted my capabilities. Thank you for remaining by my side in good times and in bad times and everything in between.

Finally, I want to go beyond recognition and dedicate this culminating project to my Uncle Henry. This project is one accomplishment in my life I wish he could have seen. Although I know he would have been proud of me regardless of what I was able to achieve, I want him to know how important he was and still is in my life. Like my own father, he not only supported my dreams, but exemplified the value of hard work and dedication. And so, to my Uncle Henry:

> I hope you have been able to witness all the hard work I have put into making my life a success. You have been in my thoughts every day that I wake up and every night before I go to sleep. In times of need or in feelings of failure, I think about how strong you were to never give up on your own obstacles. You had a positive outlook on life, regardless of any situation and for that I admire you. Although you are not here to see firsthand what I think is one of the biggest accomplishments in my life, I know you are watching over me and are proud of the young woman I have become today.

> I love you and I miss you.

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted as an experimental pilot to evaluate a new reading comprehension curriculum, *Rocky River Reading,* for students in a local after school program. The participants were 50 second through sixth grade students from a variety of socioeconomic statuses and reading proficiency levels. In this study quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. An analysis of the data revealed that during the four week period the experimental group exhibited a greater decrease in time spent reading and read at home more out of interest. Control group parents were less likely to be in consensus on parent pre- and post-evaluations that their student had difficulties with reading based on prior reading experiences with the child at home. In similarity to the pre- and post-evaluations from the control group, experimental parents felt students had no reading strengths prior to *RRR*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In order to become recreational and life-long readers, students need the opportunity to practice and develop their literacy skills in relaxed and enjoyable environments. Activities such as group discussions, storytelling, leisure reading, literacy games and other such reading-based interactions can foster youths' interest and motivation to read. Research shows that after school programs successfully provide such activities.

-- After School Alliance (2008)

Each school day in California more than 4.4 million elementary and middle school-aged students are being served in one or more types of after school programming. Yet, almost 2 million students of the same ages are still left unsupervised with no such care during after school hours (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, 2001). The various after school programs range from community service learning centers to homework assistance and enrichment-based programs. For many of these programs the key focus is to promote higher achievement in core subject areas such as reading, mathematics, language arts, and social science. The importance of after school programming stems from all areas of need, whether it be the benefit of reduced juvenile delinquency, reduced injuries, higher reading comprehension, better mathematic scores, increased school attendance, assistance with conflict resolution skills, or the advantage of serving as a safe haven for children whose parents work during the after school hours.

Since non-school hours represent the single largest block of time in the lives of American students, The Children's Aid Society reports the most important benefit of any after school program is the fact that its programming has the advantage or potential of providing a significant amount of enrichment activities (2008). This may be important for parents to consider when planning before and after school care, as 40% of young people's

waking hours are not devoted to useful activities such as school, homework, meals, chores or work (Fashola, 1998). With 32% of waking hours for students being spent in school and 8% of being spent on extracurricular activities, there are still over 60% of waking hours to be used for increasing the likelihood for students to engage in a variety of risky behaviors, such as substance use, vandalism, and/or early sexual activity.

Consequently, these findings may be why 94% of voters nationwide say that there should be some type of organized activity or place for students to go after school each day (Hirsch, 2005). Every day at least eight million elementary school students are left unsupervised at home once school is dismissed. Unfortunately, these after school hours pose a threat to society and to the students themselves with violent juvenile crimes for children ages 5 to 14 tripling between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.; the peak hour for juvenile crimes, 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., is typically the first hour that most students are dismissed from school (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, 2001). These two events overlap indicating that there may be (or is) a relationship between them that should motivate policy makers to increase funding for after school programs, and/or provide additional enrichment activities to limit juvenile delinquency.

One significant impact of an after school program is its link to the regular school day in terms of academic achievement. Many of the diverse activities offered in after school programs are those that time constraints and curricular pressures of busy school-day classes often do not permit (Alan, 2006). These activities may include sustained silent reading, personal discussions on a variety of topics, elaboration of problematic concepts in mathematics, journal-writing, pen-pal writing correspondence, theatrics, and project collaboration. As stated in Alan (2006), Marilyn Jager Adams, a noted researcher in the field

of literacy, believes extended day literacy programs outside of school offer opportunities for students to pick tasks and stay with the tasks according to their own needs and interests. Many of these tasks, such as personal choice of literary material and additional time to practice reading, allow students to focus on their abilities and enhance literacy potential; an advantage that may be too time-consuming for teachers with numerous students during the school day.

In terms of personal reading outside of school hours, many of the disadvantaged and/or at-risk students, do not have access to books, magazines, internet, other technology-based materials, nor is there a significant amount of time spent reading each day in school (Kolić-Vehovec & Bajšanski, 2007). As a result, these particular students have limited literacy exposure. As reported by McQuillan (1998), researchers recently concluded that nearly two thirds of low-income families owned no books for their students. In fact within the regular school day, the school district at focus for this project permits only 15-20 minutes of silent reading a day (J. Ohannesson, personal communication, April 12, 2008). In addition to the limited time constraints and resources necessary for literacy skill-building, these students may also lack English-fluent or literate adults that can assist students with improving vocabulary, providing knowledge of communication processes needed for academic success, and enhancing literacy through the use of modeling these skills themselves.

<p style="text-align:center">Statement of the Problem</p>

Research has shown that for elementary students struggling with reading comprehension, one-on-one tutoring settings can be beneficial since it provides these students with individualized assistance, thus accommodating to their needs (Clay, 1993).

These tutoring settings may include a variety of teaching methods and/or curriculum designed to build and strengthen literacy skills. Research has also shown that after school programs have the advantage of providing individual instruction for students who often struggle in different academic subjects, such as reading comprehension, since individual needs can be more easily identified and accommodated in an after school program. Time constraints and a focus on fulfilling state standards, for example, are two reasons why struggling students are reading at a much slower pace than that necessary for their comprehension (The Children's Initiative, 2008). As a result, both teaching methods and curriculum emphasizing literacy building is valuable in an after school program. Additional time and small class sizes in an after school program, therefore, may maximize the use of these methods and curriculum and supplement the regular school day in terms of improving reading comprehension.

Statement of Purpose

The implementation of curriculum underlining the skills necessary for reading comprehension can be a constructive addition to an after school program. After school programs have the benefit of assessing and evaluating the students during individual instruction and designing a program of activities specific to the students' needs.

The purpose of this pilot study was to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness of a newly-developed reading comprehension curriculum similar to that of an existing curriculum emphasizing mathematics in a local after school program. The new curriculum, known as *Rocky River Reading*, was developed by the researcher based on existing reading comprehension tests that are already used during the regular school day either in school textbooks or in state standards-based curriculum that are adopted by the school of which the

current students attend (The *AfterSchool Kidz Lit®,* Developmental Studies Center, 2003). The reading comprehension tests from these particular textbooks and state standards-based curriculum assist the *RRR* approach by providing guidance in how to establish similar tests for effectiveness ~~in~~ evaluating reading comprehension. In *RRR*, students are provided with timed reading comprehension tests on 12 progressing levels of difficulty; two different tests are given at each level for a total of 24 tests in the curriculum that must be completed with 100% accuracy in order to proceed to the next level, if a student fails to receive 100% accuracy, he or she must redo the same test the following day until full competency is achieved; *RRR* also includes weekly student-parent reading packets and daily group discussions.

Students were given an initial assessment developed by the researcher that is based on an accumulation of existing comprehension questions within state standards-based curriculum. After assessments and evaluations, students were randomly assigned to either an experimental group or control group. The 25 students assigned to the experimental group completed weekly *RRR* comprehension tests, took part in daily group discussions, and took home a weekly reading packet to be completed by the student and parent. In terms of the control group, 25 students only participated in an initial and final assessment and evaluation. The purpose of not completing aspects of *RRR* was to compare their assessment and evaluation scores to that of the experimental group in terms of determining effectiveness of *RRR* or basic academic growth after four weeks.

At the end of the four week period, all students will be evaluated with the same assessment; both pre- and posttest scores on the assessments and evaluation of the *RRR* participant group will then be compared to the pre/posttest assessment scores of the control

group. The advantage of this project will be to offer the elementary after school setting the benefit of either a newly-developed curriculum focusing on reading comprehension, or will at least provide further insight on how to improve this curriculum for long term usage.

<u>Research Question</u>

Is there a significant difference between pre- and post- test reading scores within a four week period for second through sixth grade students who work with the *Rocky River Reading* curriculum as opposed to those who do not?

<u>Limitations</u>

Variables that the researcher cannot control in an experimental study are often referred to as limitations. For the current study, the limitations are as follows:

1. Daily student attendance during the four week curriculum implementation.

2. Additional parent and teacher support related to literacy skill-building during the four week period of using *Rocky River Reading*.

3. Student motivation to concentrate successfully on each test given.

4. Student anxiety during test taking.

5. Guaranteed participation in the after school program.

6. Successful completion and return of student-parent reading packets.

<u>Delimitations</u>

The boundaries of this study were limited to ten students from each grade level in second through sixth grade, for a total of 50 students. The participating students were enrolled in an after school program at an elementary school located in the Southern San Joaquin Valley of California.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions are found throughout the current study and are provided alphabetically for further clarity and reference. These terms and definitions are often found within after school programs, elementary school settings, and reading programs and are as follows:

Advanced: Signifies superior performance at a given grade (NAEP, 2005).

After School: The hours between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday

AR: An acronym for *Accelerated Reader™*, a computer based, reading management and motivational system designed to complement existing classroom literacy programs for grades K-12 (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2006).

Auditory-Accuracy Level: Level of listening comprehension (Carver, 1993).

Automaticity: A feature of a process that runs till completion once started, without the need of conscious monitoring (Rupley et al., 1998).

Basic: Denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade (NAEP, 2005).

Breadth: Size of the mental lexicon and the number of words giving meaning to the reader (Tannenbaum et al., 2006).

Cognitive Power: Intelligence in the capacity of memorization (Carver, 1993).

Cognitive Speed: Primary factor influencing the rate of reading (Carver, 1993).

Construction of Meaning: Type of sociocognitive processing model that embraces the idea that the reader, the text, the teacher, and the classroom community work together to enhance the motivation and skills needed to read effectively (CSUS, 2004)

Cooperative Learning: Group-based integration approach providing maximum opportunities for meaningful classroom interaction in a supportive environment (Shaaban, 2006).

CSUS: An acronym for the California State University, Sacramento.

Decoding: The ability to recognize and match a printed word with its mental lexicon and derive the meaning at the word level. (Rupley et al., 1998).

Depth: Richness of knowledge that the reader has for the words he or she knows (Tannenbaum, 2006).

Direct Vocabulary: Learning words through explicit instruction, such as multiple readings or identifying key words (Nelson & Stage, 2007).

ECRI: An acronym for the Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, an organization designed to improve the reading ability of elementary students by emphasizing word recognition, study skills, spelling, writing, proofing, and penmanship (Fashola, 1998).

English Language Learner (ELL): individuals who are trying to acquire the necessary English vocabulary to be academically and socially successful in an environment different from his or her own cultural background (Palmer et al., 2007).

Extrinsic motivation: based on rewards and social controls and can hinder learning when used excessively (Colker, 2008).

Graphemes: Letters and spellings representing sounds in text (Antunez, 2002).

Higher-Level Stimuli: Information sources concerned with concepts and semantic relationships (Pulido, 2003).

Indirect Vocabulary: Learning words primarily through exposure, such as being read to, reading independently, or engaging in conversations with others (Nelson & Stage, 2007).

Interactive-Compensatory Model: Process in which the reader compensates for one information source by relying on another information source to accomplish a word recognition task (Pulido, 2003).

Internal Attention: Contains three characteristics known as alertness (ability to activate schemata related to text comprehension), selectivity (ability to attain only that information requiring processing for the text at hand), and limited capacity, (amount of cognitive energy available for processing information) (CSUS, 2004).

IRP: An acronym for the Intergenerational Reading Program designed to meet the needs first grade students who are at-risk for reading problems in which they improve reading skills through assistance from senior citizens (Schacter, 1999).

Lower-Level Stimuli: Information sources dealing with more basic characteristics such as phonics, sight words, or print itself (Pulido, 2003).

Monitoring: The ability to note explicitly whether decoded words make sense and whether the text itself makes sense and has the ability to reprocess if a problem is detected (Pressley, 2000).

Intrinsic Motivation: A type of motivation that springs from internal desires, interests, and experiences; has long been established as integral to reading motivation and engagement (Colker, 2008).

NAEP: An acronym for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the only measure of student achievement in the United States that compares the performance of students in a given state with the performance of students across the nation or in other states; often called the "Nations Report Card" (NAEP, 2005).

Phonemes: Smallest units making up a spoken language, with English consisting of about 41 phonemes; phonemes combine to form syllables and words (Antunez, 2002).

Phonemic Awareness: Understanding that the sounds of spoken language work together to make words (Antunez, 2002).

Phonics: Understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes (Antunez, 2002).

Proficient: Represents solid academic performance in which a student reaching this level has demonstrated competency over a challenging subject matter (NAEP, 2005).

RRR: An acronym for Rocky River Reading, a curriculum that provides timed reading comprehension tests on 12 progressing levels of difficulty; two different tests are given at each level for a total of 24 tests in the curriculum, which also includes weekly student-parent reading packets and daily group discussions.

Rauding-Accuracy: Level of ability to comprehend while reading (Carver, 1993).

Rauding-Rate: Rate of reading associated with recreational reading of text or simple words (Carver, 1993).

Rauding Theory: Having the ability to comprehend reading material of an appropriate level of difficulty that is affected by two factors: the rauding-accuracy level and the rauding-rate level. The theory also consists of three components: cognitive power, cognitive speed, and auditory-accuracy level (Carver, 1993).

Reading Comprehension Strategies: Culmination of skills facilitating the ultimate goal of learning to read; these skills include Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Reading Fluency, and Vocabulary Development (Antunez, 2002).

Reading Fluency: Critical factor necessary for reading comprehension in which the reader can read and recognize words accurately, quickly, and comprehend them simultaneously (Antunez, 2002).

Schema: Units of which all information is organized into either brand new units (i.e. new information) or revising existing schemas (i.e. adding to existing information); if plural, it is known as *schemata* (CSUS, 2004).

Schema Theory: Framework that organizes knowledge in memory by putting information into the correct "slots," each of which contains related parts. As new information enters memory, must be compatible with one of the slots, and be entered into the proper slot before comprehension can occur (Nist & Mealey, 1991).

Self-efficacy: the ability of a person to judge his own capabilities in regard to a task, seems to play a major role in whether or not a child takes on a reading challenge (Bandura, 1997).

STAR: An acronym for Standardized Testing and Reporting Program, contains six tests administered annually in the spring in grades two through eleven that measure how well students in California public schools are learning the knowledge and skills identified in the California content standards (California Department of Education, 2006).

Transactional Model: A dynamic situation of which the meaning of text does not become apparent until the reader interacts with and processes the text (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Vocabulary Development: Knowledge of stored information about the meanings and pronunciations of words necessary for communication (Antunez, 2002).

World Knowledge: Relating to what is already known to what is read; this is done by asking "Why?" questions about factual knowledge read in the text (Pressley, 2000).

Summary

Reading comprehension is a subject in academia needing a more significant focus. Although there are numerous existing literacy curricula used within the regular school-day, little has been developed to serve time constraints of after school programs; a place that can provide individual assistance with literacy needs.

The purpose of the current study is to implement a new curriculum developed by the researcher. Upon participant completion of the experimental period, curriculum will be assessed on its effectiveness, if any, based on experimental and control group pre- and posttest scores.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Each of us has a duty to help our children achieve their full potential. By working
together, we can shape the destiny of America's children with our hands and
hearts. Children who are able to read will be ready to learn and ready to lead.
                    -- First Lady Laura Bush, excerpted from the
                    foreword of *Ready to Read, Ready to Learn*

Like most major academic concepts, reading comprehension can take on a variety of

definitions and encompass numerous elements. The concept of being literate goes-beyond

reading a book word for word meaning and rather focuses on a deeper level of cognition. As

stated by Clay (1993), reading is a thinking process that involves the extraction of meaning

from print. This includes being able to visualize and understand both illustrations and text

within a particular story. Reading comprehension embraces the ideas of predicting future

events based on current information, decoding text, activating prior reading knowledge

through reflection on past experiences, matching patterns of what is known to that of what is

not known, and questioning the uncertain (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Although reading comprehension can be understood as a group of literacy concepts, a

specific definition is a difficult one for students, parents, and teachers alike. As a student,

reading may be as simple as holding a book and being able to read with clarity. To parents,

reading comprehension may be viewed as having an ability to recognize words and in

making connections between the text and reality. In contrast, teachers may perceive reading

comprehension as a combination of vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and phonemic

awareness. As a result of this discrepancy in understanding the components of reading

comprehension, strategies in teaching literacy skills may vary depending on those defining it.

This chapter will examine the general literacy theories and problems that currently

exist in elementary schools amongst students, parents, and teachers; as applicable in California. The essential components of reading comprehension and current strategies used to reinforce them will be discussed as they are used to the benefit of after school programs. In doing so, there should be an adequate understanding of both current reading comprehension struggles and the advantage of an after school program curriculum emphasizing and assisting student needs individually.

<div align="center">Theories in Reading Comprehension</div>

As stated in Struble (2003), the topic of reading comprehension was developed with the ideas of both mental representation and memory in which it was thought that readers followed a particular path: a reader would construct a mental image, relate new information to prior knowledge, and/or seek further clarification before comprehension or long-term memory could improve. Consequently, under this definition reading comprehension depended upon cooperation and experience on the part of the reader in which the reader brought both existing reading skills and the motivation to develop additional skills to become a better reader.

Schema Theory

Although not strictly specific to reading, the schema theory as described by Struble (2003) is viewed as an active process in which the reader comprehends new information in one of two ways: assimilates the new text data to an existing model or adjusts the existing model to accommodate the new text data. In doing so, new information is retained in connection with the existing model. Simply put, all knowledge is organized into units known as *schemas* that contain stored information and a range of differing levels of existing schemas, such as knowledge about cultural truths to knowledge of a particular word.

According to the theory, *schemata* are formed to represent concepts, such as objects and the relationships they have with other objects, situations, events, actions, and sequences (CSUS, 2004). In terms of reading comprehension, individuals develop schemata about everything they experience that represent mimic personal theories of reality. As described by the California State University, Sacramento (2004), these theories of reality influence the way information is interpreted, continue to change as new information is received, and ultimately affect comprehension relevant to a reader's task. In other words, as the reader interprets information within a text, he or she attributes what is being read to what they already know. This method assists their comprehension of the text by making it more meaningful and enriching.

In terms of cognitive-based processing, Samuels (1994) defines three characteristics of *internal attention* that are crucial to comprehension. First, alertness is used to actively attempt to access relevant schemata involving letter-sound relationships, syntactic knowledge, and word meanings. Second, the reader must attend selectively to only the present information requiring processing. Finally, the reader has a limited capacity of cognitive energy that can be made available to the information processing necessary for text comprehension. Thus, this cognitive energy is given to reading tasks that require a greater attention, such as difficult vocabulary and text content itself. As stated by Samuels, if the individual has their cognitive energy focused on decoding, he or she is limited in the energy required to also integrate, relate, and combine the meanings of the words being decoded. Samuels asserts that difficulties with reading comprehension occur when the reader cannot automatically access knowledge in the schemata. In other words, without prior schemata in comprehension skills and methods, the reader may be unable to process the information

successfully. If the reader has existing skills and methods to assist in their reading practice, then the reader will not encounter such difficulties. Thus, readers must learn a variety of comprehension skills and methods necessary to avoid this situation.

Transactional Model

The transactional model of reading states that reading is an active situation in which the meaning of text does not become apparent until the reader transacts with the text, such as utilizing the skills necessary to produce proper pronunciation of difficult words and/or to follow the content within the material. Rosenblatt (1994), as described in CSUS (2004), explains the model further:

> "Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Instead of two fixed entities acting on one another, the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation (p.1063)."

The reading skills required to process the meaning of text is not only active, but has no meaning unless the reader evokes the meaning itself. Goodman (1994) states that other than the transaction between the reader and text, the writer of the text also influences reading comprehension by how well he or she constructs the text. The reader must reconstruct the text presented and give meaning through existing reading skills. By giving meaning to the text, the reader uses spelling, punctuation, grammar, bibliographies, and other formatting characteristics to comprehend proficiently.

Interactive-Compensatory Model

To elaborate on the idea of the relationship between reader and text, Rumelhart (1994) explains the idea of interaction within groups of existing skills known as sources. Similar to the idea of schemata, a reader will pull information from a second source when the information from the original source is scarce. For example, when the information necessary

to recognize a word is not available, the reader will then rely on information from either a previous experience or contextual clues to accomplish the word recognition task. The term for this process is known as the *Interactive-Compensatory Model*. Pulido (2003) elaborates on this idea stating that when sources work together and/or overlap, there is varying levels of information processing taking place. Sources concerned with concepts and semantic relationships are known as *Higher-Level Stimuli*, whereas sources dealing with more basic characteristics such as phonics, sight words, or print itself are referred to as *Lower-Level Stimuli.* In sum, both levels of stimuli rely on one another when one is less adequate than the other in order to assist the reader with the necessary skills to read successfully and without difficulty.

Stages, Levels, and Motivation

Other recent research has approached the topic of cognition in relation to reading. This research has provided several theories as to why students in elementary school may be facing a greater amount of difficulty with literacy. In the study of Rupley, Wilson, and Nichols (1998), students are only successful with reading comprehension by effectively completing consecutive reading stages as they develop. Young readers must first learn to recognize shapes, sounds, and names of letters and acquire a low level of phonemic awareness before achieving word recognition and learning to read in general. Without a successful progression in these early stages, students are unable to achieve automaticity in word recognition, which is a significant factor for reading comprehension at the elementary school level since standardized test scores and textbook content requires reading comprehension for successful usage. In other words, without the ability to decode text, younger readers are limited in their reading abilities.

Carver (1993) also presents a current literacy struggle known as the *Rauding Theory* (Note: the Rauding Theory refers to having the ability to comprehend reading material of an appropriate level of difficulty that is affected by two factors: the Rauding-accuracy level and the Rauding-rate level; please see the Definition of Terms in Chapter One for more information). The theory also consists of three components: cognitive power, cognitive speed, and auditory-accuracy level (Carver, 1993). Carver states that having the ability to proficiently comprehend reading material is affected by two factors: the rauding-accuracy level, which is the level of ability to comprehend while reading, and the rauding-rate level, which is the rate of reading associated with recreational reading of text or simple words. The theory also consists of three smaller components: cognitive power (i.e. intelligence in the capacity of memorization), cognitive speed (i.e. the primary factor influencing the rate at which a reader can read text material), and auditory-accuracy level (i.e. listening comprehension). Other studies agree that for younger students, reading comprehension is directly related to word-recognition capabilities, while the accuracy level of reading comprehension is directly influenced by rates of processing (Rupley et al., 1998; Carver, 1993).

Kolić-Vehovec and Bajšanski (2006) have elaborated on cognition and questioned the idea of motivation and metacognitive strategies necessary to process information and understand text. In other words, readers need to be aware of these strategies and be willing to use them to successfully achieve reading comprehension. Kolić-Vehovec and Bajšanski found that readers who could consciously identify their use of reading strategies were more often able to better understand text. In addition, the correlation of perceived usage of reading strategies and reading comprehension increased throughout elementary school; thus, students

were more apt to read independently without being told to do so. Similarly, Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) found that readers rating their reading ability as "excellent" perceived themselves as using reading strategies more frequently than readers who rated their reading ability as "average" or "poor."

In sum, these particular theories are important in the development of a reading program in that they not only provide previous and ongoing research related to how students read, but why they may also be struggling. Thus, understanding the cognitive processes and skills necessary to read are significant for a successful reading program.

<u>Current Struggles with Reading Comprehension</u>

There are a variety of possible explanations for literacy struggles amongst elementary school students, both the lack of a solution and the need for improved strategies continue to rise. As reported by the California Department of Education (2006), only 47% of second graders and 36% of third graders scored at the proficient and advanced levels for English language arts on the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR); these grade levels showed gains in which there was a 5% increase from the previous year. In terms of other grade levels, less than half of all students achieved at proficient or advanced scores in English language arts. Counties across California, such as Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, and San Francisco showed similar STAR results for second through sixth grade students, in which less than half of all students achieved proficiency or advanced levels. Statewide, only 42% of all students in grades 2-11 scored at proficiency or above.

Finally, based on a recent nationwide report card from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2005), several facts were found. First, no state had a higher average reading score in 2005 than in 2003, and seven states had a lower reading score.

Based on fourth grade achievement levels in 2005, Mississippi had the highest percentage (82%) of students scoring at or below basic on scores of reading comprehension, while Massachusetts had the lowest percentage (56%) of students scoring at or below basic on scores of reading comprehension; all other states and jurisdictions had percentages in between. Of the 38 states participating in the 1998 and 2005 assessments, only three had higher average level scores in comparison between the two years, and eight had lower-than-average level scores. Also within the 38 participating states, only eight states increased in average reading scores between 2003 and 2005, while two decreased. Based on these alarming facts of students' test scores nationwide, there seems to be a continuous need for improving and/or developing better strategies and curriculum to assist students with reading comprehension problems.

<div align="center">Essential Components of Reading</div>

Identifying the essential components of reading is one way to improve strategies and curriculum that focus on reading comprehension. These specific components, when practiced, can significantly improve reading ability and are of great importance in reading development. As stated by Antunez (2002), there are five main reading components that can teach students how to be good readers. These components include phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and other strategies used by students to comprehend material.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness stems from the idea and importance of recognizing sounds. Antunez (2002) explains that students need to be taught to hear sounds in spoken words and understand that these words are made up of the smallest parts of sounds, which are also

known as *phonemes*. In the English language alone there exist 41 phonemes that when combined, form syllables and words. Upon recognizing that these small units create words, the child develops phonemic awareness as a process. To elaborate on this idea further, Allor (2002) describes phonemic awareness as an oral language skill of which the reader understands that sentences are made up of words, words are made up of sounds (syllables), and syllables are made up of individual sounds (phonemes). When reading comprehension problems do exist, it is often due to readers being unable to blend sounds to form words or to segment words into their individual sounds. Thus, reading development is delayed since the reader cannot blend sounds and segment words to produce correct pronunciation. In other words, reading difficulties develop without the ability to form segments, sounds, and words as a process.

Phonics

Phonics goes beyond word and sound recognition and focuses on the relationships between written letters and spoken sounds (Antunez, 2002). In doing so, readers are able to recognize familiar words more proficiently and automatically, and decode new words with greater efficiency. Rupley et al. (1998) further describes the process of using phonics as being able to recognize and match a printed word with its mental lexicon and derive the meaning at the word level of comprehension based on its relationship with the context of which the word is written. One negative outcome of phonic instruction, however, is a reader's focus on structure. Eldredge, Quinn, and Butterfield (1990) explain that students tend to focus more on the structure of the words rather than the meaning that should be acquired from the printed words when phonic instruction is explicit. In their study, Eldredge et al. found that students, when taught to segment and blend sounds in words (i.e. phonics),

they improved word recognition skills and reading comprehension by understanding how to pronounce words properly and within contexts.

Reading Fluency

To rapidly and accurately understand the meaning of text being read, readers must first develop reading fluency. Antunez (2002) explains that when reading fluency is developed, readers can read silently, recognize words automatically, and can establish meaning to text. Similarly, reading fluency allows readers to read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Reis, Eckert, McCoach, Jacobs, and Coyne (2008) assert that the reason fluency can be explained as a benefit to reading comprehension through cognitive processing in which the "efficient processing of lower level reading skills (i.e. word recognition) characterized by fluent reading frees up cognitive resources for higher level reading skills (i.e. comprehension)" (p.300). As a result, the reader has more time to concentrate on the text meaning, rather than spending too much time and energy figuring out what the words are. Therefore, readers who have not developed fluency are more likely to read slower, read word by word, and focus on decoding words rather than comprehending the meaning of the text; thus, reading slows down, requires more processing, and the ability to understand meaning is sacrificed.

Vocabulary Development

Once readers have learned to recognize the relationships between words, letters, and sounds, they need to learn the meaning and pronunciation of words, which is known as vocabulary development. Having knowledge of written and spoken word relationships, readers need to be able to actively build and expand the meanings and usages of these relationships (Antunez, 2002). Researchers have found that although vocabulary

development as a separate entity is not completely necessary for reading comprehension, students are more likely to improve on comprehension when vocabulary instruction is established directly (i.e. instruction) or indirectly (i.e. daily conversation and other informal exposure). On tests of reading comprehension, for example, students receiving some type of vocabulary instruction outperform students receiving no such instruction (Pressley, 2000).

Other factors influencing vocabulary development also include the type of vocabulary in reference to reading comprehension. Tannenbaum,, Torgesen, and Wagner (2006) have found that reading vocabulary measures correlate higher with reading comprehension than do measures of oral vocabulary; the reason for this being measures of tap word-reading ability (to segment phonemes by breaking a word into its sounds by tapping out and/or counting each sound) in addition to knowledge of word meanings. Researchers have also suggested that the age of participants is correlated between the developments of vocabulary and reading comprehension. In one study, Snow (2002) found that the strength of the relationship between a kindergarten vocabulary measure and reading comprehension increased substantially as the students advanced in grade level. Snow found that for first graders, fourth graders, and seventh graders, correlations were high between .45 and .70. Finally, Tannenbaum et al. suggests the depth of vocabulary being assessed (i.e. the amount of words a student may or may not know) is correlated to reading comprehension. As reported, measures such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test assess the range of words about which the individual has knowledge, whereas other measures of vocabulary can be used to assess depth and fluency of word knowledge (Tannenbaum et al., 2006).

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Acquiring strategies to understand, remember, and communicate what is read, is known as reading comprehension strategies (Antunez, 2002). By specifically teaching students these strategies, they are not only learning the steps to become good readers but are also being taught to understand text independent of instruction on the specific text. Thus, students who are in control of their own reading comprehension are more proficient and active readers than students who are more dependent others to comprehend the reading for them. By acquiring learning strategies, students are able to become aware of why they are reading text, gain an overview of the text before reading, make predictions about upcoming text, read selectively for better meaning, incorporate past experiences into text, use context clues to determine unfamiliar vocabulary, paraphrase important points, evaluate the quality of text, and consider new ideas in contrast to existing ideas (Pressley, 2000). Some strategies that can be helpful to students facing comprehension issues include generating questions about text when reading, constructing mental images of text ideas, summarizing throughout text, and analyzing stories based on the setting and story grammar components (e.g. problems and solutions amongst characters).

Miscellaneous Components of Reading

Although not stated as "essential", there exist three miscellaneous components contributing to reading comprehension development. These components still remain essential in that they accomplish the goal of helping readers understand what is being read and build literacy skills. More specifically, these components act as strategies to enhance comprehension. As stated by Pressley (2000), the three comprehension components include decoding, world knowledge and recognition, and comprehension monitoring.

Decoding

To become aware of not only recognizing letters and sounds, but that letters can be sounded out and blended together as words is known as *decoding*. Having the skill of decoding allows good readers to notice whether words in a sentence or context make sense and, if not, are able to take a second look at a word to see if it was misread (Pressley, 2000). Much of decoding is comprised of separate skills that make it possible for readers to understand text meaning. For example, LaBerge and Samuels (1974) state that sounding out a word does not guarantee that a reader will understand the meaning of the word. In fact, trying to sound out a word requires great mental effort which does not permit energy for other cognitive operations, such as comprehension of the words trying to be sounded out. LaBerge and Samuels believe that decoding acts as a primary strategy in building reading fluency. Once fluency is established, the reader can then understand what is being read. Pressley (2000) recommends that for students needing comprehension improvement, they must first learn to decode well, such as through explicit instruction of sounding out words. In doing so, words can be more easily recognized to the point of fluency since less energy is spent on trying to pronounce words, and more energy is given to understanding the content of which they are in.

World Knowledge and Recognition

Relating information between what is already known, such as with past experiences or existing knowledge, to what is read within a text is known as using *world, or global, knowledge* to comprehend what is read. Readers who show strong ability in world knowledge are better able to grasp the meaning of a topic because of a high prior knowledge. However, Pressley (2000) states that readers with world knowledge often do not make inferences based

on prior knowledge unless the inferences are absolutely demanded to make sense out of the text. Prior knowledge is used to support reading when readers are encouraged to read high-quality, information-rich texts, especially as students; this allows younger readers to learn not only the difference between fact and fantasy, but teaches them how to give significant meaning to text by providing a deeper and more meaningful understanding of what is read. In terms of reading comprehension, Pressley finds that a wealth of knowledge is necessary to continuously build reading comprehension. One way to achieve constant development of world knowledge is asking "Why?" questions about factual knowledge read in texts. Questioning text not only has the advantage of contributing to world knowledge, but teaches the reader skills in memorization as well. Memorization skills are strengthened since they will "orient readers to prior knowledge that could explain the facts being encountered" (p.3). In other words, memorization of words and their meanings assist readers in fluency since words and their definitions can be more easily recognized, while more energy is devoted to attributing prior knowledge to comprehending the text content.

The importance of world knowledge and recognition of knowledge in the text is substantial in that both account for a large variance in reading comprehension. As described in Tannenbaum et al. (2006), tests of reading comprehension were analyzed and showed that 89% of the variance in the tests was due to world knowledge and reasoning. When this research was analyzed again, it was shown that world knowledge, drawing inferences from the content, following the structure of the passage, and recognizing a writer's intent and tone were the four skills correlated with reading comprehension; world knowledge being the strongest predictor of reading comprehension to support the development of world knowledge. Tannenbaum et al. suggests that readers should develop knowledge of the core

concept of a text before reading and of the different contexts in which a particular word is used. This not only promotes flexibility in world knowledge, but contributes to strengthening reading comprehension.

World knowledge is also enhanced through what Tannenbaum et al. refer to as *breadth* and *depth* of vocabulary. Breadth refers to the size of the mental vocabulary and the number of words that have meaning to the reader. However, rather than breadth describing the quality by which each word is known, the term is defined by the quantity of words that give meaning to the individual. In terms of depth, this term refers to the richness of knowledge that the reader has for the words known. As an individual acquires a greater depth, he or she accomplishes three things: "an increase in world knowledge, flexibility in word usage, and accessibility of vocabulary to be used in different contexts." In their particular study, Tannenbaum et al. found that 50% of the variance in reading comprehension was accounted for by attaining world knowledge.

Comprehension Monitoring

Having the ability to note explicitly whether decoded words make sense, whether the text itself makes sense, and being able to reprocess information if a problem with text is detected is what Pressley (2000) defines as *comprehension monitoring*. Monitoring can be a dependent task in which a reader is guided by a supervising individual; however, this strategy is of greater benefit when done independently. Readers should learn at an early age to seek clarification by rereading text when they do not understand its meaning. As described by Kolić-Vehovec and Bajšanski (2007), comprehension monitoring is a task requiring the detection of inconsistencies in text, such as scrambled sentences, contradictory sentences or statements that conflict with world knowledge. Other components of comprehension

monitoring include rating the importance of sentences in text and evaluating the complexity

of text. Readers must learn to evaluate not only their understanding of the text, but be able to

seek clarification as a means of facilitating their comprehension. When self-monitoring while

reading, a reader should ask: "Is what I am reading making sense?" Pressley suggests that if a

problem does prevail, a reader should try sounding out a confusing word or rereading the part

and/or part(s) of the text that did not make sense. In the study of Kolić-Vehovec and

Bajšanski, data showed strongest developmental effects within the relationships of text

comprehension and monitoring. This effect was also found to be more substantial during

higher elementary school grades.

　　In sum, there are miscellaneous skills in reading comprehension that can assist a

reader in learning to comprehend text. For the development of a reading program, these

additional skills and necessities in learning to read are crucial for its success.

<u>Reading Comprehension in the After School Program</u>

　　A regular school-day often consists of state standards-based curriculum that typically

does not allow the opportunity for either remedial assistance or emphasize on certain

academic subjects. In fact, teachers may find it difficult to set aside any extra time in their

own day-time curricula for skill-building in reference to struggling students. Moon, Brighton,

and Callahan (2003), for example, believe that in efforts to exemplify year-to-year academic

growth for policy-makers and educators, school schedules have been realigned and subjects

reduced or eliminated so more time is made possible for covering basics and teaching

students how to take tests. In turn, struggling students are left to fend for themselves in terms

of working harder than the norm to understand what was previously taught in class. The

majority of these struggling students are not only lacking the skills necessary to support other

subject areas, but also do not have the adequate resources to meet their needs.

One particular skill required to achieve competency in any school subject area is reading comprehension. Accomplishment in reading comprehension is not only the key to obtaining an education, but is a lifelong skill that should be continuously enhanced. Students today, however, are given the wrong message about reading and often do not pursue reading for pleasure as an adult. The reason for this being, formal reading instruction is pursued as a chore rather than by personal choice during the school day. Ivey (2000) explains that standard reading instruction does not excite students since limited attention is given to reading for enjoyment. Coupled with a lack of assistance in strengthening reading comprehension skills in school, reading habits typically decline in adulthood because individuals are left with modest reading comprehension skills that never improve as suggested by Ivey (2000).

<u>Advantages</u>

More often than not there is the issue of the regular school day spending the majority of its time on more basic subjects, such as language arts or mathematics in particular. This is an issue since the school setting is still not providing adequate instruction for student success. Adequate instruction might include additional time spent on remedial concepts that students may still be struggling with, assisting students with more individualized attention, or planning lessons tailored to students' abilities. Fortunately an after school program can provide additional instruction to free the regular school day of these pressures. In reference to younger students struggling with reading comprehension for example, after school programs can offer a more individualized approach to reading, through which students may be given the opportunity to read books of their own choosing. Gordon, Bridglall, and Meroe (2005)

state that after school leaders can accommodate the needs of students based on a deeper one-to-one interaction since regular school day teachers have a greater ratio to attend to more than 25:1 on a daily basis. Program staff not only values the importance of creating challenges to accommodate and assist students to flourish in their abilities, and creating flexibility in lessons until students are fully competent in its concepts, but can also develop positive relationships that foster student success. As stated by Allington (2001), flexibility in curriculum not only helps students to recognize the intrinsic rewards of reading, but helps them understand the social and cultural dimensions of literacy. Notably for students from disadvantaged homes, after-school programs provide the supplementary experiences that can maximize their academic potential, such as relationship-building, identifying and assisting academic needs, and providing a safe haven that encompasses academics and the development of world knowledge rather than delinquency (Gordon et al., 2005).

Finally, after school staff members typically have the chance to meet with parents during sign-out times to discuss the needs of their students; the end result being a collaboration in which both parties can be of more assistance to students. Most after school program staff also have the advantage of talking with regular day-time teachers about their curricula. This allows program staff to design additional explorations of interest in which students can connect both day-time and after school experiences. In fact, research has shown that in alignment with day-time curriculum, after school programs can enhance attitudes toward learning and academics, including increases in reading achievement (Alan, 2006; Bissell & Malloy, 2002).

Available Curriculum

An after school program has the advantage of focusing on topics and skills that

students often do not receive enough assistance. Therefore, curriculum made available to after school programs is crucial in terms of its significance to each child, and the length of time it can be covered due to shorter hours in the program, which may often pose a challenge since most curriculum available to programs are often difficult to condense and do not allow students time to process its information. Curriculum made available to after school programs can range from state standards-based lessons to more staff-developed activities that often focus on the specific needs of students. For reading comprehension, several curricula do exist in which lessons not only support state standards, but accommodate the needs of both the after school program and its students.

The *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program* is one example of curricula that is tailored to meet the different needs of both after school and summer programs. This enrichment program not only supports English language learners, but also allows its users to modify lessons to their own preference. It increases motivation to read and builds literacy skills, while at the same time it develops core values of helpfulness, fairness, personal responsibility, and respect for others. In fact, one particular study evaluated *Kidz Lit* during the full 2001-02 school year at 34 school sites and found participants to show significant increases in the amount of reading overall, in their positive feelings about their reading ability, in pre- to posttest measures (for Spanish-speaking students), and in social/ethical attitudes and behaviors (Developmental Studies Center, 2003). The *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program* comes with five sets of ten books that specifically address certain topics, such as respecting adults or peer relationships. For each book in a set, leaders have a story guide outlining a five-part process for conducting story-related activities; these include introducing the story, reading the story, discussing the story, connecting to the story, and wrapping up the

story. With this five step process, students not only learn how to connect new information to their own lives, but read engaging books that enhance the value of learning to read independently. Students also learn to express their feelings and contemplate ideas through discussion, drama, art, movement, and writing (Developmental Studies Center, 2003).

Accelerated Reader™ (AR), although frequently used during the regular school day, is another reading comprehension program made available to after school programs. This electronic program allows readers to choose a book from its components, read the book, answer multiple-choice questions that test their understanding of the story; the purpose of this process being to enhance and improve student motivation and vocabulary growth through an individualized goal/point system; student's individual goals are based on their reading grade equivalent (GE) score from a standardized test, such as STAR Reading, coupled with the amount of time the student is able to devote to reading. *AR* converts GE scores into a range of difficulty that is used to determine the level of books from which the student can select. The effectiveness of this program has been found to be significant in terms of reading achievement success. Research has shown that students exhibit an increase in the levels of reading time and gain significantly more meaning on the passage comprehension and total comprehension (i.e., passage and sentence comprehension) measures. On passage comprehension, *AR* participants gained almost three times as much as did control groups not receiving testing in *AR*, whereas on the composite measure *AR* students gained more than twice as much as control participants, who did not take part in the *AR* program (Peak & Dewalt, 1993; Samuels & Wu, 2004). Although beneficial, *AR* does not assess inferential or critical thinking skills nor do students have a wide range of books to choose from. (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2006).

The *Bo Bug Shared Reading Program* features character-driven rhyming stories, and online learning activities. It offers teachers and parents an exciting and easy way to use daily reading interventions that feature a simple assessment to track progress in the five areas of reading: fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness. In each of these areas, Bo Bug provides questions and discussion topics that teach students to self-monitor, strengthen skills, and learn parts of a story. The program offers eight shared reading stories, animated episodes, over 200 online reading activities, and a facilitator's guide (Global Learning, 2000-2008). Assessment of this program based on research by its creators showed increases in student reading scores within areas of fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness. Overall reading scores also increased as well as scores based on state standardized test scores.

LitART Learn After School Literacy Series is a full year of curriculum comprised of eight thematic literacy notebooks. An integrated thematic literacy curriculum notebook provides step-by-step activity plans for 200 activities based on 16 picture books and three novels. Within this curriculum, LitART offers twelve components that can be adapted to meet the needs of an after school program: opening magic ("welcome" activities that provide movement, coordination, thinking, and observation), daily tone (language activity using a riddle, idiom, or other expression to build language skills), MAP (Multifaceted Activity Plan that poses questions based on an award-winning book), reading strategies (poses nine strategies for understanding and reading a book), comprehension questions (asks for answers based on literal, inferential, or evaluative information), creative response (activities that support and extend the story based on its illustrations), literacy response (activities focusing on fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, story grammar, reading comprehension, and

literary elements), literature journal (allows four different options of writing and sharing), word games (to influence language and vocabulary development), word collection (games focusing on key terms from a story), discussing quotes (identifies the "who," "what," "when," "where," and, "why" components of a story's quote), and litamatics (uses guided-thinking to promote problem solving skills within a story) (Global Learning, 2000-2008).

Within this program, evaluations showed that reading fluency increased by 16% which was measured by timed oral reading assessments. Reading comprehension increased by 22% and was measured by having the reader retell a story and respond to comprehension questions. Matching words to related words and meanings was done to assess vocabulary, which increased by 14%, while book-talk oral presentations was performed to evaluate oral language skills, which increased by 21%. Finally, positive attitudes towards reading increased by 18% through measurements of student surveys. (Global learning, 2000-2008).

Read-It-All™ Summer Program by Leap Frog® is a set of interactive audio reading books tailored to fit the needs of grades 3-6 for use in summer or after school programs. This program includes a planning guide with up to 150 minutes of daily instruction lasting between four to six weeks. Read it All ™ provides direct instruction and corrective feedback on critical skills such as comprehension, word solving, vocabulary, and fluency, while integrating reading strategies in nonfiction texts. For program staff, pre- and post-assessment tests are available to monitor student reading progress, including English language learners. In terms of effectiveness, one research study showed that a total of 44 fourth- and fifth-grade students improved by 14% on a test of expository reading comprehension after using six weeks of Read it All ™ for 1.5 hours a day. Program staff using Read it All ™ commented on its benefit to engage students at different skill levels, allowing staff to work independently

with students needing additional help. Students also expressed more positive attitudes toward reading by 10%, specifically related to academic reading (Leap Frog Schoolhouse ®, 2005).

<u>Existing After School Reading Programs</u>

Many after school programs tend to emphasize all components of the regular school day, such as English, mathematics, science, or physical activity; yet, few focus on one specific area of academics. When after school programs do concentrate on one specific area, students receive more time and assistance with academic needs. Programs that address literacy needs, for example, may not only give students the opportunity to strengthen literacy skills, but help them develop a greater appreciation for reading.

Share Literacy After School Programs offer younger students a chance to build literacy skills not only in the program itself, but at home as well. During program hours, Share Literacy provides activities to enhance vocabulary development, higher-level thinking (i.e. comprehension, reflection, and analogical questions), reading fluency, comprehension and group participation, and creative expression (i.e. arts and crafts). To extend curriculum, Share Literacy also sends literacy kits home with students. First, the kits offer time for repeated reading, which ultimately can improve student comprehension and fluency. By providing books and teaching materials at home student interest in reading increases, as well as teaches parents the skills and strategies to assist their child's literacy efforts when at home. Finally, the parent and child interaction increases as each literacy kit encourages a family reading process in which family members read and learn together (Share Literacy, 2007).

Project Zero's Mather Afterschool Program, developed by Harvard University, is a project-centered approach to literacy instruction for third, fourth, and fifth grade students in Massachusetts. Both program structure and curriculum were designed to serve three

purposes: (1) to help struggling students become self-directed thinkers and learners, (2) to offer a supportive context within which teachers could try out innovative teaching strategies and curriculum, and (3) to serve as a stimulus and model for creating effective learning environments both inside and outside of school. Class projects within the program are based on goals that are meaningful to both students and teachers, but that also provide natural opportunities for use of literacy and thinking skills through problem solving, peer collaboration, assessment, and teaching through modeling and coaching. For example, the program created projects in newspaper publishing, script writing, and producing for public service announcements (Project Zero, 2008). Evaluation of this program was not available for discussion.

Reading Recovery is a short-term intervention of one-to-one tutoring for low-achieving first grade students; often those who need remedial assistance on concepts necessary to make reading and writing attainable. The goal of this program is to reduce the number of first grade students who struggle with reading and to lower the costs of these learners to educational systems. The program is divided into a 12 to 20 week periods which incorporate half-hour lessons each school day with a specially trained Reading Recovery teacher. The program proceeds until students demonstrate proficiency in grade-level expectations and work independently in the classroom; new students are then added to the program when the previous struggling students achieve an acceptable level of proficiency. In past research, Reading Recovery has shown that since 1984, approximately 75% of students completing the 12- to 20-week intervention met grade-level expectations in reading and writing. Follow-up studies indicate that these students also did well on standardized tests and maintained literacy gains in later years. For students not meeting expectations after the

program, further evaluation is performed (Reading Recovery, 2001-2008).

Intergenerational Reading Program (IRP) was designed to meet the needs of first grade students who were categorized by their teachers as being at-risk (i.e. reading scores below the 15th percentile) for reading problems; the goal of the program was to improve reading skills of these students through assistance from senior citizens. Individual tutoring sessions given three times a week incorporated a focus on phonics, spelling, and word context through word strategy materials and reading. Although further evaluation of these programs showed no effectiveness on post-test measures between IRP students and non-IRP students, reading gains shown throughout the program were more significant for IRP students. The benefit of tutoring was also greater for boys who had lower phonological awareness scores. (Schacter, 1999).

Books and Beyond is a voluntary research-based national reading program developed to assist and motivate students in K-8 to read for recreation instead of watching television after school. The goal of this particular program is not only to improve both reading skills and attitudes toward books and reading in general, but for students to become aware about the types of television shows they watch. Students targeted in this program include gifted, at-risk, special education, bilingual students, and non-readers. As an incentive, students earn small rewards such as theme folders, pencils, and gold medals once they have read a certain number of books. In terms of an after school program setting, older students in junior high or high school serve as reading models. Parents also collaborate with the program to keep track of books read by their child and serve as volunteers to coordinate activities of the program. Parents are also asked to read at home to their students, make community library visits, chart any time spent watching television, and model reading themselves (Fashola, 1998).

Evaluation of the program was not available for discussion.

The *Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction (ECRI)* is designed to improve the reading ability of elementary students in both regular school-day and after school instruction. Reading-related skills emphasized in the program include word recognition, study skills, spelling, writing, proofing, and penmanship. The importance of these skills is stressed as they can improve other literacy skills, such as decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary. ECRI curriculum is scripted and includes multisensory and sequential methods and strategies of teaching. Each lesson includes at least seven methods of instruction, one comprehension skill, one study skill, and one grammar or creative writing skill. Although prompts are initially used to assist reading strategies, students eventually become more independent in reading comprehension. In further evaluations of this program, results showed that for students in grades 2 through 7, Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) scores on subtests for reading, comprehension, and vocabulary subtests were higher for ECRI students when compared to another reading program (i.e. the control group) (Fashola, 1998).

The *Howard Street Tutoring Program* is a remedial tutoring program designed to assist 20 students in grades two and three who are reading below grade level; these students are also considered to be at the bottom third of their class and are of low socioeconomic status or reside in urban settings. Students work one-on-one for an hour Monday through Friday in a seven month period with a specially trained reading volunteer. These volunteers are non-paid adults or college students receiving extensive training to become tutors. Volunteers and on-site coordinators use an informal reading inventory to assess potential students for the program, with targeted students being those who work below grade level in reading. Upon evaluation of this program, Howard Street Tutoring Program students

outperformed comparison groups in word recognition and word-passage reading. Other research has also found similar increases in mean test scores for word recognition, reading passages, and spelling based on gains in pre- and posttest assessments (Fashola, 1998; Morris, Perney, & Shaw, 1990).

In sum, these programs provide not only enriching opportunities for the skills necessary to succeed in reading comprehension, but are also made available to a variety of students. In reference to the development of a reading program, these programs model variations of interactive strategies to make learning more enjoyable for students, such as through individual instruction, community involvement, and parental support.

<div align="center">Students and Reading Comprehension</div>

From a child's perspective, reading comprehension can be difficult if additional assistance is not provided. Concepts such as phonics, syntax, grammar, and vocabulary often complicate matters in that students must first learn each component before moving on to the next phase of successful reading. When a concept becomes challenging, learning is impeded and remains delayed if remedial assistance is not provided. As stated by Antunez (2002), students will usually express their frustration with statements such as "I hate reading" or "This is stupid," instead of saying, "It takes me so long to read something," or "I didn't really get what that book was about." Frustration not only stems from problems with reading comprehension, but is affected by other factors as well: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, language learning difficulties, developmental differences, individual differences, and problems with cooperative learning.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

As described by Colker (2008), there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and

extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation springs from internal desires, interests, and experiences and has long been established as integral to reading motivation and engagement since it can determine the amount of time students pursue reading for their own interest and its own sake. Colker explains that an engaged reader is one who reads for different purposes, builds knowledge to construct new learning, and participates in meaningful social interactions that encourage reading. With intrinsic motivation, engaged readers search for understanding, enjoy learning, and believe in their literacy abilities.

However, one component is necessary to sustain reading motivation; this component is known as *self-efficacy*. Introduced by Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the ability of a person to judge his or her own capabilities in regards to a particular task. Colker (2008) states that self-efficacy plays a significant role in determining whether a child will pursue a reading challenge. For students who have high self-efficacy, a reading challenge is viewed as a task that can be accomplished through persistence and hard work. In contrast, those with low self-efficacy will see the challenge as a task for which their reading capabilities are not strong enough to accomplish. Interestingly enough, Colker states that self-efficacy is related to and can predict achievement performance in both math and literacy.

When intrinsically motivated, students exhibit a stronger concentration during the reading process, are directed to find a challenge in the material to improve their own capabilities, and enjoy the experience of reading. Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, and Perencevich (2004) state that these students also read for pleasure in greater lengths of time, with greater comprehension, and have more positive feelings towards reading than students who are not intrinsically motivated to read. These positive effects encompass three factors that can predict student reading frequency and comprehension: curiosity (read to learn about the

world), involvement (read to understand text), and the preference for a challenge (interested in facing challenges within reading materials). Previous research has also shown that a positive self-efficacy is positively related to reading motivation that persists into adulthood (Colker, 2008; Wigfield et al., 2004). In conjunction with reading programs and/or after school programs, intrinsic motivation can influence peer relationships, team leaders become mentors and role models, and students are given support in their abilities through both academic and emotional assistance.

In contrast, extrinsic motivation is based on rewards and social controls and can hinder learning if used excessively. As described by Colker (2008), a child who is extrinsically motivated to read may decide to complete a reading assignment only because it is a class requirement and prefers not to fail. Other extrinsic motivations include compliance, recognition, competition, and work avoidance. The primary problem associated with extrinsic learning is the idea that learning becomes superficial as students choose to please all other components rather than themselves. However, research discussed by Colker has found that extrinsic motivation can be used to establish the intrinsic motivation necessary to read. To accomplish successful extrinsic motivation, there must be a balance between the use of incentives and leading learners to engage in an appropriate amount of reading that creates a deeper, internal meaning. An appropriate balance also offers more challenging and goal-oriented reading behavior, thus amplifying intrinsic motivation and a desired behavior.

English Language Learners

As reported in Palmer, Shackelford, Miller, and & Leclere (2007), one in six U.S. adolescents aged 14 to 19 either spoke another language other than English, was born in a foreign country, or both. These particular students not only face the challenge of learning

another language, but struggle to adapt to the complexities of doing so alone. English language learners (ELL) are defined as individuals trying to acquire the necessary English vocabulary to be academically and socially successful in an area different from his or her own cultural background (Palmer et al., 2007). Unfortunately emphasis is placed on ELL to acquire the English language quick enough to catch up with their English speaking counterparts. Yet, more often than not, the process of learning another language only weakens the flow of their education.

Palmer et al. explains that the English language is "rich in words and phrases that, at times, may seem confusing because of the disparity between the literal and figurative meanings. These words and phrases, understood by proficient native English-speakers as part of everyday discourse, lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding for the ELL" (p.258). Other sources, such as Palmer and Brooks (2004), also state that failure to understand the difference between literal and figurative meanings not only leads to a breakdown in text comprehension, but can discourage readers from continuing to read the material. As a result, ELL students may find it difficult to learn English without proper instruction on learning to distinguish literal and figurative meanings. Learning a complex language can create an even greater struggle when trying to apply it to an activity, such as reading. Thus, proper instruction should be made available either through curriculum or reading programs to assist language development for these students.

Developmental and Individual Differences

Ability in reading comprehension varies depending upon individual development. Often teachers may find it difficult to assist struggling students in reading comprehension since each student brings their own strengths and weaknesses when reading text. One

example of an individual difference is described by Hinchley and Levy (1988) in which they state that the language acquisition students bring as they enter school determines their challenges in learning to read. In other words, since language skills are already developed as students enter school, "the challenge in learning to read must be in changing the printed word (graphemic code) into its spoken or phonological form. Once this phonological recoding has been accomplished, readers can presumably access the meanings of words via the spoken language route" (p.2). Language and reading acquisition also influences word-decoding skills in that poor readers name isolated words and pronounceable non-words more slowly when in comparison to proficient readers. There is also a strong relationship between reading comprehension and general language comprehension. Hinchley and Levy explain that one of the primary factors influencing general language comprehension is knowledge about the language itself and world events; readers only read in relation to what they already know. As previously mentioned by CSUS (2004) world knowledge is based on schemata that is developed through experiences. For students, schemata are crucial components when learning to read since it broadens both general world knowledge and understanding text. Students who lack these experiences, such as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, may have poorly developed story schemata and cannot relate them to reading tasks. In turn, students who lack sensitivity to story structure due to poorly-developed story schemata may be reprimanded on reading and listening tasks by their teachers. Therefore, these students need to develop schemata that encompass the skills necessary to utilize story structure and language comprehension.

<u>Cooperative Learning Problems</u>

Cooperative learning techniques are often used to assist ELL students and students

with learning disabilities, but can also be of great significance to all students struggling with reading comprehension. As described by Shaaban (2006), cooperative learning is a "theoretically relevant and empirically effective" technique in assisting students struggling to acquire reading, speaking, and writing the English language. Cooperative learning allows for meaningful classroom interaction in which students improve their achievement potential, motivation to learn, and self-efficacy through a supportive and collaborative environment. Cooperative learning strategies also foster positive interdependence and individual accountability with the goal of teaching students literacy skills through group efforts. However, for students who are unfamiliar or disapproving of cooperative learning efforts, learning collaborative reading strategies can be difficult to adjust to.

Vaughn and Klingner (1999) describe four reading comprehension strategies taught through a cooperative learning experience, these include: previewing and predicting ("Preview"), monitoring for understanding and vocabulary knowledge ("Click and Clunk"), main idea ("Get the Gist"), and self-questioning and passage understanding ("Wrap-Up"). These particular strategies have been shown to enhance students' comprehension of text and improve reading skills for all students, including those with learning disabilities, low achievers, and ELL. The benefit of each cooperative learning strategy is that the teacher acts as a model in showing the students each strategy at work. Through examples and opportunities for individual and group practice, students try each strategy in different settings; the end result of these efforts is that each student can become proficient with each strategy. Upon student proficiency of reading elements such as understanding sounds and meanings of words, the teacher models how to integrate each strategy when reading. The teacher also emphasizes the advantage of cooperative learning by demonstrating the roles and

responsibilities of each member of a group. Once students can work collaboratively, the

teacher's role is to guide and provide feedback to their group's usage of the strategies. Yet,

depending on the level of self-efficacy and motivation to work cooperatively, improving

comprehension skills through different group strategies may be limited.

In sum, students need the motivation and opportunities to develop a successful

reading comprehension. Students may bring a variety of skills and academic reading levels,

yet all have the potential to develop into proficient readers. With sufficient curriculum and

instruction, this potential can be accomplished.

<div align="center">Parents and Reading Comprehension</div>

In terms of parents and/or families, establishing a foundation for strong skills in

reading comprehension can depend on several factors. When students struggle with academic

concepts, such as reading comprehension, we often blame parents and families for not

working with their struggling students outside of school. However, there are many situations

that may be occurring in the home that teachers and school administration often overlook.

First, the level of education a parent has can determine the amount of assistance a child

receives. Hirsch (2005) claims that the less education a parent or family has, the less likely

they are to contribute to homework assistance and/or school in general. In other words,

parents or families with less education may lack the skills necessary for supporting their

student to achieve. In reference to reading comprehension, parents may be deficient in

literacy skills to model or teach them to their child. As a result, students must receive

assistance elsewhere, such as an after school program to support their academic needs. Low-

education is also often associated with low-paying jobs as described by Hirsch (2005).

Students from disadvantaged homes often have parents struggling to make ends meet with

low-paying jobs that do not allow parents to assist with homework or become involved as needed. These jobs are seen as inflexible and typically require shift-work, thus taking focus away from devoting time to students who may be struggling in school.

Disadvantaged homes are also frequently associated with existing pressures that are put first before other worries; pressures may include paying household bills and utilities, variation between parental employments, relocation between homes, or single-parent duties. These particular pressures can cause strain to families who need more time to focus on overcoming these difficulties before concentrating on academics. Unfortunately, students from disadvantaged homes are also denied literacy experiences rich in knowledge, such as storybook exposure, parent teaching in basic literacy elements, or being spoken to in formal conversation. In fact, Sénéchal (2006) found that parent book reading and teaching about literacy were significant aspects influencing literacy experiences. Additionally, book reading was found to be directly related to students' language skills such as vocabulary, yet not related to phoneme awareness.

Much like students, parents also need adequate and ongoing support as needed from others. Without the opportunities for additional support, parents may feel overwhelmed and limit the time and energy given to their struggling student and direct it towards other problems such as employment and finances. Thus, parents may require sensitivity to their circumstances and uniqueness.

<div align="center">Teachers and Reading Comprehension</div>

The classroom environment is a crucial element to the academic success of a student. Teachers play a central role in terms of modeling desired behavior, providing remedial assistance when necessary, and making sure that students remain on similar paths when new

concepts are introduced. Reading comprehension is a subject teachers may see as a struggle for several reasons. Students come into a classroom with varying degrees of literacy abilities and world knowledge. Students also differ in terms of motivation and self-efficacy in their own reading capabilities, which may or may not influence how the teacher presents teaching methods and new concepts. However, the CSUS (2004) suggests that teachers provide students with a classroom environment that encompasses a comfortable learning experience to enhance a student's intentions to read. This may include providing well-stocked libraries with magazines and old newspapers, or with reading tables and comfortable chairs for a more relaxed setting. A comfortable learning experience not only contributes to more favorable attitudes and positive intentions to read, but may provide students with more satisfying reading outcomes. Other researchers, such as Shaaban (2006), agree that collaboration with book-rich environments, teachers modeling reading, and utilizing social interaction during literacy tasks, the motivation to read is enhanced.

To further elaborate on the teacher's role in helping students develop skills in reading comprehension, CSUS (2004) discusses a sociocognitive processing model known as *Construction of Meaning*. This particular model embraces the idea of the reader, the text, the teacher, and the classroom community working together to enhance the motivation and skills to read. As described by Ruddell and Ruddell (1994): "The role of the classroom's social context and the influence of the teacher on the reader's meaning negotiation and construction are central to this model as it explores the notion that participants in literacy events form and reform meanings in an interpretation circle" (p.813). Simply, both teacher and classroom setting influence how a student constructs meaning of a text as he or she engages in the act of reading. In doing so, the reader, students, teacher, and other members of the classroom

community must collaborate and negotiate and/or interact with the text.

The goal of a group interaction is for all individual schemata, text meanings, academic tasks, culture, and world knowledge to unite and create a deeper meaning for text material. This allows students to not only become open-minded to new information, but strengthen their own reading-related schemata.

Ongoing support and assistance is crucial for the professional development of teaching methods. How a teacher views his or her students in an academic setting can influence how the teacher utilizes curriculum and teaches in general. Thus, school staff and administration are significant influences in how their teachers' relate to students.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Although complex with many entities, reading comprehension is an academic component that requires a continuation of learning. Aspects such as vocabulary, phonemic awareness, reading fluency, phonics, and comprehension strategies are the significant skills necessary to develop both an appreciation and knowledge of reading. However, students often struggle with reading when one skill becomes weakened or not developed, such as failure to develop an adequate or proficient vocabulary. In fact, school schedules are realigned and curriculum is adjusted to focus on the primary needs of students learning to read. Students do require assistance when difficulties in reading comprehension arise, yet also have other characteristics influencing their difficulties which can be overlooked. For example, motivation, individual differences, learning disabilities, and language-learning can all interfere with a child's ability in becoming a proficient reader.

As stated by Little and Hines (2006), one way to overcome the regular school day battle with teaching students to read is with after school programming. After school programs

open the door for students who do not have adequate resources to receive remedial assistance with their reading difficulties. Although the regular school day provides students with an ample amount of reading practice, too much attention is given to instruction and skill and not enough to remedial assistance in concepts that will make reading comprehension more enjoyable and effortless. With after school programs, however, students begin to learn habits of reading in which they can match themselves to the books of their choice, read at their own level, and receive assistance at their own pace. Students are given the opportunity to discuss their text experiences with teachers and other students alike; thus, maximizing the potential for further reading habits outside of school hours. After school programs also have the flexibility to accommodate the needs of each student and plan their lessons accordingly. As a result, regular school day teachers and parents are relieved of this pressure and students are given more of an opportunity to enhance their reading skill.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

> How children feel and interact is as important to their competence and success as how well they think. This has obviously very important implications for how people raise their children, how they care for other people's children, and how we invest public funds. Thinking and feeling go hand in hand. It's not to say that thinking is less important, just not more important.
>   -- Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Brandeis University

Reading comprehension is a subject of great importance since it contributes to all fields of study. Students struggling with learning how to read often find themselves frustrated, confused, and in need of an easier learning strategy to read better. Although there are numerous existing literacy curricula within the regular school-day, not much is built to serve the time constraints of after school programs; a place that can provide individual assistance with literacy and other remedial needs. In an after school program, a student has the benefit of not only strengthening comprehension skills, but is given the opportunity to appreciate the value of reading in a more relaxed setting. In doing so, students can be given a variety of reliable reading strategies to choose from that will enhance their existing skills. In this chapter, the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, treatment, and data analysis for this study are discussed.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this pilot study was to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness, if any, of a newly-developed reading comprehension curriculum similar to that of an existing curriculum emphasizing mathematics used in a local after school program. The research question posed was: Is there a significant difference between pre- and post- test reading scores within a four-week period for second through sixth grade students who work with the *Rocky River Reading* curriculum as opposed to those who do not?

<u>Research Design</u>

The research design used was a quasi-experimental study in which the researcher was not able to randomly select the participants from the after school program; instead, the first 50 students in grades 2 through 6 to turn in their consent forms before the due date were automatically placed in the study. However, these 50 students were then randomly selected by draw of name to participate in one of two groups: experimental (use *RRR*) or control (non-use of *RRR*). Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected to determine (1) the extent to which the statement of purpose and research question were both accomplished, and (2) to determine elements to refine the *RRR* program and its approach.

A pretest and posttest group design for experimental and control groups was used to assess the effects, if any, of the curriculum to improve the comprehension of readers. In this study, the researcher assumed roles of both instructor and researcher in which the curriculum was tailored based on students' progress and understanding of the curriculum. Reading tests, group discussions, and student-parent reading packets were designed to help students improve their reading comprehension strategies and encourage overall reading efforts. These elements were designed based on a variety of approaches that were found successful in other reading curricula, such as the *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program* (Developmental Studies Center, 2003).

<u>Population and Sample</u>

The population for this study consisted of 50 students (36 females, 14 males) ranging from second through sixth grade attending an elementary school (K-6th) in the Southern San Joaquin Valley of California. All students participating in the study were chosen from the after school program (50 out of 95 enrolled; 52% of the after school program represented).

Each student in the program received a packet including a recruitment notice, parent consent form, and student assent form was sent home to all 95 students enrolled in the after school program. As previously stated, students were not randomly selected to participate, but rather selected based on the first 50 to return parent and student consent forms; once a total of 50 consent forms were signed and returned by there due date, participants were randomly chosen by draw of name to participate in either the experimental group (use of *RRR*) or control group (non-use of *RRR*). A control group of 25 students and experimental group of 25 students was formed based on this information. Variables such as reading proficiency and instructional day teacher could not be controlled for since students were chosen to participate in priority of returned consent forms; see Appendices E and J for parent consent and student assent forms.

<u>Instrumentation</u>

Rocky River Reading is a curriculum developed by the researcher that resembles an already existing mathematic curriculum used by both the elementary school and after school program in the study for assessing the academic subject at hand; students then review the test questions to achieve 100% accuracy the next day. The mathematic curriculum, known as *Math Mountain*, is a continuous testing curriculum in which students are given individual folders with individual mathematic tests. For primary grades, students work on a series of addition and subtraction tests beginning at zero and finishing at 18; for each level, students are given two subtests, such as 0A and 0B. For intermediate grades, students work similarly as do primary grades but begin at multiplication tests ranging from 0 to 12. All students must complete each test with 100% accuracy before proceeding to the next level. When a child completes one section of the curriculum, such as addition and subtraction, he or she proceeds

to multiplication and then division. The curriculum continues and acts as a review for students throughout the school year. Depending on the instructional teacher or after school program staff, incentives are also used for each successful progression.

In modeling *Math Mountain*, *Rocky River Reading* includes 24 timed reading comprehension tests ranging from second through seventh grade reading levels. All comprehension tests were developed by the researcher and based on both instructional school day material and after school program material taken from *Houghton Mifflin Reading: California* (2008) and *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program* (2003). In *RRR*, all students begin at a second grade reading level in which tests have two parallel forms beginning at Test 1A then Test 1B, each containing one separate passage (story) followed by five comprehension questions using a multiple-choice format. Upon completion, tests progress to 12B, a seventh grade reading level and the last level in *RRR*; although students are only given a small amount of time in using *RRR*, the curriculum is developed to make challenges available for students who may be at a higher reading level.

The test questions for each *RRR* subtest were developed based on an a culmination of questions modeled in format from language arts textbooks used from the regular school day, *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program,* and the Gray Oral Reading Tests (GORT). Based on previous research (as found in the literature review), the researcher compiled each subtest in *RRR* to reflect aspects of reading comprehension, including: vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension monitoring. All test questions were also reviewed and discussed with one teacher from each grade level ranging second through sixth grade to make sure subtests were reflective of student abilities. Rather than choosing from one source on which to model *RRR*, the researcher decided to incorporate resources that were not only easier for students to

follow, but allowed for a variety of strategies to be put to use such as group discussions, reading games, and dramatic play .

In terms of choosing which concepts (i.e. vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension monitoring) were reflective of demonstrating reading comprehension, the researcher observed the strengths and weaknesses of existing students in an after school program by first researching reading levels available and problem areas most students encountered based on scores off of the Standardized Testing and Reporting Results reported from the California Department of Education within the particular school from the previous school year (2007-2008); *RRR* was then modified accordingly to encompass elements that students needed to focus on for success in reading comprehension.. These strengths and weaknesses were expressed through after school program staff and regular-school day staff. This strategy met the purpose of *RRR*, which was to create a curriculum targeting the main areas of weakness, rather than what "should" be attained at each grade level. For example, the instructor's script for daily discussions (see Appendix C) was established based on student and parent responses on pre-evaluations and students' scores of the pre-assessment measure; from the pre-assessment measure, the researcher incorporated the more frequently missed questions into the daily discussions.

Data Collection

Pretest data was collected by the researcher administering a self-developed assessment that incorporates reading a book (same book was used for all participants, entitled *Mandy's Cake* by Myka-Lynne Sokoloff) and answering questions regarding basic book components (e.g. location of a title, picture, definition of an author, and definition of an illustrator), characterization, sequence of events, and climactic understanding found in all 24

RRR timed tests; these thematic questions were used as measures for reading comprehension in relation to *RRR* (see Appendix G). Assessments were taken within individual meetings during the after school program hours between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. starting three days prior to the actual testing in the pilot study time frame and typically last 10 minutes a day per student. Participants not present on the first day of assessments had two additional days to make up his or her pretest. If after the third day of assessments a student was still not available, he or she was automatically eliminated from the study. Assessments, as well as student evaluations, were kept in confidentiality in which no party had access to them other than the researcher (see Appendix G for pre/post assessment).

After a list of participants was determined, an information database was developed for each participant including their ID, gender, pretest/posttest score, pretest/posttest time to read, age, grade level, after school program leader, and instructional day teacher; an ID number was assigned to each participant to maintain confidentiality. The pretests were scored based on total number of questions answered correctly. This score was recorded next to each student's assigned number. Participant data was then sorted in ascending order, ranking students in order of their performance on the pre-test assessment.

The after school program and instructional day attendance was monitored by the researcher for both pilot study and program purposes. If a student dropped the program for any reason, their drop date was recorded in the after school program files.

Also during the three-day assessment period, students and parents were given a pre-evaluation form regarding their current thoughts and concerns about the student's comprehension skills and reading in general; a post-evaluation form was given at the end of the four-week period in the same manner and similar format as the pre-evaluation form for

both students and parents. Evaluation forms were given in a short three to five question format to be answered with one or two sentences. For all participants, the researcher read the questions to the participants and recorded the responses. During the initial and final assessment with the researcher, it was then that students were given their evaluation form to fill out. Questions were the same on both pre- and post-evaluation forms for parents and were sent home to be turned in within a three-day period, unless otherwise discussed with the researcher. If within the three day period parents did not return their evaluation forms nor had received approval from the researcher to do so, their student was automatically eliminated from the study (see Appendix A). Although parent pre-evaluation forms were needed promptly to begin the study, parents could be given more time to do so upon approval from the researcher; see Appendices F and E for parent and student evaluations.

Treatment

During the treatment period, students using *RRR* worked individually on reading comprehension tests in the researcher's office and only came together in either primary (2nd-3rd) or intermediate (4th- 6th) groups for daily reading discussions. The assessments of their improvements, if any, were based on pretest and posttest assessments in comparison to a control group of 25 students in the after school program who did not use *RRR*. While using *RRR*, students received the following instruction in the after school program, consisting of: (a) daily timed test-taking, (b) daily reading groups and discussions, (c) weekly parent-student reading packets, and (d) participant incentives. It must be noted that all 6th grade students completed *RRR* in a 3-week period due to a week-long regular school-day field trip during the fourth week of *RRR*; 2nd-5th grade students completed *RRR* in the set four-week period.

Also, to monitor participation requirements, such as returning weekly parent-student reading packets and being present during assessment dates, a table was created and kept confidential in a locked cabinet by the researcher. The table included pre- and post-assessment dates when each student completed an assessment. The table also included the date when parent pre-evaluations were turned in and whether they were turned in on time (OT); parent post-evaluations were given a one week period to be turned in since promptness after the study was not necessary. Finally, the table included four columns that stated whether weekly reading packets were turned in on time for that week; columns were only relevant to the experimental group and not applicable for the control group.

Daily Timed Test-Taking

Daily reading comprehension tests were given to students as a means of demonstrating the student's reading skills and strategies. The reading passages and questions on each *RRR* subtest was developed based on a culmination of questions modeled in format from language arts textbooks, which included information regarding reading comprehension, used from the regular school day, *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program,* and the Gray Oral Reading Tests (GORT); all aligned with the California State Standards in Reading and Language Arts. These particular reading measures were used to develop *RRR* based on the success of their application results (see Chapter 2). Test taking lasted approximately 7 to 8 minutes of the after school instructional block (typically during the 45-minute homework period of the program); 8 minutes were given for grades second and third, while 7 minutes were given to fourth through sixth grades; these times were estimated by the researcher based on prior reading tests given in the after school program. Students were taken from their after school program class by either primary groups (second and third grade) or intermediate

groups (fourth through sixth grade) and into the researcher's office during this time period (see Appendix A).

Throughout the study if all students from a particular grade level were having difficulty with the amount of time given for testing, the time was adjusted and accommodated to fit their needs. Primary grade students (second and third graders) also had the option to have the assessment read aloud if necessary; this was determined if the student verbally asked. Timed tests were given Monday through Thursday and corrected each day by the researcher to be given to students the next day; students either received the same test if they did not achieve 100% accuracy or were given a test of a higher level according to *RRR*. All students began at the second grade level, test 1A, and finished during their last week of testing in what was called a "test-out." During the session, students could choose to continue taking tests upon 100% accuracy on each test. That is, by passing with 100% accuracy on one test, the researcher corrected it immediately, moving them the next test up in level and difficulty. This would continue until students no longer achieved 100% accuracy. The purpose of the "test-out" was so students could challenge themselves by "resetting" their instructional level (see Appendix B).

Daily Reading Groups and Discussions

After each timed test, grade levels would stay with the researcher and switch to the next activity, the daily reading group discussion. During this 20-minute time block, the researcher and primary or intermediate group participants would sit in a circle to discuss both the timed-tests and assigned parent-student readings (see Appendix A). The discussions were open to any comments, questions, or concerns that students had within the *RRR* curriculum. This was to not only to encourage a collaborative effort, but for participants to share ideas

with areas they may be struggling in, which was suggested by Vaughn and Klingner (1999). Vaughn and Klinger explain that cooperative learning strategies are most successful when students focus on the general idea of a passage, such as the "who," "what," "when," "where," and "why." Questions also included predictions about after the story, a summarization of the story that included sequence of events, the plot (i.e. the characters, setting, problem, resolution), and open-ended questions such as "Why did things happen that way?" or "What is the author trying to do here?" If needed, students could use graphic organizers provided by the researcher to jot down new and existing ideas and to help students break down information to make reading easier.

Most commonly missed questions and student weaknesses mentioned on pretest student assessments and student/parent pre-evaluations were addressed during the group discussions in means of allowing students to relate similar problems. A candy incentive was given to each student for their participation at the end of the group discussions. Other activities that were included during the group discussions included thematic plays related to books the students were reading in *RRR*, group reading with short stories, and vocabulary and phonics games (see appendices A and C for more information).

<u>Weekly Parent-Student Reading Packet</u>

Every Monday, each student would take home a reading packet that included the following: (a) a reading book matched to their grade level standards, (b) a book mark, and (c) a one page worksheet for students and a one page worksheet for parents to answer. This is in response to the research that says student-parent book reading and teaching about literacy are significant aspects influencing literacy experiences. Additionally, book reading was found to be directly related to students' language skills such as vocabulary and phoneme awareness

(Sénéchal, 2006).

Each worksheet was written and developed by the researcher and asked questions regarding the book; these questions were modeled in formatting from those in the *RRR* subtests. They included five open-ended questions regarding thoughts and ideas about the book that were to be answered by the student only. On the backside of this worksheet, parents were asked to answer three open-ended questions regarding their student's reading strategies during that reading period. Although these questions may or may not be representative of deeper learning, they are reflective of other research-based curriculum used as the foundation for *RRR*, this curriculum includes, language arts textbooks used from the regular school day, *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program,* and the Gray Oral Reading Tests (GORT) (see Appendix F). All books used for the student/parent reading packet were provided by the researcher from either *Spotlight Books*: *Comprehension, Vocabulary, Literacy Support, and/or Theme* (Macmillan McGraw-Hill) for grades 2-6 or from *Junior Web Detective*s Program, grades 3-6. These books were chosen by the researcher based on grade level, length (i.e. to be read by parent/child in 15-minute period), and interest (i.e. most appealing for parent/child that was determined by previous discussions with after school program staff and regular school day staff (see Appendix I).

Upon taking the materials home, it was the students' role to answer the assigned questions independently, while parents answered questions regarding both the book and their student's experience with reading that week. The researcher used the student worksheet for reference as to the degree students comprehended their weekly readings; the parent worksheet was used for reference and assistance to the researcher as to what they felt their students were still struggling with.; the researcher also used this information to understand

what problem areas students were facing and their *RRR* progress. The reading packet was to be returned by Friday during the after school program to the researcher. The purpose of the reading packet was to encourage literacy activity between child and parent, as well as for parents to realize areas of struggle their child may be having with reading. In doing a weekly reading packet, *RRR* allows parents and student(s) to work with their own schedule in spending 15 to 20 minutes reading together. It must be noted that book rotations existed within certain grade levels: fourth grade students read the same four books, yet the group was split to read specific books that may have been different from what was assigned that week for the other fourth grade group, similarly, fifth grade students were assigned one of two books half read one book, while the other half read the second book. Reasons for the book rotation were due to a limited amount of five books per set, thus not all grade levels could read the same book each week.

If students and parents failed to either complete the weekly packet or return it, they could have an extension for over the weekend depending on the situation. If after two failures to complete this portion of *RRR* and failure to abide by previous warnings, the student was dismissed from the study. Dismissal from the study was carried out by the researcher in which a parent phone call was made to explain the reason for dismissal, as well as a reminder of previous signed consent forms stating agreed upon participation. Social repercussions did not exist in this study as student participation was confidential from other students in the after school program. In terms of a psychological impact upon dismissal, students may have developed feelings shame, guilt, or frustration; yet, students received a certificate and candy bar for their participation, and would only be exempt from the pizza and movie party held at the end to recognize their participation, as stated by assent forms sent home prior to

participating in *RRR*. In the current study, however, no dismissal was necessary (see

Appendix A).

<u>Participant Incentives</u>

Similar to *Math Mountain*, students were given an incentive during *RRR* at four

accomplishments: (1) upon a grade level completion in *RRR*, (2) during and after attending a

daily group discussion, (3) for returning completed paperwork and reading packets, and (4)

for completion of the four week *RRR* study. When students completed a grade level, they

were given a regular-sized candy bar of their choice and a certificate for their

accomplishment. Control group participants were rewarded by the same pizza and movie

party as the experimental group, and in receiving a certificate and candy bar for their

participation (see Table 1).

<u>Table 1</u>

RRR Tests Associated with Reading Grade Level

Grade Level Reading Comprehension	*RRR* Test Number
2nd grade	1A-B to 2A-B
3rd Grade	3A-B to 4A-B
4th Grade	5A-B to 6A-B
5th Grade	7A-B to 8A-B
6th Grade	9A-B to 10A-B
7th Grade	11A-B to 12A-B

 For attending and answering questions in the daily group discussion, and to ensure

paperwork (i.e. evaluations and reading packets) were turned in on time, students received

one small piece of candy for each. Finally, for participating in the study entirely, all

participants who had *successfully completed* the four-week period (both experimental and

control group students) were given a pizza and movie party and were exempt from the after school program that day with the researcher; attending the party depended on the attendance of the student to the program that day. Also, if a student failed to complete the study, he or she was given a certificate and candy bar for what they had accomplished in *RRR*; yet the pizza and movie party was strictly for students who had successfully completed the four-week *RRR* period. Control group participants received similar incentives for their time involved in the study, including a candy incentive for returning parent pre- and post-evaluations on time, and for maintaining attendance in the after school program during the four-week period (see Appendix A).

Data Analysis

The pretest and posttest and pre- and post-evaluations were administered by the researcher during a three-day time frame after the four-week *RRR* curriculum period. The posttest was administered using the same pretest assessment and setting. If students had been dropped from either the RRR study or from the after school program itself, their progress was automatically eliminated from group results; this was done in order to respecting their consent to no longer participate in the study. Also, students did not need parental consent to discontinue his or her participation. Similar to the pretest, a new raw score was developed in the same manner. Both pretest and posttest raw scores were compared and analyzed to determine if there was a significant difference in pre- and posttest reading scores for all participants in the after school program successfully completing the four-week *RRR* pilot study period. These scores were then analyzed in comparison with the control group to determine if any increase in reading scores were accomplished by *RRR* participation or by a four-week academic growth. In conjunction with the pretest/posttest assessment, a pre- and

post-evaluation was also given in the same manner. The questions on these two items differed in terms of the pre-evaluation focusing on a general interest and attitude towards reading while the questions on the post-evaluation focusing on thoughts regarding their reading after *RRR*.

For both the pretest and posttest measures, a two-page verbal test was given by the researcher to each student (see Appendix G). The test first consisted of 20 grade leveled questions in reference to the same book for all grade levels, followed by five questions regarding attitudes towards reading. During the test, the student read a book and was asked basic questions regarding the title and author of the book, followed by reading the complete book aloud to the researcher; the book was the same book as already discussed in the group. After reading the book, the researcher would then ask the questions focusing on the "who," "what," "why," "when," and "how" of the book including characters, climax, resolution, setting, and other factors. Based on a total score of 20, students would receive a raw score with the total number of questions answered correctly. As a result, students received two raw scores: a pretest assessment raw score and posttest assessment raw score; both scores were then compared to evaluate improvement and effectiveness of *RRR* participation, if any, based on similarities and/or differences between the raw scores of each group. See appendices I and K for assessment and evaluation measures. Results and thorough analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The purpose of this pilot study was to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness, if any, of a newly-developed reading comprehension curriculum similar to that of an existing curriculum emphasizing mathematics in a local after school program. The research question

posed was: Is there a significant difference between pre- and post- test reading scores within a four-week period for second through sixth grade students who work with the *Rocky River Reading* curriculum as opposed to those who do not? While using *RRR*, experimental group participants received the following instruction in the after school program, consisting of: (a) daily timed test-taking, (b) daily reading groups and discussions, (c) weekly parent-student reading packets, and (d) participant incentives. Control group participants were asked to complete student pre- and post-assessments and evaluations, return parent pre- and post-assessments and evaluations, and be present on the day of which assessments and evaluations took place. In doing so, these participants were rewarded with the same incentive as experimental group participants.

Chapter 4

REPORT OF FINDINGS

<u>Introduction</u>

While most descriptions of necessary skills for children do not list 'learning to learn,' this should be the capstone skill upon which all others depend. Memorized facts, which are the basis for most testing done in schools today, are of little use in the age in which information is doubling every two or three years. We have expert systems in computers and the Internet that can provide the facts we need when we need them. Our work force needs to utilize facts to assist in developing solutions to problems.

-- Robert Galvin and Edward Bales,
Motorola, 1996

The purpose of this pilot study was to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness of a newly-developed reading comprehension curriculum similar to that of an existing curriculum emphasizing mathematics in a local after school program. The research question posed was: Is there a significant difference between pre- and post- test reading scores within a four-week period for second through sixth grade students who work with the *Rocky River Reading* curriculum as opposed to those who do not?

The population for this study consisted of second through sixth grade students attending an elementary school (kindergarten through sixth grade) in the Southern San Joaquin Valley of California. The sample included 50 second through sixth grade students enrolled in the after school program; the subjects were then randomly divided in half so that 25 subjects participated in the experimental group, and 25 subjects participated in the control group. These groups were not matched in any order since the researcher could not control for variables such as reading levels and socioeconomic status. However, all students were unintentionally matched with at least the same after school program leader, classroom teacher, and/or grade level with someone in their comparison group; thus, this advantage allowed for gender, age, grade level, and ethnicity to be evenly dispersed within groups for

pre- and posttest assessments and evaluations.

Reading comprehension tests were developed by the researcher to model the Grey Silent Reading Test (GSRT) format, a test battery that measures silent reading comprehension by presenting short passages in conjunction with five multiple-choice questions for students to answer. Questions for *RRR* timed tests were modeled after the format of reading comprehension questions in the *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program* (Developmental Studies Center, 2003); the researcher preferred to use this program to model test questions since students in the after school program were already familiar with the curriculum.

<center>Selection of Sample</center>

The sample was comprised of the following grade levels and representations of the after school program (*Note: abbreviation for after school program will be "ASP"): 7 second graders (n=29% of second graders from the ASP), 12 third graders (n=54% of third graders from the ASP), 15 fourth graders (n=62% of fourth graders from the ASP), 10 fifth graders (n=58% of fifth graders from the ASP), and 6 sixth graders (n=67% of sixth graders from the ASP). The sample was also comprised of the following ethnicities: 12% Caucasian (n=6), 56% Mexican-American (n=28), 12% African-American (n=6), and 20% of mixed descent (n=10); information regarding socioeconomic class and reading level was not available, however students were in attendance at an elementary school of which 50% of the total student population qualified for free or reduced-lunch. In terms of gender, each group consisted of 18 females and 7 males, for a sample total of 36 females (72%) and 14 males (28%) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Grade Level, Ethnicity, and Gender Demographics

	No. of Students in *RRR*	% in *RRR* from ASP Total	% of *RRR*
2nd	7	29%	14%
3rd	12	54%	24%
4th	15	62%	30%
5th	10	58%	20%
6th	6	67%	12%
Caucasian	6	12%	12%
Mexi/Hisp.	28	56%	28%
African	6	12%	6%
Mixed	10	20%	20%
Male	14	40%	28%
Female	36	60%	72%

For the control group the average age of participants was 8.5 years, average pre-assessment score was 16 out of 20, and average time to read a book was 2:17 minutes. In contrast, the experimental group had an average age of 9.2 years, scored an average of 16 out of 20 on the pre-assessment, and spent an average of 2:24 minutes to read a book (see Table 4). *RRR* daily test levels that participants in the experimental group achieved at the end of the four-week period reported that most frequent test students ended with was test 4B, which is the final test portion of the third grade reading level (see Table 3).

Table 3

Final Test Level for Daily *RRR* Timed Tests

Test Level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
2.5	1	2.0	4.0
4	3	6.0	16.0
4.5	8	16.0	48.0
5	3	6.0	60.0
5.5	3	6.0	72.0
6	4	8.0	88.0
8	1	2.0	92.0
8.5	1	2.0	96.0
10.5	1	2.0	100.0
Experimental Total	25	50.0	
RRR **Total**	50	100.0	

The information presented in Table 3 represents the number of students completing a

particular test number (frequency), the percent of the number of students within the group

itself (percent), and the overall percentage of students completing a particular test within the

group itself (cumulative percent). The first column reflects the valid test numbers that

students accomplished. These tests were valid in that they were the only tests represented in

the final test-taking session for students. For example, 2.5 represents the second portion of

the second grade reading level, which is test 2B in *RRR.*, while no student ended their final

testing session on a third grade reading level.

Pretest data from students and parents were collected by a general student reading

assessment (see Appendix C), student evaluation (see Appendix J), and parent evaluation

(see Appendix E), all of which were created by the researcher. Both the student reading

assessment and self-evaluation were administered within the after school classroom setting

(between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.) during the testing window of October 1

through October 6, 2008. To include students not present on the first days the test was administered; any student still unavailable without approval from the researcher (i.e. serious illness, school-related activity, or a religious-affiliated activity) was eliminated from the study since they could not begin any component of *RRR* without a completed assessment. A class list of students, along with *RRR* ID number, gender, grade level, after school program teacher, and regular school-day teacher was devised as a means of comparing experimental and control groups; this same list also consisted of pre- and posttest assessment measures, including raw scores for each assessment (i.e. the number of correct questions answered and length of time required for students to read a book during the assessment).

Table 4 shows the pre-assessment scores by ascending order for all grade levels. An ID was created for each student by no particular order. Additional information includes pre- and post-assessment scores (maximum score of 20) and pre- and post-assessment times (i.e. the length of time it took to read the book in the assessment period), age (in years), and grade level; the mean pre- and post-assessment scores, pre- and post reading times, and age were also identified. It must also be noted that information regarding the names of both the after school program teacher and regular school-day teacher, in affiliation with the student, was not included to maintain student confidentiality (see Table 4).

<div align="center">Treatment</div>

Implementation of the intervention lasted for four weeks. The intervention consisted of weekly timed reading tests that were modeled after existing reading tests and curriculum (as previously noted), group discussions regarding reading in general and assigned reading books, and student-parent reading packets. Students in the study using *RRR* received this intervention four days a week for four-weeks (three weeks for 6th grade students due to a

schedule conflict with a prior school engagement). The control group that did not receive the intervention received only the instruction from their instructional day teacher and after school program teacher.

Posttest data were collected by the researcher administering the same assessment and evaluation as done with pretests within the after school program setting during the testing window of November 3, 2008 through November 5, 2008. Posttest scores were then recorded next to the subject's ID number in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Data Table

Experimental Group							
ID	Sex	Pre-Score	Post-Score	Pre-Time	Post-Time	Age	Grade
1	F	15	17	3:00	2:46	7.60	2
2	F	13	19	3:00	2:00	8.30	2
3	F	10	17	3:03	2:54	7.70	2
4	M	14	17	3:00	1:52	7.80	2
5	F	17	19	1:20	1:26	7.11	3
6	F	13	18	2:00	1:46	8.40	3
7	F	17	20	1:22	1:00	9.60	4
8	F	18	17	1:20	1:20	9.00	4
9	F	19	20	1:16	1:13	9.10	4
10	F	16	20	1:43	1:00	8.11	4
11	F	17	19	1:27	1:25	9.11	4
12	F	14	N/A	2:08	N/A	8.50	4
13	M	16	18	1:41	1:28	11.40	5
14	M	18	18	1:38	1:21	10.30	5
15	M	20	20	2:08	1:55	10.50	5
16	F	19	19	2:12	1:35	10.30	5
18	F	20	20	1:50	1:27	11.10	6
19	F	20	20	2:00	1:25	11.10	6
20	F	17	19	1:33	2:00	8.30	3
21	F	20	18	2:32	1:17	10.10	4
22	F	18	20	1:17	1:33	10.11	6
24	F	8	18	2:06	0:58	8.30	3
40	M	18	18	1:46	2:40	10.30	5
42	M	16	10	2:42	1:40	8.80	3
44	M	17	18	1:36	1:19	10.11	5

Table 4

Participant Data Table (Cont'd.)

ID	Sex	Pre-Score	Post-Score	Pre-Time	Post-Time	Age	Grade
Control Group							
17	M	18	14	1:50	2:00	10.10	5
23	F	13	17	1:17	1:26	8.70	3
25	F	16	16	0.52	1:35	10.70	5
26	F	11	18	3:00	1:17	7.20	2
27	M	13	20	2:03	1:22	7.30	2
28	F	12	18	2:35	2:23	7.30	2
29	F	19	18	1:25	2:48	8.40	3
30	F	16	18	1:28	1:53	11.10	6
31	F	17	18	3:00	2:08	8.10	3
32	F	15	18	2:31	1:07	8.10	3
33	F	17	19	2:24	1:42	8.30	3
34	M	17	19	2:27	1:22	8.30	3
35	F	16	20	1:40	1:26	9.40	4
36	F	18	19	1:38	1:23	9.40	4
37	F	19	20	1:42	1:21	9.30	4
38	M	19	16	1:55	2:38	10.0	4
39	F	20	17	2:00	1:30	9.10	4
41	M	14	20	2:42	2:00	9.10	3
43	F	18	20	2:07	1:10	8.30	4
45	F	17	20	1:37	1:30	9.60	4
46	F	18	19	1:37	1:19	10.40	5
47	M	18	15	1:16	1:25	11.60	6
48	F	9	15	2:45	3:20	10.30	4
49	M	19	20	1:57	1:46	12.10	6
50	F	19	18	1:33	1:26	10.00	5

Data Analysis

The results of a Paired Samples t-test were run through the computer software program known as SPSS (version 16.0). A Paired Samples t-test compares the means of two variables by computing the difference between the two variables for each case, and tests to see if the average difference is significantly different from zero (Best & Kahn, 2006). In the study, this type of t-test was used for computing the difference between pre- and post-assessment scores for the experimental group and control group to compare independent samples and determine similarities and differences. The experimental group showed an average score of 16.4 for pre-assessment measures, but an average score of 18.3 on post-assessment measures; thus, indicating a significant difference between pre- and post-measures, $t(23) = -4.210$, $p < .001$. The experimental group also showed a decrease in the amount of time it took to read a story on the pre- ($M = 119$ seconds, $SD = 33.34$) and post-assessment ($M = 98$ seconds, $SD = 31.64$), $t(23) = 5.054$, $p < .001$. The control group showed an average score of 16.3 for pre-assessment measures and an average score of 18 on post-assessment measures; thus, indicating a significant difference between pre- and post-measures, $t(24) = -4.299$, $p < .001$. The control group also showed a decrease in the amount of time it took to read a story on the pre- ($M = 116$ seconds, $SD = 31.84$) and post-assessment ($M = 104$ seconds, $SD = 33.26$), $t(24) = 2.80$, $p < .001$. An Independent Samples t-test was used to compute the means of both groups on the same variables (i.e. assessments). The t-test found no significant differences within or between groups on both measures (see Table 5).

Table 5

Pre- and Post-Assessment Scores and Time for Groups

	Score		Time	
	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Experimental	16.4	18.3	199.0 sec.	98.0 sec.
Control	16.3	18.0	116.0 sec.	104.0 sec.

In terms of student pre and post evaluations, several differences were found. For the experimental group, a paired samples t-test showed negative attitudes towards reading (i.e. believing reading was "too hard") significantly decreased, $t(23) = 2.89, p < .05$, improvement in understanding vocabulary showed a minimal difference in pre- and post-evaluations, $t(23) = -1.81, p > .05$, feelings in reference to reading improving learning skills significantly increased, $t(23) = 2.76, p < .05$, and feelings in reference to believing reading is "fun and interesting" significantly increased, $t(23) = -2.03, p < .05$. Participants who already read at home prior to *RRR* were found to significantly read more, $t(23) = -2.14, p < .05$; participants who did not read at home prior to *RRR* also read more, $t(23) = 2.14, p < .05$. Also, experimental participants were also found to read more chapter books ($t(23) = 2.30, p < .05$) and horror and/or mystery books ($t(23) = -2.14, p < .05$). For the control group, results showed a minimal difference between pre- and post-evaluation measures regarding feelings towards reading in which students were less likely to see reading as a difficult task, $t(23) = 1.81$, $p > .05$, and were less likely to read horror and/or mystery reading materials. No significant differences were found for all participants in areas of general ideas of reading, what students hoped *RRR* could help with, general feelings towards reading, types of reading material, and if students read at home (see Table 6).

Table 6

Significant Findings Based on Student Pre- and Post-Evaluations

	Experimental	Control
Negative Attitude	Decreased, t(23) = 2.89, p< .05	Neutral, t(23) = 1.81, p>.05
Improved Vocab	Neutral, t(23) = -1.81, p>.05	No Difference
Ability Thoughts	Increase, t(23) = 2.76, p<.05	No Difference
Pos. Thoughts	Increase, t(23) = -2.03, p< .05	No Difference
Reading Amount	Increase, t(23) = -2.14, p< .05	No Difference

Parent pre-evaluations were examined between groups using an Independent Samples t-test to compare the means of each variable. Results found that there was a significant difference between parent attitudes towards their student's reading difficulties in vocabulary, $t(48) = -1.46$, $p<.05$, and comprehension, $t(48) = -1.55$, $p<.05$, in which experimental group parents felt their students struggled more in vocabulary ($M = .72$, $SD = .46$) and comprehension ($M = .40$, $SD = .50$) while control group parents felt their students had no reading difficulties ($M = .24$, $SD = .43$), $t(48) = 1.55$, $p<.005$). Control group parents were more apt to want comprehension focused on if their student was in *RRR* ($M = .40$, $SD = .50$), $t(48) = 1.92$, $p<.05$). Finally, experimental group parents differed slightly from control group parents in terms of beliefs that their student had no strengths in reading ($M = .16$, $SD = .37$) than did parents from the control group ($M = .08$, $SD = .27$), $t(48) = -.86$, $p>.05$) (see Table 7). Other aspects of parent pre-evaluations did not significantly differ, such as additional observed student difficulties, parent attitudes towards reading, what parents wanted from *RRR*, and observed student strengths. As reported by parents in parent evaluations, students first began to read at the age of 4.5 years, followed by 7 years of age; data for ten participants was not available, see Figure 1 for information regarding the age of which parents reported their student learned to read.

Table 7

Significant Findings Based on Parent Pre-Evaluations

	Experimental	Control
Neg. Attitude: Vocab	M = .72, SD = .46	Neutral
Neg. Attitude: Comp.	M = .40, SD = .50	Neutral
No Difficulty	Neutral	M = .24, SD = .43
Needed Focus: Comp.	Neutral	M = .40, SD = .50
No Reading Strength	M = .16, SD = .37	M = .08, SD = .27

Figure 1.

Participant Age in Reference to Learning to Read
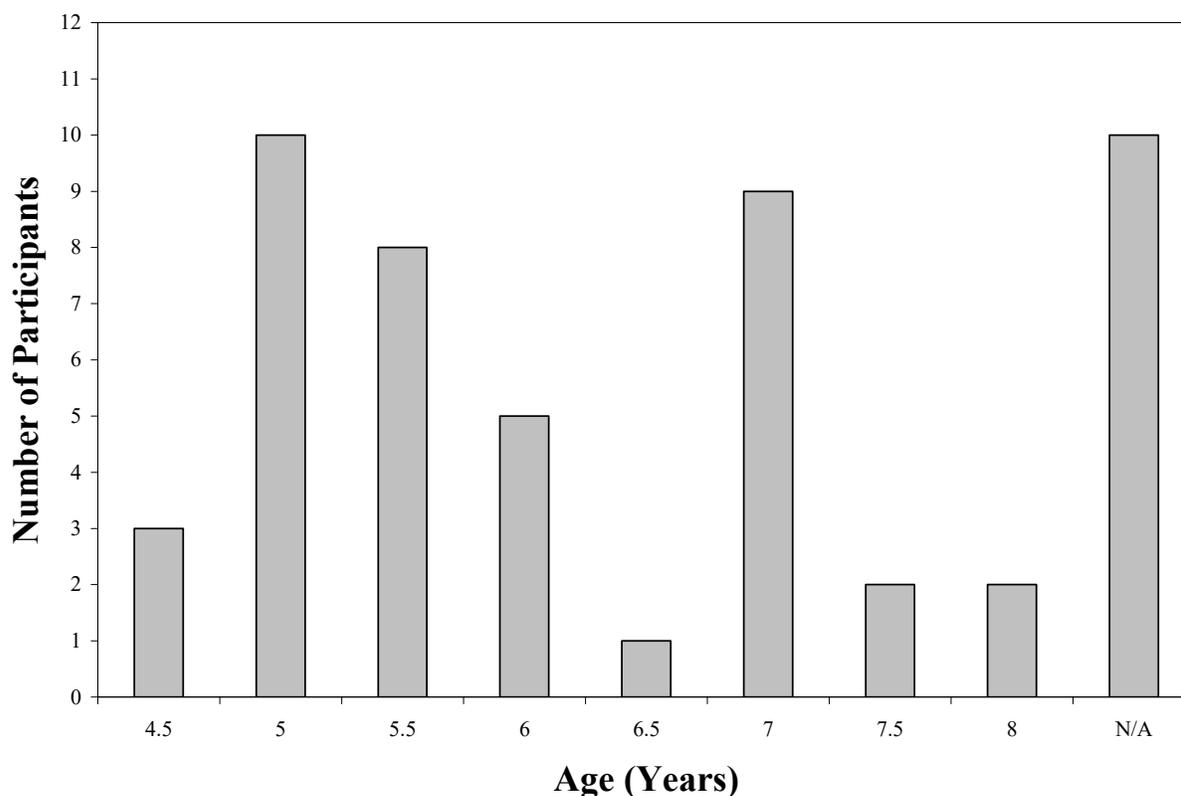
Parent post-evaluations also showed several significant differences. First, only a small

portion of parents from the experimental group felt they saw no improvement in their

student's reading comprehension ($M = .04$, $SD = .20$) as opposed to control group parents

who felt they did not see any change in their student's reading comprehension ($M = .14$, $SD =$

.35), $t(44) = 1.13$, $p<.05$. No parents from the experimental group said *RRR* did not help ($M =$ .00, $SD = .00$). In other words, the majority of these parents (86%) felt *RRR* might have or did improve their student's reading comprehension, $t(44) = 1.04$, $p< .05$. Experimental group parents felt schools needed to focus on reading strategies that accommodate student interest ($M = .54$, $SD = .50$), $t(44) = -1.88$, $p< .05$, whereas control group parents felt schools needed to divert their focus to incorporating a variety of reading curricula to motivate students to read ($M = .41$, $SD = .50$), $t(44) = 1.14$, $p< .05$. No significant differences were found between all parents in terms of other aspects of what schools should focus on, such as comprehension (see Table 8).

Table 8

Significant Findings Based on Parent Post-Evaluations

	Experimental	Control
No Improvement	Minimal, M = .04, SD = .20	M = .14, SD = .35
***RRR* helped**	Positive, M = .00, SD = .00	None
Schools: Interest	M = .54, SD = .50, t(44) = -1.88, p< .05	None
Schools: New Curricula	None	M = .41, SD = .50, t(44) = 1.14, p< .05

Parent homework response sheets provided information regarding parent attitudes towards their child's reading over the course of the four-week period (see Appendix F). Results showed that parents in both groups exhibited less negative feelings towards their student's reading ability from week one ($M = 5$) to week four ($M = 1$), less parental assistance was required for *RRR* homework from week one ($M = 20$) to week four ($M = 11$), students maintained enjoyment and interest across all weeks (means were consistent), and parents left more positive comments as noted by the researcher; see Chapter 5 for parent comment information.

In terms of the type of questions missed on the *RRR* assessment, participants in both groups were found to more commonly miss questions regarding basic book components, sequence of events, and climactic understanding than miss questions from other thematic questions (see Appendix G). However, after *RRR*, experimental participants only struggled with one basic book component (i.e. illustration) and sequence of events (see Appendix H).

<u>Summary</u>

The purpose of this pilot study was to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness, if any, of a newly-developed reading comprehension curriculum similar to that of an existing curriculum emphasizing mathematics in a local after school program. The research question posed was: Is there a significant difference between pre- and post- test reading scores within a four-week period for second through sixth grade students who work with the *Rocky River Reading* curriculum as opposed to those who do not? The researcher created timed reading tests, student pre- and post-assessments and evaluations, and parent pre- and post-evaluations to measure student performance in this study. students. An independent samples t-test was used for the majority of the data analysis such as for examining pre- to post-assessment measures between control and experimental groups and parent pre- and post-evaluations.

A significant difference was found between pre- and post-measures within the experimental group and the control group. For the experimental group, negative attitudes towards reading (i.e. believing reading was "too hard") significantly decreased, improvement in understanding vocabulary showed a minimal difference in pre- and post-evaluations, feelings in reference to reading improving learning skills significantly increased, and feelings in reference to believing reading is "fun and interesting" significantly increased. Participants who already read at home prior to *RRR* were found to significantly read more. For the control

group, results showed a minimal difference between pre- and post-evaluation measures regarding feelings towards reading in which students were less likely to see reading as a difficult task, and were less likely to read horror and/or mystery reading materials. No significant differences were found for all participants in areas of general ideas of reading, what students hoped *RRR* could help with, general feelings towards reading, types of reading material, and if students read at home. A summary of findings and conclusions is found in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Introduction</u>

Literacy arouses hopes, not only in society as a whole but also in the individual
who is striving for fulfillment, happiness and personal benefit by learning how to
read and write. Literacy... means far more than learning how to read and write...
The aim is to transmit... knowledge and promote social participation.
-- United Nations Educational Scientific Organization
Institute for Education, Hamburg, Germany

The implementation of curriculum emphasizing the skills necessary for

reading comprehension can be a constructive addition to an after school program. Although

different curriculum methods may or may not strengthen reading development on the part of

the student, after school programs have the benefit of assessing and evaluating the students

during individual instruction and designing a range of activities specific to meet students'

needs. Based on this finding, the purpose of this pilot study was to utilize and evaluate the

effectiveness, if any, of a newly-developed reading comprehension curriculum similar to that

of an existing curriculum emphasizing mathematics in a local after school program. The

research question posed was: Is there a significant difference between pre- and post- test

reading scores within a four-week period for second through sixth grade students who work

with the *Rocky River Reading* curriculum as opposed to those who do not? While using *RRR*,

experimental group participants received the following instruction in the after school

program, consisting of: (a) daily timed test-taking, (b) daily reading groups and discussions,

(c) weekly parent-student reading packets, and (d) participant incentives. Control group

participants were asked to complete student pre- and post-assessments and evaluations, return

parent pre- and post-assessments and evaluations, and be present on the day of which

assessments and evaluations took place.

The population for this study consisted of 50 second through sixth grade students attending an after school program at a local elementary school in the Southern San Joaquin Valley of California; participants were randomly divided in half so that 25 participated in the experimental group, and 25 participated in the control group. The researcher created timed reading tests, student pre- and post-assessments and evaluations, and parent pre- and post-evaluations to measure student performance in this study. Pretest data were collected in an after school program setting during the testing window of October 1, 2008 through October 6, 2008. Implementation of the intervention lasted one month for 2nd-5th grade students and 3-weeks for 6th grade students followed by a posttest assessment and evaluation for students and a post-evaluation for parents during the testing window of November 3, 2008 through November 5, 2008; post-assessments and evaluations for students and parents were the same as those in the pretest.

<div align="center">Findings</div>

Basic demographic information such as age, ethnicity, grade level, and gender were randomly assigned to both groups, yet ended up dispersing equally amongst both groups. As a result, each student was matched to at least one or more students in the other group. This allowed for more significant and consistent results since participants did not vary or weaken the statistical analysis. Also, the sample itself was representative of the after school program in which 52% of the after school program was represented in the *RRR* participant pool.

In terms of student pre- and post-assessment measures, both control groups averaged similar raw scores that differed by +0.1 on the pre-assessment and +0.3 on the post-assessment; the experimental group demonstrated these small increases. The experimental group also demonstrated a greater decrease in the amount of time it took to read a book

within the pre- and post-assessment time frame. The experimental group decreased their average time by 21 seconds, while the control group only decreased their average time by 12 seconds. However, due to the similarities and minor difference in scores, there were no significant differences to report. This may have been caused by a variety of factors, such as similarities in reading abilities prior to *RRR* or a small sample size that limited the variety of the sample. Experimental students also exhibited less negativity towards the concept of reading, improved their vocabulary, encompassed the value of reading as part of learning, and were more apt to view reading as fun and/or interesting. This finding suggests that perhaps *RRR* and a four week academic growth may have contributed in how students felt about reading.

Experimental participants were more likely to read at home either more than they did prior to *RRR* or developed a liking to reading all together. These participants also demonstrated a change in the types of materials they were reading to less complicated material such as picture books or magazines, to more challenging material such as chapter books and mystery books. These increases in feelings, attitudes, and habits towards reading may have changed due to the variety of reading material, strategies, and activities that were introduced to students during *RRR*. Feelings on this same idea did not change for the control group or for any other measure between groups, such as general ideas of reading, what students hoped *RRR* could help with, general feelings towards reading, types of reading material, and if students read at home. As previously stated, experimental participants were exposed to a variety of reading strategies that enhance the idea of reading, whereas control participants were only exposed to more formalized reading strategies within the regular school day and/or after school program. Also within the pre- and post-assessment measures,

students had difficult with answering thematic questions. As shown in Appendix H, students answered questions regarding (1) book components, (2) characterization, (3) sequence of events, and (4) climactic understanding. All students struggled with similar questions, such as "Point to an illustration;" students were more apt to point to the name of the illustrator. This may have been a simple mistake or communicative error on part of the researcher not speaking clearly or loud enough for the student to understand the difference between the illustrator and illustration. Other components students struggled with included understanding the order of events that took place in the story they had read. Future research should investigate the components of sequencing and under the problem areas.

Differences in parent attitudes may have also contributed to the improvement experimental participants exhibited. Control group parents were less likely to agree that their student had difficulties with reading, whereas experimental group parents admitted their students had issues with vocabulary and comprehension and typically did not have strengths in reading overall. As a result of this preexisting state, experimental group parents may have been more apt to motivate their students to take part in *RRR* and use its strategies to the full extent for the needed benefit.

Additional observed student difficulties, parent attitudes towards reading, what parents wanted from *RRR*, and observed student strengths did not differ between groups. This may have been a result of parents not providing enough data, not a large enough sample size, or the sample itself being chosen from an after school program. The goal of the after school program is to promote all academic subjects for students of all academic abilities, reading and language arts being one key component. Parents of students in the after school program may share the common goal of promoting these academic subjects for their struggling

student, including reading comprehension. Therefore, ideas, attitudes, and observed student reading behavior may also be similar for these parents who all have students needing remedial assistance in academics.

In terms of parent post-evaluations, only a small portion of parents from the experimental group felt they saw no improvement in their student's reading comprehension as opposed to control group parents who felt they did not see any change in their student's reading comprehension. However, more parents in the control group said that their students improved more in reading comprehension. The reason for this effect was one limitation of the study. Many parents were confused as to what an "experimental group" and "control group" were. After several attempts to explain to parents which group their student was randomly assigned to and what would be expected of them based on that random assignment, many parents still did not understand. The majority of parents filled out post-evaluations with the assumption that their student had taken part in all aspects of *RRR*, when the student was really in the control group. Consequently, post-evaluation data may have been misinterpreted by parents as they would have *expected* their student to do better with reading comprehension *thinking* he or she was actually taking part in the experiment. Therefore, results are limited to the assumption that parents did not think this way and filled out post-evaluation forms accurately.

Experimental group parents felt schools needed to focus on reading strategies that accommodate student interest such as through understanding what the student would prefer to read and would be capable also. The control group parents felt schools needed to divert their focus to incorporating a variety of reading curricula to motivate students to read, such as more interactive activities, games, and less-formalized systems. No significant differences

were found between all parents in terms of other aspects of what schools should focus on, such as comprehension. Interestingly enough, parents contradicted themselves within the idea of schools not focusing on comprehension. The majority of all parents stated that their students had problems with reading comprehension and needed assistance with it; however, they also stated other areas of reading are of greater importance to be taught in school than comprehension. The reason for this confusion is unclear, but should be looked at in future research.

Parent homework response sheets provided information regarding parent attitudes towards their child's reading over the course of the four-week period. Results showed that parents exhibited less negative feelings towards their student's reading ability, less parental assistance was required for *RRR* homework, students maintained enjoyment and interest across all weeks, and parents left more positive comments as noted by the researcher. At the beginning of *RRR*, only few parents positively commented on their student's reading performance:

> "It was fun to watch her read and comprehend what she read!"
> "My student will benefit herself in this program, what a difference it is going to make!"

Based on tallying these direct quotes, most parents at the beginning of week one were hopeful that *RRR* would be of assistance. These feelings were consistent if not increased by week four in which more parents were noting positive observations of their student's reading comprehension. By the end of week four, the majority of parents saw a difference:

> "…thanks for helping her with reading. I would like to know how she is doing until now and if there is anything that I can do to help. I am more than happy to do so… I am very happy about [her reading] because she did a really good job on her book…She seems to be reading more often without getting bored."

> "My student is enjoying this reading process even though there was a struggle. Thank

you for helping my student be a better reader."

"He did very well, read with little assistance this week. I feel this program is benefiting him."

One parent reported her student's improvement each week, in which she began the

RRR with negative comments regarding his performance and saw a progression each week.

Week one: "[He] needs to get more interested in what he's reading so he can understand."

Week two: "[He] needs to read books that he is interested in. I don't think the story is interesting to them at this age."

Week three: "[He] is paying more attention when we read together so he is able to answer questions easier and his comprehension is getting better."

Week four: "He did good and was more interested in what he was reading this week. I hope you can continue helping [him] with his reading and comprehension. While he has been in this program and the after school program, I believe it has helped him in his class.

Other parents that commented about their student's performance described a progression in

reading comprehension, yet because RRR was conducted within a short-time span, a great

progression was not possible. Parents reported that their students were in the beginning

stages of enjoying to read, learning different strategies on how to read, and were reading

more.

<u>Recommendations</u>

Recommendations for future usage of RRR are in the areas of reestablishing

additional games and activities to build comprehension skills, providing a more adequate

time-span for students to take part in RRR, examining homework responses more thoroughly

to determine the needed areas of reading improvement, and include parents in the RRR

process since the majority were wanting to know the status of RRR. First, future research

should continue using all *RRR* components as is, yet include variety of teaching techniques in the activities that are included, such as the daily group discussions and test-taking. This study provided an array of teaching methods in reference to reading comprehension, which included basic group-reading, theatric story telling, comprehension games that focused on phonics, homophones, compound words, and vocabulary that can assist the reading process, and discussion groups were students were asked to compare and contrast the story to their life. These activities helped broaden student options in terms of accommodating to their interest at some point and illustrating teaching strategies that break the traditional reading comprehension learning strategies. Students enjoyed sharing their ideas about the stories each week and were more likely to arrive each day to discussion groups with ideas to discuss.

Second, a longer time-span would be required to see any type of significant difference between experimental and control groups. In addition, perhaps a larger sample size would be of great benefit to determine further results since some data was lost as a result of students not returning forms in on time. With a larger sample, this mishap can be avoided and will less likely skew results. Future research should also require further parent participation in *RRR* and parents were more eager to learn about the program and assist with it after seeing improvements in their student's reading. The advantage of wanting to assist will allow parents to learn the value of reading and stress the importance of it to their student at home. One component of *RRR* was for parents to become actively engaged, not only for the researcher's benefit to see if parent participation was a positive aspect, but for parents to realize the capabilities and/or areas of weakness their student had. *RRR* required parents to spend at least a 15-minute amount of time reading with their student and answering questions regarding their student's performance; thus, this question and answer session allowed for

reflection that may not have otherwise been considered without being required to read with the student.

Finally, future research should continue to evaluate parent homework responses each week for the benefit of using this information in daily group discussions. Each week, the researcher made sure to note the areas of weakness the students were dealing with as reported by the parent and to accommodate the needs of each parent as they reported, such as providing a variety of stories for their student to fit the interest of that student, and to continue working on learning vocabulary. The benefit of evaluating student homework response sheets was for students to receive practice in discussing their ideas, thoughts, and comprehension strategies before daily discussion groups.

Future research should address these issues to make *RRR* or similar a possible success. Perhaps conducting a sample outside of an after school program to reflect an entire school population or adding more enriching components to the structure of *RRR* all together would be beneficial.

Appendix A

Description of *Rocky River Reading* Activities

Daily Timed Test-Taking

Monday-Thursday reading comprehension tests demonstrating reading skills and strategies to the best of a student's ability.
  - ➢ Approx. 7 to 8 minutes during the after school instructional block
    - ▪ 8 minutes for 2nd and 3rd graders (can be read to aloud)
    - ▪ 7 minutes for 4th - 6th graders
    - ▪ Tests given in Primary groups (2nd-3rd grades) and Intermediate groups (4th-6th grades), done in researcher's office
  - ➢ Time is adjusted and accommodated to fit student needs
  - ➢ Corrected each day by the researcher
  - ➢ Students receive the same test if they did not accomplish 100% accuracy, or are given the next *RRR* subtest upon 100% accuracy of the previous subtest

*6th Last day/Test-Out: October 23rd; 2nd-5th Last day/Test-Out: October 30th

Daily Reading Groups and Discussions

After timed-tests, each grade level would stay as a group with the researcher and begin a discussion regarding both the timed-tests and assigned parent-student readings.
  - ➢ Approx. 20 minutes individually with groups, sitting in a circle
  - ➢ Discussions open to any comments, questions, or concerns that students had with the *RRR* curriculum.
  - ➢ The researcher incoporates the "who," "what," "when," "where," and "why."
  - ➢ Questions include predictions, a summarization, sequence of events, the plot and open-ended questions such as "Why did things happen that way?" or "What is the author trying to do here?"

* If needed, students could use graphic organizers provided by the researcher to jot down new and existing ideas and to help students break down information.
* Students receive a piece of candy daily after discussion group for their participation.

Weekly Parent-Student Reading Packet

Encourages literacy between child and parent, as well as for parents to realize areas of struggle their child may be having with reading.
  - ➢ Worksheets written according to the corresponding book and developed were by the researcher
  - ➢ Reading packets consisted of: (a) a reading book matched to their grade level standard, (b) a book mark, and (c) a one page work sheet for students and parents to answer
  - ➢ Students must answer worksheet questions independently, while parents answer questions regarding both the book and their student's experience with reading that week.
  - ➢ Reading packets are taken home each Monday and due back to the each Friday
  - ➢ Reading packets allow parents and student(s) to work with their own schedule in spending 15 to 20 minutes reading together.

*If students and parents failed to either complete the weekly packet or return it, they could have an extension for over the weekend depending on the situation. If after two failures to complete this portion of *RRR*, the student was dismissed from the study.

Participant Incentives

Incentives were given: (1) upon a grade level completion in RRR, and (2) for participation in the four week RRR study.

> ➢ Upon completion of a reading grade level (see Table 2), students were given a regular-sized candy bar of their choice and a certificate for completion.
> ➢ For complete participation, all 50 subjects were given a pizza and movie party of which they were exempt from the program that day with the researcher
> ➢ Party attendance depended on the attendance of the student to the program that day; flyers were sent to parents a week prior to the parent for early notification

* If a subject failed to complete the study, he or she was given a certificate and candy bar for what they had accomplished in *RRR*; the party was strictly for students who had successfully completed the four-week *RRR* period.

Participation Dismissal

Students can be dismissed from the study at any time for the following reasons:

> ➢ Absent from all three initial assessment days of the study
> ➢ Dismissed or withdrew from the after school program itself, for any reason.
> ➢ Failure of a parent returning their evaluation form within the three day assessment
>   period, and without the researcher's approval
> ➢ Failure of student and parent to complete the weekly reading packet OR return it
>   after two warnings to do so
> ➢ Students and/or parents could withdraw their participation at any time and for any
>   reason. Students did not need parental approval for withdrawing as well.

* Upon dismissal, a student was given a certificate and candy bar for what they had accomplished in *RRR*; yet the pizza party was strictly for students who had successfully completed the four-week *RRR* period.

*Dismissal was carried out through either a telephone call or in personal contact with the parent/guardian, depending on the convenience of the parent. Parents were explained to the reason for dismissal, as well as a reminder of previous signed consent forms stating what was expected of the student during the study.

Appendix B

Quiz Booklet 1A – 12B, with Answers

Billy jumped over the red fence.
The red fence was big.
Billy likes to jump over a big fence.
His favorite color is red.

1.) What did Billy jump over?
    a. A dog
    b. A yellow fence
    c. A red flower
    d. A red fence

2.) What color was the fence?
    a. The fence was blue
    b. The fence was green
    c. The fence was red
    d. The fence was orange

3.) A _____ is also red.
    a. Apple
    b. Banana
    c. Lion
    d. Rock

4.) What does NOT belong in the story?
    a. Billy eating an ice cream
    b. Billy jumping over a fence
    c. His favorite color is red
    d. The red fence was big

5.) The red fence was_____.
    a. Small
    b. Big
    c. Round
    d. Orange

Jane rode her bike to the park.
Jane <u>enjoys</u> going to the park.
It was a bright sunny day.
Jane rode her bike around the pond.

1.) Jane rode her bike to the _____.
    a. Pool
    b. Park
    c. House
    d. Movies

2.) What do you think <u>enjoys</u> means?
    a. To eat something
    b. To be happy
    c. To be sad
    d. To be mad

3.) Jane rode her bike on a _____.
    a. Dark and rainy day
    b. Bright and sunny day
    c. Hot sunny day
    d. Snowy day

4.) Jane rode her bike around the _____.
    a. Tree
    b. Pond
    c. Dog
    d. Park

5.) Jane_____ going to the park.
    a. Enjoys
    b. Hates
    c. Likes
    d. scared

Mr. Smith went to the store.
Mr. Smith bought carrots and peas.
He also bought fruits.
Mr. Smith made a <u>wonderful </u>snack.

1.) Where did Mr. Smith go?
   a.   To the park
   b.   To the store
   c.   To his work
   d.   To the gym

2.) What did Mr. Smith buy at the store?
   a.   Apple, peas, and other fruit
   b.   Soda , chips, apples
   c.   Carrots, peas, and fruit
   d.   Candy, soda, cereal

3.) What does <u>wonderful</u> mean?
   a.   To be mean
   b.   To be great
   c.   To be sad
   d.   To cry

4.) What did Mr. Smith make?
   a.   His dinner
   b.   A snack
   c.   Lunch
   d.   A bowl of cereal

5.) How was Mr. Smith's snack?
   a.   Tasty
   b.   Gross
   c.   Wonderful
   d.   Large

Tommy got a red bike on his birthday.
He loved his new shining red bike.
He first went to the park.
And then he went home.
He had a good day.

1.) What did Tommy get for his birthday?
   a. A red bike
   b. A orange bike
   c. A blue car
   d. A yellow airplane

2.) How did Tommy feel about his new bike?
   a. He loved his new bike
   b. He hated his new bike
   c. It made him feel sad
   d. It was not what he wanted

3.) Where did Tommy go first on his new bike?
   a. To his grandmothers house
   b. To the park
   c. To his house
   d. To his friends house

4.) Where did Tommy go after the park?
   a. To the store
   b. Home
   c. To his friends house
   d. To the park

5.) What kind of day did Tommy have?
   a. A bad day
   b. A good day
   c. A boring day
   d. A great day

During the spring time I like to throw a ball around with my cousins. This season I have <u>noticed</u> that I have gotten a lot stronger than I was last spring. My cousins say I can throw a ball so far down the street that it takes all three of them to try and catch it. I like to watch them try and catch the ball when I throw it because I throw much farther than them. Maybe one day they can throw a ball as far as I can, but first they need to practice!

1.) What season is this story taking place?
   a. Summer
   b. Winter
   c. Fall
   d. Spring

2.) What do you think the underlined word, *noticed*, means?
   a. To see
   b. To win
   c. To change
   d. To not pay attention to

3.) How many cousins does the main character have?
   a. Four
   b. Three
   c. Two
   d. He does not have cousins

4.) If the cousins want to throw far, what must they do first?
   a. Buy a ball
   b. Practice
   c. Run down the street
   d. Get stronger

5.) What has happened this season to the main character?
   a. He bought a new ball
   b. He started to play with his cousins
   c. He got stronger since last spring
   d. He moved

Matt used to live in a very old house near a big pond. In this pond there were a lot of fish, frogs, and birds. One day at dusk, Matt looked out of his bedroom window and noticed everybody in his family gathering around the pond. Matt put on his shoes and went outside to see what the matter was. When he got outside, Matt saw that the pond was completely empty. He began to cry, until his father told him that the animals had taken the pond to a better place, and would return the next summer. His father was right; the pond came back the next summer.

1.) Where was Matt's house close to?
   a. A big pond
   b. A forest
   c. Other houses
   d. A new house

2.) What happened to the pond?
   a. It became bigger
   b. It was completely empty
   c. His family turned it into a swimming pool
   d. It became smaller

3.) What time of day did the pond go away?
   a. Morning
   b. Afternoon
   c. Dusk
   d. It didn't go away

4.) What did Matt's father tell him about the pond?
   a. The pond wasn't there before
   b. The pond had no animals
   c. The animals had taken the pond to a better place
   d. The pond dried out

5.) What happened the next summer?
   a. Matt and his family moved away
   b. Matt went to summer school
   c. The pond came back
   d. The pond was even bigger

Over the weekend, Amber and her family went on a picnic. They decided to first take a hike up to the highest mountain <u>overlooking</u> the city and then set up their picnic. Amber's mother packed all types of snacks, such as oranges, sandwiches, apples, and Amber's favorite snack, peanut butter cookies. Amber was very excited to spend the day with her family and to see the nice view from the top of the mountain. Amber made sure to wear jeans and a sweatshirt because it might be cold and she did not want any of the insects to bite her.

1.) Where was the picnic?
    a. At the lake
    b. At their house
    c. The top of a mountain
    d. At a park

2.) What is Amber's favorite snack?
    a. Apples
    b. Oranges
    c. Sandwiches
    d. Peanut-butter cookies

3.) Why did Amber wear jeans and a sweatshirt?
    a. Her mother made her
    b. She had nothing else to wear
    c. It might be cold and because of insects
    d. To go hiking

4.) What did Amber's family do before their picnic?
    a. Take a hike to the highest mountain
    b. Eat their snacks
    c. Change into jeans and sweatshirts
    d. Look at the view from the top of the mountain

5.) What do you think the underlined word, *overlooking*, means?
    a. To watch
    b. To think about
    c. To have a view of
    d. To cover

One morning as Jenny was making breakfast, she heard a small <u>yelp</u> at her front door. She didn't do anything at first, and kept cooking. Her nephew Peter came downstairs and asked Jenny what the noise he heard could be. "I'm not sure Peter, but let's go check it out," said Jenny. When they opened the door, they looked all about, but saw nothing. As they shut the door, both of them heard the noise again. Peter ran to the door and to his surprise, looked down and saw a puppy. "Aunt Jenny, can I keep him?" asked Peter. Aunt Jenny could not resist the puppy's wagging tail and sweet eyes and told Peter he could keep the puppy.

1.) Who is Jenny?
    a. Peter's mother
    b. Peter's aunt
    c. The puppy's owner
    d. Peter's sister

2.) What do you think the underlined word, *yelp*, means?
    a. A cry
    b. A bark
    c. A scream
    d. A laugh

3.) Where was Peter when Jenny was making breakfast?
    a. Watching TV
    b. Downstairs
    c. Upstairs
    d. Outside

4.) What was outside when they opened the door the first time?
    a. Nothing
    b. A puppy
    c. The newspaper
    d. Peter's mother

5.) Why do you think Jenny let Peter keep the puppy?
    a. She couldn't resist the puppy's wagging tail and sweet eyes
    b. Peter had wanted a pet
    c. It was Peter's birthday
    d. Peter was being good

   I think my grandfather is my favorite relative because he is the smartest person I know. Not only has he lived for years, but he has <u>witnessed</u> a great deal of history. I enjoy hearing all of his stories and wonder if I will be able to tell those stories to my own children. My grandfather can also cook anything you can think of and he will always make sure it turns out delicious! He will make the best spaghetti and meatballs on the same night he makes chocolate cake for desert. You should see his spice cabinet, it's full of herbs and spices for his spaghetti. I hope to be just like my grandfather one day so I can be the best at everything.

1.) Why is grandfather the character's favorite relative?
 a. He can cook
 b. He witnessed a great deal of history
 c. He is the best at everything
 d. He is the smartest person

2.) What do you think the underlined word, *witnessed*, means?
 a. Been a part of
 b. Observed
 c. Told
 d. Shown

3.) What food does grandfather make the best?
 a. Meatballs
 b. Spaghetti and meatballs
 c. Chocolate cake
 d. Spaghetti

4.) Why does the character hope to be like his grandfather?
 a. To be the smartest person
 b. To be able to cook spaghetti
 c. To be able to tell the same stories
 d. To be the best at everything

5.) How do you think the character feels about his grandfather?
 a. He admires him
 b. He dislikes him
 c. He thinks grandfather is funny
 d. Grandfather makes him happy

Playing in public last Friday night was the most <u>frightening</u> thing I have ever done in my life. When I went up on stage, someone said I was the youngest person to play at a concert there. I was a bit nervous since I was the only trumpet player to have her own part in the concert. I was also nervous because my whole family was in the front row watching me! Before the concert, my mother had told me that the sound of my trumpet was the best sound she had ever heard. The greatest thing of all was that she said nobody could play better than me because I had practiced so hard. I won't forget what she said because this made me play as strong as I could that night.

1.) What do you think the underlined word, *frightening*, means?
    a. Scariest
    b. Happiest
    c. Exciting
    d. Boring

2.) Why was the character nervous?
    a. She was the only trumpet player in the concert
    b. She was the youngest to play
    c. Nobody was better than her
    d. She had to play in public

3.) Who was in the front row at the concert?
    a. The trumpet players
    b. Her family
    c. Her mother
    d. The band

4.) According to her mother, why could nobody play better than she played?
    a. She was the only trumpet player
    b. She had practiced so hard
    c. She had been excited all day
    d. She was stronger than everybody else

5.) When was the concert?
    a. Tonight
    b. This Friday
    c. Last Friday
    d. Yesterday

Gina's <u>favorite</u> holiday is Christmas for many different reasons. Not only does she get to ask for her favorite toys, but she can also plan on making the biggest snowman in the cold weather. Since she is out of school during Christmas, Gina loves lying around watching movies and drinking hot chocolate. Her grandmother makes the tastiest hot chocolate because she melts actual candy bars in warm milk to make it extra chocolaty! One time, her grandmother even tried melting chocolate marshmallows in warm milk, but it became too messy. During Christmas, Gina also goes with her grandmother to buy presents for the whole family. Although Gina loves opening presents, she also enjoys giving them to the people she loves the most.

1.) What do you think the underlined word, *favorite*, means?
   a. Preferred
   b. Not wanted
   c. Silliest
   d. To love

2.) Why does Gina have so much free time during Christmas?
   a. She stays with her grandmother
   b. She is out of school
   c. She makes the time to have fun
   d. She does not have free time

3.) Why didn't the chocolate marshmallows work in the warm milk?
   a. It did not taste right
   b. It was too chocolaty
   c. Candy bars tasted better
   d. It was too messy

4.) What does Gina ask for during Christmas?
   a. Hot chocolate
   b. Presents
   c. Toys
   d. To watch movies

5.) What type of person do you think Gina is during Christmas?
   a. Giving
   b. Selfish
   c. Boring
   d. Angry

Name: _____   **6B**

Every day Josh goes to visit a family nearby his work. The reason he does this is to help them with cleaning their house and taking care of their brand new baby. One day their baby had an extremely high fever. The parents kept getting a great feeling of worry because they did not have a car to take the baby to the doctor. Josh took them to the doctor in his car, which was much easier and faster than taking a taxi cab. Some neighbors have copied Josh's idea of helping others and are doing the same. I hope to become a neighborhood hero like Josh! His actions never <u>displease</u> anyone. I think I will start by helping my brother redo his homework.

1.) What did Josh have that the family he was helping didn't have?
    a. A baby
    b. A job
    c. A car
    d. Money

2.) What was wrong with the baby?
    a. Nothing was wrong with her
    b. She had a high fever
    c. She needed to go to the doctor
    d. Her family did not have a car

3.) Why was the family worried?
    a. They did not have a car
    b. The baby had a high fever
    c. They had no money for a taxi cab
    d. Josh was not there yet to help

4.) What do you think the underlined word, *displeased*, means?
    a. To make unhappy
    b. To make someone laugh
    c. To ignore
    d. To copy

5.) After watching Josh, what does the character hope to do now?
    a. Buy a car like Josh has
    b. Help his brother do homework
    c. Become a neighborhood hero
    d. Check on the baby's fever

Joe walked into the store yesterday and saw his brother John buying a jacket. When John left, Joe tried on a jacket just like it, it looked nice on him. There was only one jacket left, so Joe bought it. Joe was very excited and ran home to show his family. Joe first showed his mom what he had bought and she said it looked great. But when Joe showed John, John <u>frowned.</u> When Joe asked why he was sad, John said he bought the jacket for Joe's birthday.

1.) Who is John?
   a. Joe's brother
   b. Joe's uncle
   c. Joe's cousin
   d. The family dog

2.) How was Joe feeling when he ran home?
   a. Excited
   b. Guilty
   c. Angry
   d. Confused

2.) Who did Joe show the jacket to first?
   a. John
   b. No one, he went straight to his room
   c. His mother
   d. Sarah

3.) What do you think the underlined word, *frowned*, means?
   a. To be sad
   b. To be happy
   c. To be bored
   d. To throw a ball

5.) What do you think will happen next in the story?
   a. Joe will return the jacket to the store
   b. John will be very mad at Joe for buying the jacket
   c. Joe and John are going to go play football
   d. Their mother will tell them its time for dinner

Denise and Jill went on a camping trip. When they got up into the mountains, there were <u>numerous</u> bees and snakes. Jill told her not to worry since these bees and snakes would not sting or bite unless Denise bothered them. Denise was scared of the bees and snakes and asked Jill if they could stay somewhere else. Jill agreed and they decided to set up a tent at the top of the highest mountain, from this spot they could see for miles into the distance. They watched the sun go down and the sun come up, as well as listen to all the sounds from different animals. Denise had a good time with her friend Jill and they both want to go again.

1.) Who is Jill?
    a. Denise's friend
    b. Denise's mother
    c. A stranger
    d. There was no Jill in the story

2.) Where did Denise and Jill go camping?
    a. On a beach
    b. In Jill's backyard
    c. Near the desert
    d. Into the mountains

3.) What was Denise scared of?
    a. Bees and Snakes
    b. Bees and Bears
    c. Snakes and Bears
    d. Getting lost

4.) What do you think the underlined word, *numerous,* means?
    a. A large amount
    b. A small amount
    c. Something scary
    d. Colorful

5.) If Denise bothered the snakes and bees, what might have happened?
    a. Nothing, the snakes and bees would have left her alone
    b. The snakes and bees would sting and bite her
    c. Only the snakes would bite
    d. Only the bees would sting

Sarah was given a magic wand by her fairy godmother. This magic wand could turn a spoon into a bowl of soup and turn a dog into a cat. It could turn a frog into a prince, and even the ugliest house would become a <u>magnificent</u> castle! One wave of the wand, and Sarah could have one wish. Two waves of the wand, and Sarah could have two wishes. At the third wave, the wishes would stop and Sarah's first two wishes would go away. One day, after Sarah had two wishes come true, she jumped for joy with the wand in her hand. Sarah didn't realize she was waving the wand at the same time she jumped for joy and it was too late, her first two wishes had already gone away.

1.) What does NOT belong in the story?
    a. The magic wand was wonderful and enchanting
    b. A spoon could turn into a bowl of soup
    c. Sarah gets one wish with waving the wand once
    d. After waving the wand three times, Sarah got a third wish

2.) What does the underlined word, *magnificent,* mean?
    a. Wonderful
    b. Awful
    c. Horrible
    d. Colorful

3.) Why did Sarah jump for joy?
    a. Her fairy godmother gave her a magic wand
    b. She had two wishes come true
    c. Her dog turned into a cat
    d. She lives in a castle

4.) What do you think happens next in the story?
    a. Sarah started crying and was upset
    b. Sarah turned into a frog
    c. The magic wand disappeared
    d. The fairy godmother felt sorry for Sarah and gave her a third wish

5.) What happened after Sarah's two wishes came true?
    a. She jumped for joy
    b. Her fairy godmother appeared
    c. Sarah lost the magic wand
    d. She made a third wish

Zack went shopping last Monday. He bought two boxes of chocolate-chip cookies, one gallon of milk, and different vegetables for a salad his mother was making. When he got home, he noticed that he forgot to buy the orange juice his mother had asked him to <u>purchase</u>. Zack had to go all the way back to the store. When he got to the store, Zack realized he did not have his wallet with him. Zack was already frustrated, but decided he needed to go get his wallet if he was going to buy the orange juice for his mother. But when he got home, Zack could not find his wallet anywhere. He looked under his bed and found that his dog had torn apart his wallet. Zack was left with no money to buy orange juice now.

1.) When did Zack go shopping?
   a.   This morning
   b.   Yesterday
   c.   Last Monday
   d.   He didn't go shopping

2.) What do you think the underlined word, *purchase*, means?
   a.   To buy
   b.   To lose
   c.   To sell
   d.   To get rid of

3.) Why was Zack frustrated?
   a.   He did not have his wallet
   b.   He does not like orange juice
   c.   The dog tore apart his wallet
   d.   Zack had no money

4.) Where was Zack's wallet?
   a.   In the kitchen
   b.   In Zack's jean pocket
   c.   In the dog house
   d.   Under the bed

5.) What does NOT come next in the story?
   a.   Zack went to the store to buy orange juice
   b.   Zack was upset that his dog tore apart his wallet
   c.   Zack is worried his mom will be upset at him
   d.   Zack feels like he's had a horrible day

I play the flute, and my younger sister Diana plays the trombone with the high school jazz band. We sisters want to play in an upcoming band competition together, but our school does not have one yet. My sister and I decided to audition for the community band competition instead. First, we each had to play a solo piece and did pretty well considering we played individually. Then the other band competition members had to play their own solo pieces; all members sounded amazing! In fact, one member was so brilliant that I decided to sit right next to her. I was a bit nervous at first, sitting next to such a wonderful band member, yet she <u>commented</u> on my own music abilities. She told me she had never heard a beautiful harmony from a flute player; I was confident the rest of the day.

1.) What does the character's school not have yet?
    a. A band competition
    b. Orchestra
    c. Jazz band
    d. Flute players

2.) In their audition, what was the first thing the characters had to do?
    a. Find a partner
    b. Tune up their instruments
    c. Play a solo piece
    d. Take a seat

3.) Why was the main character "a bit nervous?"
    a. She forgot the music
    b. She lost her instrument
    c. She couldn't find Diana after the audition
    d. She had to sit next to a brilliant and wonderful band member

4.) What gave the main character confidence the rest of the day?
    a. She played her solo piece wonderfully
    b. She was told she played the flute with beautiful harmony
    c. She was able to audition for the band competition
    d. Her sister was there with her

5.) What do you think the underlined word, *commented*, means?
    a. To mention or make notice of
    b. To make fun of or laugh at
    c. To copy
    d. To ignore

Chris rode with happiness as he came down the hill on his bike. He heard Jane shout with excitement as she came down the same trail. When he glanced over his shoulder, however, Chris noticed that someone else was following them. It was Bobby. Chris felt very annoyed. Bobby was a new student at school who often picked on Chris by taking his lunch money. Although Bobby never bothered Jane, Jane was not a big fan of Bobby. In fact, Jane rode faster to catch up with Chris after she saw that Bobby was following them. Bobby kept riding behind both Chris and Jane, but never caught up to them. Chris and Jane debated whether to let Bobby ride with them. They finally decided to ask Bobby to join them. To their <u>astonishment</u>, Bobby agreed to ride with them and apologized for the way he was acting at school.

1.) What do you think the underlined word, *astonishment*, means?
    a. To be surprised or shocked
    b. To be scared
    c. To be annoyed
    d. To be frustrated

2.) Why did Chris dislike Bobby at first?
    a. Bobby stole his bike
    b. Bobby had taken his lunch money
    c. Bobby made fun of Jane
    d. Bobby stole his bike and made fun of Jane

3.) What were Chris and Jane debating?
    a. Chris thought his bike was better than Jane's bike
    b. If they should ask Bobby to join them in riding bikes
    c. If they should be friends with Bobby
    d. They were not debating, but were making fun of Bobby

4.) What was Chris and Jane doing before Bobby showed up?
    a. Riding bikes down a hill
    b. Fixing their bikes
    c. Waiting for Bobby
    d. Riding their bikes up a hill

5.) What do you think would happen next in the story?
    a. Chris and Jane accepted Bobby's apology
    b. Bobby continued to make fun of Chris and Jane
    c. They all went home
    d. They decided to ride up the hill again

Jessica ran into the girls' bathroom and locked the door behind her. "I hate this! It's not fair!" she cried, breaking into uncontrollable sobs. Just last week, she felt on top of the world, everything in her life was going well. In fact, Jessica was elected school president and received straight A's on her report card. Jessica had nothing to worry about, or so she thought. That morning, Jessica heard she was moving. "Why can't I stay here!" she cried. Her dad got a new job in another town and so they had to move. As Jessica sobbed, her best friend Joy ran in crying. When Jessica saw who it was, she asked Joy what was wrong. Joy <u>exclaimed,</u> "My dad said we're moving!" After talking, Jessica and Joy realized they were going to both move to the same town and school. Everything was better.

1.) Why was Jessica recently happy?
   a. She received straight A's and was elected school president
   b. She became friends with Joy
   c. She was moving to the same place as Joy was
   d. She was not recently happy

2.) What did Jessica think was unfair?
   a. Joy was moving to the same town and school as her
   b. She had to move away
   c. She did not want to be elected school president
   d. Nothing was unfair to her

3.) Who is Joy?
   a. Another girl who came into the bathroom
   b. Jessica's best friend
   c. The school principal
   d. Jessica's mother

4.) What is another word that could replace the underlined word, *exclaimed*?
   a. Cried
   b. Laughed
   c. Described
   d. Explained

5.) Why did everything turn out better for Jessica and Joy?
   a. The school bell rang and school was out
   b. Joy was happy that Jessica got straight A's on her report card
   c. They would be moving to the same town and school
   d. Joy and Jessica could still be friends at different schools

My mother is an anthropologist and studies ancient civilizations. She also teaches history at the local high school too. Both my brother and I, the two of us would like to either study anthropology or teach history as well. I think anthropology is fascinating! Being able to travel the world and uncover an <u>array</u> of ancient discoveries is something I would love to do in life! In order to pursue that, I am currently taking a course at the Natural History Museum after school. This course has taught me about different religions and cultures, and the interaction between human behavior and human beings. Right now I am learning about Egypt and its pyramids in this course. In addition to learning about Egypt, I'm reading some books at home about the Inca culture of Peru, which is in South America.

1.) Based on this passage, what do you think Anthropology is?
   a. **The study of different religions and cultures**
   b. The study of the Inca culture
   c. A subject in school that teaches history
   d. It is fascinating

2.) What do you think the underlined word, *array*, means?
   a. **A collection or arrangement of**
   b. Different
   c. A small amount
   d. A combination

3.) What are two things you know about the character's mother?
   a. She works at the Natural History Museum and has two kids
   b. She's an anthropologist and visits the Natural History Museum
   c. **She's an anthropologist and teaches history**
   d. She visited Peru and studies the Inca culture

4.) What is one thing the character has learned in the course he is taking?
   a. The Inca culture
   b. South America
   c. Ancient discoveries
   d. **The interaction between human behavior and human beings**

5.) What do you know about the character's brother?
   a. **He wants to either teach history or study anthropology**
   b. He is taking the same course at the Natural History Museum
   c. He is reading a book about Egyptian pyramids?
   d. He wants to be a high school teacher

Sitting on the roof one night I watched the stars glisten in the midnight sky. My mother fixed me a plate of cookies and a glass of milk, in means of preparing me for my night of stargazing. My mother was inside washing dishes, my father was asleep, and my two brothers were watching TV, I know because I could hear it. While outside, I could not help but <u>contemplate</u> about the sky itself. I imagined myself as one of those microscopic bursts of light, floating above the clouds. I envisioned my family as stars: mother would be brilliantly bright watching over the millions of smaller stars, father would be the largest star in the deep dark sky, and my brothers would be the tiniest twinkles continuously flashing until the sun came up. Comparing the beautiful stars to my wonderful family made me thankful.

1.) What did the character plan to do that night?
- a. Contemplate about his family
- b. Eat cookies and milk
- c. Compare the stars to his family
- **d. Stargaze**

2.) What is one thing the character did while up on the rooftop?
- a. Ate cookies and milk
- **b. Imagined himself and his family as stars**
- c. Wonder about the weather
- d. Worked on his telescope

3.) Based on this story, how do you envision the night?
- **a. A deep dark sky with millions of stars**
- b. Cloudy, not really being able to see too many stars
- c. A deep dark sky with few stars
- d. The sun was barely going down

4.) What do you think the underlined word, *contemplate*, means?
- a. To dislike
- b. To look at
- **c. To think about**
- d. To ignore

5.) Why do you think the character is thankful?
- **a. Seeing the beauty in the stars made him realize the beauty in his family**
- b. There were a lot of stars out that night
- c. He was alone and had time to think
- d. He got to use his new telescope

When I entered college, I was not sure what to expect. I had heard random things from my older friends who were already in college, things like, "College will be the best years of your life" and "Make the most out of your college years, it's the only time your free!" However, the first day I actually stepped foot on a college campus it was the complete opposite. I realized I would have to start paying my own rent and utilities, I would have to be responsible for getting myself to class and completing my homework, and I would have to get a job if I wanted to live comfortably. When I discussed this with my parents, they told me that I am now an adult and would have to face adult challenges. To my <u>dismay</u>, I realized they were right. I am 18 years old and about to embark on adulthood. I should not be scared, but rather embrace the difficulties that lie ahead and use them to my advantage. What only hurts you will only make you stronger.

1.) Based on comments from friends, what impression did the character have about college?
    a. <u>College will be exciting because your free</u>
    b. College will be intimidating
    c. College helps a person grow up
    d. College is the first step into adulthood

2.) How do you think the character felt when he realized what college was all about?
    a. Optimistic
    b. Motivated
    c. Infuriated
    d. <u>Nervous</u>

3.) What do you think the underlined word, *dismay*, means in its context?
    a. Delight
    b. Awkwardness
    c. <u>To be shocked or surprised</u>
    d. Thankfulness

4.) What did the character discuss with his parents?
    a. <u>His new priorities and responsibilities he will have in college</u>
    b. Being free
    c. Problems with homework
    d. Finding the money to pay rent

5.) What was a positive turning point for the character?
    a. Stepping onto a college campus for the first time
    b. <u>To not to be scared but embrace the difficulties that lie ahead</u>
    c. Being responsible in getting himself to class
    d. Hearing that college would be the "best years" of his life

When I grow up, I hope to establish a personal business of my own. Some people may call this being an <u>entrepreneur</u>, but I call it having an advantage in life. I believe developing ideas and utilizing them to a more skillful, individual practice can help anyone flourish in their every endeavor. I often ponder the numerous possibilities I have and am capable of using when creating my own business. Perhaps being the owner of a restaurant or even going as far as to develop an invention that advances certain aspects of our current society. I want to make life easier and better for those in need, as well as cater to those who may not even require my assistance. In my personal business, my main goal will be to concentrate on the people, and respect their every desire. I believe not focusing on my consumers would be absurd, as they are the ones who will make my business a success.

1.) What do you think the underlined word, *entrepreneur*, means?
   a. To be fortunate or lucky
   b. To be anxious or nervous
   c. To be motivated and a go-getter
   d. <u>To take on an enterprise alone or to be self-employed</u>

2.) What goal is the character striving for in his personal business?
   a. <u>Focusing on the consumer</u>
   b. Putting skillful ideas to good use
   c. To flourish in success
   d. Actually establishing a business

3.) Based on this story, what type of person is this character?
   a. <u>Motivated and driven</u>
   b. Shy and fearful
   c. Lazy and careless
   d. A procrastinator

4.) What does the character hope to establish in the future?
   a. To please consumers
   b. To own a restaurant
   c. Make life easier for everybody
   d. <u>A personal business</u>

5.) What type of business do you think the character will have?
   a. One that will not be successful
   b. He will create an invention that does well for society
   c. <u>One that concentrates on consumers and does well for society</u>
   d. One that illustrates his numerous skills

My father believes that the problem with public policy today is that it is difficult to <u>document</u> the quality of our society. I on the other hand, feel that accepting what is already efficient for our economy would be most beneficial. Of course I believe our society has the potential for an even greater success by ridding the old and bringing in the new. Yet, working with what already exists not only builds community amongst our fellow citizens, but bridges the gap between those who need a hand and those willing to lend a hand. As a community, we need to negotiate our needs, cooperate with one another to accomplish desires, and remain confident in all situations. I admire the individuals who *advertise* a moral and ethical society, working hard for what they believe in. I respect the numerous attempts our legislature stands for in making our society a stronger place. Finally, I value the excellence we visualize for future generations.

1.) What do you think the underlined word, *document*, means?
    a. <u>To verify</u>
    b. To mention
    c. To remember
    d. To understand

2.) The character places an emphasis on _____.
    a. Legislature
    b. Public policy
    c. <u>Community</u>
    d. Future generations

3.) Who does the character admire?
    a. <u>Individuals who work hard</u>
    b. Individuals who are confident in situations
    c. Individuals who lend a hand
    d. His father's view on public policy

4.) In its context, what could the italicized word, *advertise*, mean?
    a. <u>Model</u>
    b. Produce
    c. Destroy
    d. Promote

5.) What can we assume about the character based on this passage?
    a. <u>He believes success lies in the hands of the community working together</u>
    b. He fully disagrees with his father's point of view
    c. He believes that working hard can only get you so far
    d. He believes future generations will have an easier life

Appendix C

Instructor Script for Daily Discussions

After daily test-taking, students would stay in their primary or intermediate grade-level group for a 15-20 minute discussion. During this time, students could comment and share ideas on both the tests they had taken and about weekly student-parent reading packets. The researcher used a script to host the discussion:

1) Describe the characters you have been introduced to in your reading packet and in your reading tests.

2) Summarize the book you are currently reading at home. What is the main problem (we call this the most important part)? How do the characters or main characters fix this problem? What is the setting like?

3) What did (main problem) happen?

4) (After the summarization) Why do you think that happened in the story?
5) (After the summarization) When did (an event in the story) happen? In the beginning, middle, or end of the story? Why do you think this is?

6) How do you feel about the take-home reading book and stories you are reading on your tests?

7) Name one thing you have learned from any of the stories you have read.

8) What is an illustration and an illustrator- can you find one? What is an author?

9) Were there any hard words? How can we figure out their meaning?

*Allow students to discuss any feelings, ideas, or comments on *RRR* in general so that they understand how discussing books makes reading a bit easier.
*Make sure each student has a turn to talk or discusses at least one idea
*Monitor time, reminding how long they have during their discussion

Appendix D

Parent Consent to Participate

Want your student to be a part of the
Rocky River Reading pilot study?

Within the next six weeks, Miss Contreras will be conducting a research study as part of her Master of Arts in Education Program at Cal-State Bakersfield. This study requires 50 ACES students, ten from each grade level to participate. She has developed a curriculum known as *Rocky River Reading*, in which students receive rewards for 100% accuracy on timed reading comprehension tests, as well as participating in daily discussion groups and turning in weekly student/parent reading packet. Want to know more?

Students will be required to:
* Participate Monday-Thursday in group discussions; this will take place during their ACES homework time of which they will miss a total of one hour from this period each week. However, students can make this hour up between 5:00p.m.-6:00p.m. during sign-outs.
* Attend ACES daily (only suggested and desired for the purposes of this study)
* Turn in weekly reading logs

Parents will be required to:
* Assist student with the parent/student reading packet, taking approximately 15-20 minutes each week to complete. This also includes completing the parent worksheet and making sure the student completes his or her worksheet, both of which are to be turned in each Friday with its packet.
* Complete a pre- and post-evaluation form in a timely manner

OR

Your student may be randomly chosen to participate in a "control group," this group of 25 students will only take a pre-test and post-test assessment during the first and last week of the study. Their results will be compared to the results of students who used *Rocky River Reading*.

Participation in this study is voluntary and is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Only the first **TEN** students from each grade level to return their consent forms (*see attached*) will be allowed to participate.

If you are interested in your child participating in this research study, please carefully read and sign the attached form as soon as possible. Thank you!

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
PROJECT TITLE: READING COMPREHENSION IN THE AFTER SCHOOL
PROGRAM: A PILOT STUDY

[Authorized by the CSUB Institutional Review Board/Human Subjects Research:
Protocol 08-115]

I understand the purpose of this pilot study is to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness, if any, of a newly-developed reading comprehension curriculum similar to that of an existing curriculum emphasizing mathematics in the ACES after school program.

The new curriculum, known as *Rocky River Reading (RRR)*, was developed by the researcher based on existing reading comprehension tests that are already used during the regular school day either in school textbooks or in state standards-based curriculum. In *RRR*, students are provided with timed reading comprehension tests on 12 progressing levels of difficulty; two different tests are given at each level for a total of 24 tests in the curriculum that must be succeeded with 100% accuracy in order to proceed to the next level. If a student fails to receive 100% accuracy, he or she must redo the same test the following day until full competency is achieved.

RRR also includes weekly student-parent reading packets and daily student group discussions. Students will be given an initial assessment developed by the researcher that is based on an accumulation of existing comprehension questions within state standards-based curriculum. At the end of the four week period, students will be evaluated with the same initial assessment; both pre- and posttest scores on the assessments will then be compared to examine achievement on student skill and with *RRR* , if any. All student assessment scores will also be kept confidential throughout the study.

I understand that I will be required to answer and return a pre- and post-evaluation regarding reading in general and about my student's skills in reading comprehension. Evaluations will require 10-15 minutes of my time and will be strictly confidential. Pre-evaluations will be due back within the three-day assessment period (to be explained by the researcher), while post-evaluations will be due back during the last week of testing.

I will also be required to assist my student in completion of a 15-20 minute weekly student-parent reading packet for the four-week testing period. I understand my students will answer the packet worksheet independently, while I answer questions regarding both the book and my student's experience with reading that week. I will make sure the packet is due back to the researcher every Friday and understand I may be given a weekend extension for returning the packet if necessary and through the researcher's approval. However, if after two failures to complete this portion of *RRR*, my student will be dismissed from the study.

I understand that all identifying information which might link me to my evaluation

and reading packet data will be kept confidential. Only an identification number or false name will appear on the printed materials. No one will be able to associate my name with my data. A master copy of all participant names will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office. Only she will have access to this list. This list will all be destroyed within one year after the completion of the study. My name will not be used in written reports or presentations of the study findings.

I understand that my student and I are free to choose not to participate in this study. In addition, if I do choose to participate my student and I are free to withdraw at any time, even in the middle of an evaluation, student test-taking, or weekly student-parent reading packet, without penalty. This means that I can ask to have my information shredded at anytime. In this case, the researcher will do so immediately. If I choose not to participate, or to withdraw during the course of the study, it will not have a negative effect on both my student and I.

Benefits: I understand that this study may or may not be of direct benefit to me or to my student. It has not been designed to provide a quick improvement in reading comprehension for my student, nor will it produce an improvement in school grades. Rather, it is hoped that the knowledge gained from this study will help to improve *RRR* for future use, if any, as well as assist in other reading comprehension strategies.

Risks: I expect that my student and I will experience a minimum of risk, discomfort or stress while participating in this study. However some evaluation questions for both my student and I may be considered personal and thought-provoking or emotional in nature. If I do become uncomfortable during this process, I am aware of withdrawing from the study or have the option of not answering the question.

If I choose to withdraw both myself and my student's participation from the study OR my student is dismissed from the study for not following what is require and carry emotional feelings due to these event(s), my student and I may contact the school principal for further assistance:

Marshall Dillard
Principal, Sandrini Elementary School
Alum Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93309
(661)-397-1515

If I have further questions about the research itself, or if I wish to obtain a summary of the results of the research, I may contact:

Christina Contreras
Graduate Student, Master of Arts in Education/Early Childhood Education
Site Manager, Sandrini ACES After School Program
Alum Ave, Bakersfield, CA 93309
(661)-201-3220, Ccontreras@runner.csub.edu
In addition, I may contact the nursing faculty member serving as thesis/project

committee chair with questions about the research, or if I have a research-related problem:

Cary Larson-Mckay, Ph.D.
Program Coordinator, Master of Arts in Education
Department of Education
California State University, Bakersfield
Bakersfield, CA 93311-1099
(661)-654-3286

For questions regarding my rights and my student's rights as a research subject, I may contact:

Dr. Steve Suter
University Research Ethics Review Coordinator
Institutional Review Board/Human Subjects Research
Department of Psychology
California State University, Bakersfield
Bakersfield, CA 93311-1099
(661) 654-2373

Authorization: I have read this form completely and have decided that I and my student will participate in the study described. The general purpose, the requirements of participation and possible hazards and inconveniences of participating have been explained to my satisfaction. <u>I will be given a copy of this consent form</u> if I am chosen to participate. My signature indicates mine and my child's consent to participate.

Signatures:
StudentParticipant:_____Date:_____

Parent/Guardian Participant:_____Date:_____

Researcher:_____Date:_____

Appendix E

Parent Evaluation Forms

Parent Pre-Evaluation Form

Parent Name: _____

Student Name: _____   Age:_____

This is my _____ evaluation (Please put "first" or "second")

Based on previous reading experiences with your child, please answer the following questions, in 1 to 2 sentences, and return to the researcher within 3 days of which it was given to you.

1.) What difficulties do you see or hear when your child reads? Describe briefly.

2.) How would you like *Rocky River Reading* to help your child?

3.) What areas of reading (e.g. vocabulary, sounding out words) do you feel your child is strongest?

4.) At what age did your child begin to read independently?

5.) What are your thoughts and concerns about reading in general?

Parent Post-Evaluation

Parent Name: _____

Student Name: _____

Please answer the following questions:

    1.) Do you feel your child has improved with reading for the past 3- 4 weeks?

    2.) Do you think *Rocky River Reading* **might have** improved your child's reading over the past 3-4 weeks?

    3.) What do you think schools should focus on in terms of reading?

Appendix F

Parent-Student Reading Packet Worksheet

Name: _____   Grade:_____   Date:_____

Book Title: _____

I hope you enjoyed reading your book this week! Please answer these questions in 1 to 2 complete sentences. Make sure to put this back in your reading packet and return back to Miss Contreras. Thank you!

1.) In three sentences, tell me what happened in the book:

2.) What did you not understand in the book?

3.) What was your favorite part of the book?

4.) What did you learn from the story?

5.) Pick a character and tell me about them:

Side B (Parent)

Please answer the following three questions, in 2 to 3 sentences, about your student's reading strategies this week. Feel free to comment or share ideas regarding Rocky River Reading as well. Also, make sure this is turned back in with your student's reading packet. Thank you!

Parent Signature: _____ Date:_____

1.) How do you feel your student did with reading their assigned book this week?

2.) How were you able to assist your student when reading or answering questions?

3.) Did your student enjoy reading this week, why or why not?

*Comments, thoughts, ideas:

Appendix G

Student Pre- and Post-Assessment

Student Pre- and Post-Assessment

Student Name: _____ **Student #:** _____

Day Teacher: _____ **ASP Leader:** _____

Time length to read book: _____

Age: _____ **Grade:** _____

1) Can you read the book for me? (1 pt)

2) What is the title of the book? (1 pt)

3) Where is the title? (1 pt)

4) Point to an illustration (1 pt)

5) What is an author? (1 pt)

6) What is an illustrator? (1 pt)

7) Who were the characters of the story? Who were the main characters? (2 pts)

8) What happened in the story? Summarize (2 pts)

9) Why did (problem) happen? (2 pts)

10) When did (choose a character) do (choose an event)? (2 pts)

11) How did (choose a characters) fix the problem? (2 pts)

12) Explain the setting for me (describe if necessary) (2 pts)

13) What was the most important part? What makes you think that? (2 pts)

	# of Questions	% of Assessment	Question #s
Book Components	7	54%	1,2,3,4,5,6,12
Characterization	3	23%	7,8,11
Sequence of Events	4	30%	8,9,10,11
Climactic Understanding	4	30%	8,9,11,13

Appendix H

Reading Packet Book List

Second Grade
- *Mandy's Cake*, by Myka-Lynne Sokoloff
- *Natural Partners*, by Steven Otfinoski
- *One Stormy Night*, by Anne W. Phillips
- *It's Right on the Way*, by Mary Carol Nagel

Third Grade
- *Supersonic Shake*, by Patricia Lakin
- *Tuba City, Texas*, by Dan Greenberg
- *Dinosaur Diner*, by Patricia Lakin
- *May the Best Person Win*, by Mary Kaiser Donev

Fourth Grade
- *The Fish's Wishes*, by Anne Miranda
- *Sam Feline Private Detective*, by Dan Greenberg
- *Balto: The Dog Who Saved a City*, by Robert O'Brien
- *Best Friends*, by Gary Pernick

Fifth Grade
- *Mary McLeod Bethune*, by Eloise Greenfield

or
- *The Lost Tomb,* by R. Spencer Chandler

Sixth Grade
- *Go Free or Die: A story about Harriet Tubman*, by Jeri Ferris

*Textbooks come from *Spotlight Books*: *Comprehension, Vocabulary, Literacy Support, and/or Theme* (Macmillan McGraw-Hill), grades 2-6 or *Junior Web Detective*s Program, grades 3-6; chosen based on length (i.e. to be read by parent/child in 15-minute period) and interest (i.e. most appealing for parent/child).

*Grades 5-6 only read one book for the 4-week period because of length.

Appendix I

Student Assent Form

Be Part of the Rocky River Reading Study!

What is *Rocky River Reading?*
It works just like Math Mountain. When you get 100% on a couple of reading tests, you get a prize! If you stay with *Rocky River Reading* for 4 weeks, you get a movie/pizza party instead of ACES for the day!

Why am I being asked to be part of it?
Miss C made up *Rocky River Reading* as a project for school. She wants to help students read better and have fun at the same time.

If I helped, what would I have to do?
- ✓ Make sure you are not absent from ACES for 4 weeks, unless you are sick
- ✓ Read a book and fill out a worksheet with your parents and return it each week
- ✓ Be in a reading group during your ACES homework time
- ✓ Take a before and after test to see how you read

Will everyone know how I am helping?
No- only Miss C will know. Others will only know that you are in the study, that's it.

Why would I want to help?
- ➢ You will be helping Miss C with a school project
- ➢ You can help make *Rocky River Reading* better
- ➢ You will be the very first student(s) to use *Rocky River Reading*
- ➢ You might be able to read better, or like to read more!

Why wouldn't I want to help?
- ➢ You might have to answer hard questions and have homework
- ➢ You might have trouble reading some tests if you do not like to read
- ➢ You will have to do your homework during *Fun At 5*

I _____ want to help and be a part of *Rocky River Reading*. I know what I will be helping with and will make sure I follow the rules. If I do not want to help anymore, I can stop when I want and still get a prize But I know that I **only** get a party if I help for 4 weeks. Miss C will let me know if she needs my help.

Sign here: _____   Grade:_____

Appendix J

Student Evaluation

Student Evaluation Form

Student Name: _____   Grade: _____

This is my _____ evaluation (Please put "first" or "second")

In complete sentences, please answer these questions and give back to Miss Contreras when you are done.

1.) Do you like to read? Why or why not?

2.) What do you hope *Rocky River Reading* can teach you?

3.) When you read a book, do you get frustrated or happy? Why do you think this is?

4.) Do you ever read at home? Why or why not?

5.) When you do read, what do you like to read?

REFERENCES

Alan, G. (2006, May). After school achievement: Strengthening literacy and other skills. In *Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Letter*. Retrieved April 9 2008, from <http://www.sedl.org>.

Allington, R. L. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs.* New York: Addison-Wesley.

Allor, J.H. (2002). The relationships of phonemic awareness and rapid naming to reading development. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 25*(1), 47-58.

Antunez, B. (2002). English language learners and the five essential components of reading instruction. Retrieved May 28, 2008, from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/341>.

Bandura, A. *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control.* New York: W.H. Freeman, 1997.

Best, J.W., & Kahn, J.V. (2006). *Research in Education* (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bissell, J. S., & Malloy, J. (2002). *Evaluation of California's after school learning and safe neighborhoods partnerships program: 1999−2001* (Preliminary Report). University of California-Irvine, Department of Education.

California Department of Education. (2007). Curriculum and Instruction. Retrieved June 29, 2008, from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/>.

California Department of Education Standardized Testing and Reporting. (2006). *Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Results*. Retrieved June 24, 2008, from <http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2006/>.

California State University, Sacramento. (2004). *Schema theory*. Retrieved June 16,

2008, from <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/g/gipej/teaparty.pdf>.

Carver, R.P. (1993). Merging the simple view of reading with rauding theory. *Journal of*

Reading Behavior, 4, 439-454.

Clay, M. M. (1993). Reading recovery: A guidebook for teachers in training. Portsmouth,

NH: Heinemann.

Colker, L.M. (2008). *When children have to read because they want to, not because they*

have to. Retrieved June 29, 2008, from

<http://www.rif.org/educators/articles/WhenChildrenRead.mspx>.

Developmental Studies Center. (2003). *AfterSchool Kidz Lit® Program*. Retrieved July 2,

2008, from <ttp://www.devstu.org/afterschool/askl/videos/index.shtml>.

Eldredge, J.L., Quinn, B., & Butterfield, D.D. (1990). Causal relationships between

phonics, reading comprehension, and vocabulary achievement in the second

grade. *Journal of Educational Research, 83*(4), 201-215.

Fashola, O. S. (1998). *Review of extended day and after school programs and their*

effectiveness. Report No. 24. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the

Education of Students Placed at Risk, John Hopkins University.

Florida Center for Reading Research (2006). *Accelerated Reader*. Retrieved July 2, 2008,

from <http://www.fcrr.org/FC*RRR*eports/PDF/AcceleratedReader.pdf>.

Global Learning (2000-2008). *The Bo Bug Shared Reading Program*. Retrieved July 2,

2008, from <http://www.litart.com/early/bobug/vocabulary>.

Goodman, K. S. (1994). Reading, writing, and written texts: A transactional

sociopsycholinguistic view. In Ruddell, R. B., Ruddell, M. R., and Singer, H.

(Eds). Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading. (4th ed.) (pp. 1093-1130).

Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Gordon, E. W., Bridglall, B. L., & Meroe, A. S. (2005). *Supplementary education: The hidden curriculum of high academic achievement.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Hinchley, J., & Levy, B.A. Developmental and individual differences in reading comprehension. *Cognition and Instruction, 5*(1), 3-48.

Hirsch, B.J. (2005). *A place to call home: After-school programs for urban youth.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Houghton Mifflin Reading Harcourt School Publishers. *Houghton Mifflin Reading: California*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008.

Ivey, G. (2000). Redesigning reading instruction. *Educational Leadership, 58*(1), 42–45.

Kolić-Vehovec, S., & Bajšanski, I. (2006). Metacognitive strategies and reading comprehension in elementary-school students. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 21*(4), 439-451.

Kolić-Vehovec, S., & Bajšanski, I. (2007). Comprehension monitoring and reading comprehension in bilingual students. *Journal of Research in Reading, 30*(2), 198-211.

Laberge, D., & Samuels, S. (1974). Toward a theory of automatic information processing in reading. *Cognitive Psychology, 6,* 293-323.

Leap Frog Schoolhouse ® (2005). *Read-It-All™ summer reading intervention study: Timber point elementary, discovery Bay, CA*. Retrieved July 2, 2008, from <http://www.leapfrogschoolhouse.com/content/research/RIAS_ES_SPED_Discov eryBay.pdf>.

Little, C.A., & Hines, A.H. (2006). Time to read: Advancing reading achievement after

    school. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 18*(1), 8-33.

McQuillan, J. (1998). The literacy crisis: False claims, real solutions. Portsmouth, NH:

    Heinemann.

Mokhtari, K., & Reichard, C.A. (2002). Assessing students' metacognitive awareness of

    reading strategies. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94,* 249-259.

Moon, T. R., Brighton, C. M., & Callahan, C. M. (2003). State standardized testing

    programs: Friend or foe of gifted education? *Roeper Review, 25*, 49–60.

Morris, D., Perney, J., & Shaw, B. (1990). Helping low readers in grades 2 and 3: An

    after-school volunteer tutoring program. *The Elementary School Journal, 91*(2),

    132-150.

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. (2001). After-School Programs

    Fact Sheet. Retrieved April 9, 2008, from <http://www.safeyouth.org>.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2005). *Nationwide Report Card*.

    Retrieved June 13, 2008, from <http://nationsreportcard.gov/science_2005/>.

Nelson, J.R., & Stage, S.A. (2007). Fostering the development of vocabulary knowledge

    and reading comprehension through contextually-based multiple meaning

    vocabulary instruction. *Education and Treatment of Children, 30*(1), 1-22.

Nist, S.L., & Mealey, D.L. (1991). Teacher-directed comprehension strategies. In R.

    Flippo & D. Caverly (Eds.). Teaching reading and study strategies at the college

    level. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Palmer, B.C., & Brooks, M.A. (2004). Reading until the cows come home: Figurative language and reading comprehension. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *47*, 370–379.

Palmer, B.C., Shackelford, V.S., Miller, S.C., & Leclere, J.T. (2007). Bridging two worlds: Reading comprehension, figurative language instruction, and the English-language learner. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 50*(4), 258-267.

Peak, J. & Dewalt, M. (1994). Reading achievement: Effects of computerized reading management and enrichment. *ERS Spectrum: Journal of School Research and Information, 12*, 31-34.

Pressley, M. (2000). *Comprehension instruction: What works.* Retrieved June 16, 2008, from <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/68?theme=print>.

Project Zero. (2008). *Mather After School Program.* Retrieved July 1, 2008, from <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/Research/Mather.htm>.

Pulido, D. (2003). Modeling the role of second language proficiency and topic familiarity in second language incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading. *Language Learning, 53*(2), 233-284.

Reading Recovery (2001-2008). *Reading recovery: Basic facts*. Retrieved June 28, 2008, from <http://www.readingrecovery.org/reading_recovery/facts/index.asp>.

Reis, S.M., Eckert R.D., McCoach, D.B., Jacobs, J.K., & Coyne, M. (2008). Using enrichment reading practices to increase reading fluency, comprehension, and attitudes. *Journal of Educational Research, 101*(5), 299-315.

Rosenblatt, L.M. (1994). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Ruddell, R. B. & Ruddell, M. R. (1994). Language acquisition and literacy processes. In R. B. Ruddell, M. R. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and Processes of Reading* (4th ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Rumelhart, D. E. (1994). Toward an interactive model of reading. In R. B. Ruddell, M. R. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (pp. 864–894). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Rupley, W.H., Wilson, V.L., & Nichols, W.D. (1998). Exploration of the developmental components contributing to elementary school children's reading comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 2*(2), 143-159.

Samuels, S. J. (1994). Toward a theory of automatic information processing in reading, revisited. In R. B. Ruddell, M. R. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (4th ed.) (pp. 816–837). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Samuels, S.J. & Wu, Y. C., (2004). The effects of immediate feedback on reading achievement. Unpublished Manuscript.

Schacter, J. (1999). *Reading programs that work: A review of programs for pre-kindergarten to 4th grade*. Retrieved July 2, 2008, from <http://www.mff.org/pubs/ME279.pdf>.

Sénéchal, M. (2006). Testing the home literacy model: Parent involvement in kindergarten is differentially related to grade 4 reading comprehension, fluency, spelling, and reading for pleasure. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 10*(1), 59-87.

Shaaban, K. (2006). An initial study of the effects of cooperative learning on reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation to read. *Reading*

Psychology, 27(5), 377-403.

Share Literacy. (2007). *After School Programs*. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from

<http://www.shareliteracy.org/afterSchool.htm>.

Snow, C. (2002). *Oral language development and demographic change*. Presentation at

the Institute for Statewide Literacy Initiatives, Harvard Graduate School of

Education, Cambridge, MA.

Struble, D.M. (2003). *A fifth grade case study intervention: Explicit instruction using

reading comprehension strategies*. Unpublished master's thesis, California State

University, Bakersfield.

Tannenbaum, K.R., Torgesen, J.K., & Wagner, R.K. (2006). Relationships between word

knowledge and reading comprehension in third-grade children. *Scientific Studies

of Reading, 10*(4), 381-398.

The Children's Aid Society. (2008). After School Program Facts. Retrieved April 9,

2008, from <http://www.communityschools.org/afterschoolfactsheet.html>.

The Children's Initiative. (2008). After-School Education and Safety Program. Retrieved

April 9, 2008, from <http://www.thechildrensinitiative.org/asesprog1.htm>.

United States Department of Education. (2006). *Reading Tips for Parents*. Retrieved June

23, 2008, from <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/reader/index.html>.

Vaughn, S., & Klingner, J.K. (1999). Teaching reading comprehension through

collaborative strategic reading. *Intervention in School & Clinic, 34*(5), 284-293.

Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J.T., Tonks, S., & Perencevich, K.C. (2004). Children's motivation

for reading: Domain specificity and instructional influences. *Journal of

Educational Research, 97*(6), 299-309.