THE EFFECTS OF READING WORKSHOP ON FIRST GRADE STUDENTS'

INDEPENDENT READING LEVELS

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Christin D. Baker

December, 2011

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Abstract

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act brought literacy achievement to the attention of schools across the nation. NCLB forced schools to reexamine their current teaching practices and ensure that students are making adequate progress in reading (*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. §6312*, 2002). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2007), 70% of fourth grade students in Texas are at *basic* or *below basic* achievement levels in reading, based on their levels of comprehension (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). This state-wide problem raises concern for districts that must show adequate yearly progress. Therefore, the challenge is for districts to come up with new teaching strategies to get students beyond basic level reading skills. This study examined the effects of implementing Reading Workshop, a learner-centered approach to teaching reading.

In a review of the literature, very few rigorous research studies have been conducted on Reading Workshop in the early childhood years. In addition, no studies to date have examined its effects on students' independent reading levels. As a result, this study examined the following research questions: 1) What are the effects of a Reading Workshop pilot program on first grade students' independent reading levels compared to students in a balanced literacy program, and 2) What are the effects of Reading Workshop on various subpopulations of students (i.e. gender, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, and English as a Second Language)?

This study examined first grade students from a large school district in Texas. The sample was taken from 12 Reading Workshop pilot schools (N = 2,013) and 12 non-pilot schools (N = 2,240) of similar socioeconomic status. The pilot schools served as the experimental group and the non-pilot schools served as the control group. A series of statistical tests was conducted to answer the research questions. First, a dependent groups t-test was used to compare the beginning and end of year data within each group to determine if the schools made significant progress. Next, an independent groups t-test was used to determine if any significant difference exists between the groups (pilot vs. non-pilot). Then, the same two t-tests were used for each of the subpopulations (gender, ESL, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, and ethnicity) to determine if any difference exists.

When analyzed separately, results indicated that both the pilot and non-pilot group made significant progress from the beginning to the end of the school year in regards to student independent reading levels. This was also true for each student subpopulation identified. When the pilot and non-pilot groups were compared, there was not a significant difference between the students' independent reading levels at the end of the year. However, among the subpopulations, there was a statistically significant difference in the scores of ESL and economically disadvantaged students from the pilot and non-pilot group. ESL students scored significantly higher in the pilot schools, while economically disadvantaged students scored significantly higher in the non-pilot schools. This study demonstrates that balanced literacy alone and balanced literacy with the addition of Reading Workshop are both effective in increasing students' independent reading levels from the beginning to the end of the school year. In

addition, they are both effective in increasing students' independent reading levels in

each of the subpopulations.

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Chapter I

Introduction

With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001, schools have been held to a higher standard regarding student literacy achievement. According to NCLB, districts are required to show adequate yearly progress that will work toward eliminating the achievement gap by 2014 (*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. §6312*, 2002). With this in mind, districts are continuously seeking to implement best practices for teaching reading that will increase literacy achievement. Literacy has been defined as "the ability and willingness to use reading and writing to construct meaning from printed text" (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001, p. 4). Our job as educators is to find ways to activate student interest in reading and provide them with appropriate scaffolding that will help them become successful readers. We want to teach our children to read with "wide-awake minds," so that they are able to get the most out of reading (Calkins, 2001, p. 15).

Conceptual Framework

Reading Workshop is a learner-centered approach that focuses on teaching students how to construct meaning from text and helping them to become life-long readers. One purpose of Reading Workshop is to model effective comprehension strategies and promote higher order thinking among students (Meyer, 2010). Another purpose is to instill a love for reading so that students continue to read books for a variety of purposes throughout their lives (Calkins, 2001). Nancie Atwell's Reading Workshop framework emerged in 1987 with the publication of her book *In The Middle: Writing, Reading Learning with Adolescents* (Atwell, 1987)*.* It was later reintroduced by

educational leaders such as Lucy Calkins in *The Art of Teaching Reading* (Calkins, 2001). Nevertheless, Reading Workshop incorporates many key elements of effective reading instruction. The first of these elements is *time*. In a Reading Workshop students are given large blocks of time to choose books, practice reading, and reflect on what they are reading (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). Readers cannot improve their skills without time to practice. Thirty minutes a day is devoted to unstructured independent reading time. For beginning readers, part of the time is spent reading independently and the other part is spent reading with a partner of similar reading ability (Calkins, 2001). Time during independent and partner reading is not spent simply reading, but applying reading strategies that the students have learned in mini-lessons (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). The second element is *choice*. Students are given opportunities to choose books from the classroom library for their own personal reading (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). This is preceded by teaching children how to choose books that are "just right" for them. Once children choose their book, students are able to choose which reading strategy they have learned will help best help them comprehend what they are reading (Calkins, 2001). The third element is *response*, in which students are encouraged to respond to what they are reading. Students may respond in a variety of ways including verbally or in writing (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). Such response can occur during independent reading as teachers conference with individual students, partner reading between peers, guided reading between the teacher and students, and whole class share time at the end of Reading Workshop (Calkins, 2001). The fourth element is establishing a *community* in the classroom. Teachers establish a classroom community in which reading is viewed as important. In this community, students are

responsible for their own learning. They learn about themselves as readers and their peers as they interact within the community. Students learn to value and support one another as they develop as a reader (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). Readers are able to provide assistance to one another during partner reading, as modeled by the teacher (Calkins, 2001). The last key element in Reading Workshop is *structure.* Reading Workshop is structured so that teachers first model through mini-lessons, then students are given time to apply what they've learned (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). The structure and routine of the Reading Workshop is consistent; therefore it is predictable for the students each day. The daily schedule consists of: a mini-lesson, independent reading, partner reading, guided reading, conferring, and share time. Students are able to better manage their time due to this consistency (Calkins, 2001).

Each of the following elements provides the framework for Reading Workshop: time, choice, response, community, and structure. It is due to these elements that Reading Workshop is beneficial to a variety of students from at-risk to high achievers. By allowing students to choose books that are on their reading level and giving them specific feedback regarding skills they need to work on, Reading Workshop meets the individual needs of students (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). Reading Workshop teaches children to become lifelong readers. It not only teaches children how to read, but teaches them how to think about their thinking, how to comprehend. The strategies learned in Reading Workshop are intended to carry over throughout the rest of their reading lives (Calkins, 2001).

Need for the Study

A range of studies have been conducted on Reading Workshop from third through seventh grade, which are noted later. However, no rigorous research studies have examined the approach in the early childhood years. Studies have been conducted on as few as six students and as many as 98. However, none have been conducted on the magnitude of this study (Blake, 2006; Kletzien & Hushion, 1992; Mitev, 1994; Schiavone, 2000; Shatzer, 1996). This study examined 1,200 first graders from a large suburban district in Texas. Previous studies have examined student comprehension, student attitudes about reading, student vocabulary and teacher attitudes about the effectiveness of Reading Workshop (Blake, 2006; Kletzien & Hushion, 1992; Mitev, 1994; Schiavone, 2000; Shatzer, 1996). However, there is currently no research on the effects of Reading Workshop on students' independent reading levels. Independent reading levels is one way school districts determine reading achievement in the elementary grades. There is a need for this study to determine if the Reading Workshop approach is effective in increasing students' independent reading levels.

Statement of the Problem

Comprehension is a complex cognitive process that "requires an intentional and thoughtful interaction between the reader and the text" (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, p. 13) It has been described by the National Reading Panel as a skill that is critical to young children's development, not only in academic learning but also in lifelong learning (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 2000a). At the national level, literacy remains a concern for both

children and adults. In 1992, the National Center for Education Statistics conducted an adult literacy survey to determine the English literacy of adults in the United States. The representative sample consisted of adults ages 16-64 from eleven different states. Participants were scored according to their response to basic literacy tasks and categorized into one of five literacy levels. Each of the levels represented increasingly complex literacy skills and strategies. According to the survey, 21-23% of the total population scored a Level 1 and 25-28% of the population scored a Level 2, the lowest levels of proficiency. This constitutes approximately 94 million adults nationwide that are at-risk based on their literacy performance. The majority of the adults who performed at Level 1 were immigrants, 25%, or considered as living in poverty, 41-44% (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 2002). In a more recent report by the National Center for Education Statistics, comprehension was documented as the second most difficult skill for America's least literate adults (Baer, Kutner, Sabatini, & White, 2009).

The same trends of reading difficulties at the national level are also noted among children according to *The Nation's Report Card* for reading in 2009 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). While the overall performance of fourth graders reading skills has increased over the years, the average reading score from 2007 to 2009 did not significantly change. This suggests that student performance in reading at the national level has reached a plateau. As a nation, we are not making significant yearly progress. The 2009 report also noted that the gaps in fourth grade students' reading performance among ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status are not decreasing. From 2007 to 2009, there were no significant changes in the gap between White and Black and White and Hispanic students. In 2009, White and Asian/Pacific Islander

students had higher average reading scores in than Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native Students. In regards to gender, females scored higher on average than males in 2009. This gap has been present since 1992 and has not significantly changed since. Another achievement gap noted was among students from different socioeconomic status. Fourth grade students who were eligible for free or reduced-lunch scored lower on average than students who were not from these households. While the scores of students from low-income families have increased significantly since 2005, there was not a significant difference from 2007 to 2009 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Based on this report, the current instructional practices used for teaching reading are not meeting the needs of all subpopulations of students.

Data in *The Nation's Report Card* for reading also reported the status of each state (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). At the local level, Texas had no significant change in overall reading performance of fourth grade students from 2007 to 2009. Only two states scores increased significantly from 2007, Kentucky and Rhode Island. This suggests a need for improvement in reading instruction in the early elementary years across the United States. According to the 2009 report, 72% of fourth grade students in Texas were at *basic* or *below basic* achievement levels in reading, based on their levels of comprehension. Only 28% of students in Texas were at the *proficient* level or above. At the *basic* level students have an understanding of the overall meaning, make obvious connections, and simple inferences. At the *proficient* level, students have a more clear understanding and are able to extend ideas in the text by drawing conclusions. At the *advanced* level, students are able to critically interpret the text and are aware of literary device. Based on the report, 36 states had a higher

percentage of students at the *proficient* level and above than Texas. Among those states, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Vermont had the highest percentages. When compared to the national percentage, Texas fell slightly behind. At the national level, 33% of students in 2009 were at or above the *proficient* level in reading, while Texas had only 28% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). This suggests a local need for Texas to improve its reading performance.

In order to have more students at the *proficient* and *advanced* levels of comprehension, we need to find more effective reading strategies to meet the needs of our students. Literature suggests a need for improved literacy instruction in the early elementary years that can help close the achievement gaps between gender, socioeconomic status, and English language learners (Kirsch et al., 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). There is also a need for improved instruction that focuses on comprehension (Baer et al., 2009; Kirsch et al., 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Why should we wait to address literacy needs until students are termed at-risk? According to reading expert Lucy Calkins, the ability to question, synthesize, and interpret text should be taught when students first begin formalized reading instruction in kindergarten and first grade. Children need to be taught early on that reading is "thinking guided by print" (Calkins, 2001, p. 13). If we improve students' ability to comprehend in the early grades, they will have a stronger foundation to build upon and will be more successful as they reach the upper grades (Calkins, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

Twelve schools from a large district in Texas were chosen by curriculum coordinators to serve as pilot schools for the program and implement the Reading Workshop approach. Therefore, the pilot group was established prior to this study. The Reading Workshop approach was added to the district's traditional balanced literacy approach used in previous years. While students from kindergarten and first grade in each of the schools participated in the pilot program, for the purpose of this study only first grade were examined. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of Reading Workshop on students' independent reading levels from twelve pilot schools compared to students from twelve non-pilot schools. It sought to determine if differences exist in reading achievement among students taught using two different models of instruction, one that included balanced literacy with the addition of Reading Workshop and one that included only balanced literacy.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study addressed the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the effects of a Reading Workshop pilot program on first grade students' independent reading levels compared to students in a balanced literacy program?

Research Question 2: What are the effects of Reading Workshop on various subpopulations of students (gender, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, English as a Second Language, and ethnicity)?

If children are able to better understand what they are reading, they should be able to read at higher levels. Reading Workshop focuses on teaching children the

comprehension strategies and skills they need to be successful readers. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in student independent reading levels at the end of the year between the pilot and non-pilot schools. Reading Workshop is an approach to teaching reading that allows for individualized instruction. It is believed to be beneficial to a range of students from at-risk to high achieving. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in independent reading levels at the end of the year between the subpopulations from the pilot and non-pilot schools.

Definition of Terms

The following are the operational definitions used in this study:

Reading Workshop: A non-traditional approach to teaching reading that occurs every day for approximately an hour. Reading Workshop components include: mini-lessons, independent reading, partner reading, guided reading, and conferring with both peers and the teacher. These components are scheduled at the same time each day so that the structure is predictable for the students. Reading Workshop focuses specifically on reading for meaning and equipping students with the tools necessary to do so (Calkins, 2001).

Balanced Literacy: Unlike Reading Workshop, balanced literacy is not one specific approach with specific components. Balanced literacy is a philosophical perspective on teaching reading that is based on three main beliefs. The first is that children's local knowledge about reading, global knowledge about reading, and love of reading are equally important. Children's local knowledge consists of phonological awareness, sight word identification, word identification strategies, and word meanings. Global

knowledge consists of learning to interpret and respond literature. Children's love of reading consists of their attitudes towards reading and their motivation to read. The second belief is that there are multiple sources of knowledge in which children can learn from including teachers, parents and their peers. A balanced literacy approach views each of these sources as equally important and utilizes each of them in teaching children to read. The third belief is that children learn to read through a variety of instructional strategies. Therefore, a balanced literacy classroom incorporates a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners. Each of these beliefs drive a balanced literacy program and are the focus of student learning (Fitzgerald, 1999).

Mini-Lesson: A mini-lesson is a five to fifteen minute lesson that is taught to the whole class about a topic that the teacher wants the students to apply during independent reading. These mini-lessons are based on teacher observations of student's reading and address the needs of students in the classroom. Each mini-lesson has five components: connection, teaching point, active involvement, link, and follow-up (Calkins, 2001). While there is no set script for a mini-lesson, the content of mini-lessons can be divided into three categories: procedural, literary, and strategy/skill. Procedural mini-lessons relate to the actual routines and procedures that occur during a Reading Workshop. An example of a procedural mini-lesson is selecting a place to sit during independent reading. Literary mini-lessons focus on various literary aspects of books. An example of a literary mini-lesson is examining characteristics of different genres. Strategy/skill mini-lessons teach children skills such as concepts about print, decoding, and comprehension strategies. An example of a strategy/skill mini-lesson is

teaching a strategy for figuring out unknown words such as picture clues (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001).

Independent Reading: Independent reading consists of thirty minutes of silent reading that is conducted solitary (Calkins, 2001). Often times, students are given post-it notes to record their thinking as they are reading a book or apply various strategies they've learned.

Partner Reading: Partner reading is combined with independent reading for beginning readers who may not be able to sustain thirty minutes of reading on their own. In this case, students will spend fifteen minutes reading independently then fifteen minutes reading with a partner. Partnerships are based on students with similar reading abilities and/or students who need to work on some of the same skills (Calkins, 2001).

Conferring: Conferring is a conference that occurs during independent reading between the teacher and individual students or partners. The role of the teacher is to research, decide, and then teach. The conference begins with the teacher researching by listening to the child read and making anecdotal notes. After the child has finished reading, the teacher interviews the child regarding the work they have been doing as a reader. This gives the child the opportunity to reflect on their own progress. From the anecdotal notes, the teacher is then able to decide what to teach the student. The teaching may consist of giving advice, informing the child about something new, or demonstrating something that you would like the child to try. The conference ends with the teacher encouraging the child to apply what they have just been taught (Calkins, 2001).

<u>Guided Reading:</u> In a Reading Workshop setting, guided reading is conducted as other students are reading independently or with a partner. Guided reading consists of reading with a small group of students who have similar reading abilities. During this time, the teacher provides the students with a text that is challenging enough for them to read with support. After introducing the book, the teacher listens and coaches students as they read it independently. Then, the teacher chooses a teaching point to discuss with the entire group (Calkins, 2001).

<u>Share Time:</u> The term share time is synonymous with the term follow-up, which is conducted at the very end of Writing Workshop. It is a follow-up on the mini-lesson taught that day. During this time, students have the opportunity to share with the class what they learned and/or strategies they used during reading.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to research on the effects of Reading Workshop and whether or not it is an effective approach for increasing literacy achievement. It also provides evidence whether the approach is beneficial to various subpopulations of students including gender, at-risk, low socioeconomic status, ESL, and ethnicity. Since there is not any other research on the effects of Reading Workshop on students' independent reading levels at this time, this study provides newly documented information. Results from the study also provide insight about whether the method of instruction would be beneficial for all first grade classrooms within the district studied. Implications of this study can be generalized for other districts to follow. The literature review in Chapter 2 justifies the need for the study and reveals a gap in the literature.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

While Reading Workshop teaches children about concepts of print, literary aspects of books, and decoding strategies; one of the main goals is reading for meaning.   As previously mentioned, Reading Workshop incorporates many elements of effective reading instruction including: time to practice reading, student choice of reading material, opportunities for response about literature, a supportive community, and a predictable structure (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). These elements are incorporated in a daily schedule that consists of a mini-lesson, independent reading, partner reading, guided reading, conferring, and share time. Many of these elements are repeatedly found in literature. In this review of literature the following topics are investigated: theoretical background, research-based strategies that promote literacy achievement, student intrinsic motivation and literacy achievement, factors that influence student intrinsic motivation, comprehension in the early childhood years, and research on Reading Workshop. Each of these topics will be discussed and their relationship to the Reading Workshop approach will be examined.

Theoretical Background

Theory is the underlying beliefs that support educational practices and shape the curriculum. Curriculum expert Ralph W. Tyler (1950) states that:

Without a comprehensive theory for guidance, the organization of the curriculum

is likely to be partial, spasmodic, and relatively ineffective. Hence, an important

task for students of the curriculum is to develop a comprehensive theory

regarding the organization of learning experiences. (p. 47)

He suggests that in order for curriculum to be effective, it must be grounded in learning

theory. Knowledge of how students learn and develop should be the foundation of all

learning experiences (Tyler, 1950). With school districts as the chief source for local

curriculum decisions, it is their responsibility to organize such a curriculum. Reading

Workshop is an example of an approach to teaching reading that is grounded in

comprehensive theory. In the next few paragraphs, the theories that serve as the

framework for Reading Workshop will be discussed.

One of the underlying theories of Reading Workshop is the constructivist theory.

The constructivist theory is based on Jean Piaget's belief that children actively construct

their own knowledge through their interactions with the environment. He also believed

that children learn best by conducting the work themselves, therefore, need multiple

opportunities to do so (Mooney, 2000). In relation to reading, the constructivist theory

suggests that when students actively construct their own knowledge about what they

are reading, their comprehension will improve (Gill, 2008). "Reading comprehension is

the act of understanding and interpreting the information within a text" (Shanahan &

North Central Regional Educational Lab, 2005, p. 28). It involves active thinking in

order to construct meaning (Shanahan & North Central Regional Educational Lab,

2005). In Reading Workshop, students are taught how to actively construct their own

knowledge through modeled mini-lessons. Then, students are given the opportunity to

practice these skills on their own and make sense of them. In addition, the Reading

Workshop environment is set up so that students are able to successfully read and

construct knowledge from books at their independent reading level. These practices support the constructivist theory and how children create knowledge.

Another theory applied in Reading Workshop is Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory. The transactional theory refers to a reciprocal relationship between the reader and the text, in which a transaction occurs. The text is merely words until it is brought to the reader's mind and a transaction occurs, evoking images, concepts, and emotions. As a result, readers are encouraged to verbalize, examine, and reflect on their responses to text. These responses help children create understanding of the text. The theory also suggests that individual readers bring different experiences with them, therefore, will arrive at different meanings. As a result, differences should be appreciated and respected. Last, the theory suggests that readers read for different reasons. They may assume an efferent stance, in which they are reading to seek information. They may also assume an aesthetic stance, in which they read simply for the emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual experience (Probst, 1988). Reading Workshop applies this theory by encouraging student response through daily partner reading. Students are encouraged to respond to text as they read with a partner. This interaction helps children create meaning from the text. The learning environment encourages individuality through respect of student responses during whole group and small group interaction. The types of mini-lessons also support reading for a variety of reasons. Each of these practices in Reading Workshop is influenced by the transactional theory.

Schema theory is another foundational theory to Reading Workshop. While the term schema was first introduced by Frederic Barlett in 1932 (as cited in McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005), the application of the term was greatly influenced by

cognitive scientists during the 1970's (Vurdien, 1994). Cognitive scientists Anderson and Pearson described a reader's schema as "a structure that facilitates planful retrieval of text information from memory and permits reconstruction of elements that were not learned or have been forgotten" (McVee et al., 2005, p. 537). In other words, reader's prior knowledge influences how they make sense of new information. Therefore, it is essential that readers have enough prior knowledge to comprehend text and they know how to access this knowledge (Gill, 2008). According to the schema theory, a reader's schema is constantly changing as information is refined or new information is added (Vurdien, 1994). The schema theory relates to Reading Workshop in that it provides an understanding of the reading process and how readers comprehend.

One important aspect of Reading Workshop is the scaffolding that occurs when teachers confer with individual students as they are reading independently. According to Calkins (2001), conferring with readers involves three steps: researching the child's abilities, deciding what to teach based on the child's abilities, and teaching in a way that the child can apply what they learn. These steps of conferring with readers are based on Lev Vygotsky's theory of the "zone of proximal development". According to Vygotsky's theory, the "zone of proximal development" is the distance between what a child can complete independently and that which they can complete with the assistance of a peer or adult. Vygotsky referred to this assistance as scaffolding. He believed that adults can help a child accomplish a new skill by providing supporting information. In addition, a child's peer who has already mastered the skill can assist him or her in attaining that skill (Mooney, 2000). In reading instruction, scaffolding can be either general such as teacher modeling, or specific such as specific skill instruction (Rupley,

Blair, & Nichols, 2009). This theory is applied in Reading Workshop as teachers confer with students during independent reading and as peers confer with each other during partner reading (Calkins, 2001). Vygotsky also believed that teachers need to carefully observe children and plan instruction based on their abilities (Mooney, 2000). Reading Workshop implements this aspect of Vygotsky's theory during teacher and student reading conferences. Teachers must first observe a student reading before they can decide how to assist them (Calkins, 2001). With this foundational theory to support Reading Workshop, it is now necessary to discuss research on instructional strategies that promote literacy achievement.

Research-Based Strategies that Promote Literacy Achievement

      Direct/explicit comprehension instruction.

      Direct/explicit instruction involves direct teaching of new information through teacher-student interactions and teacher guidance (Rupley et al., 2009). According to the National Reading Panel's (2000b) report, direct/explicit instruction is effective in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Each of these components is essential for children who are learning to read. Therefore, there is a need for direct/explicit reading instruction in order for children to become proficient readers. When applied to the teaching of comprehension, direct/explicit instruction involves students learning specific cognitive strategies that will help them overcome barriers to comprehending text. While it is possible for readers to acquire some comprehension strategies informally, research has shown that explicit instruction increases performance significantly (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 2000a). In Reading Workshop, such instruction occurs during mini-

lessons demonstrated by the teacher. In the next few paragraphs, individual studies with direct/explicit comprehension instruction will be examined more in depth.

   In 2000, the National Reading Panel published a report that examined 203 studies of reading comprehension instruction in grades two through eleven over the past two decades (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 2000b). One of the purposes of the report was to determine if comprehension could be taught through direct instruction. Findings support the explicit teaching of the following comprehension strategies: comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, use of graphic and semantic organizers, question answering, question generation, story structure, and summarization to increase reading achievement. While these instructional strategies were shown to improve comprehension independently, research supports a combination of strategies to be most effective. One successful approach that the National Reading Panel determined successful in combining multiple comprehension strategies was reciprocal teaching (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 2000b). Reciprocal teaching involves the gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the student. First, the teacher models a specific comprehension strategy. Then, the student is asked to try the strategy with teacher guidance. As the teacher observes the student successfully using the strategy over a period of time, the amount of teacher guidance is reduced (Shanahan & North Central Regional Educational Lab, 2005). This teaching approach is one that is incorporated in Reading Workshop as students apply what is learned from mini-lessons and teachers scaffold their application of the knowledge.

Since the National Reading Panel's report in 2000, numerous research studies have been conducted on reciprocal teaching. Scharlach (2008) studied a form of reciprocal teaching called START (Students and Teachers Actively Reading Text). START is a recent instructional framework that was designed to improve student reading comprehension, achievement, and self-regulated use of strategies. The framework involves the teacher modeling of eight comprehension strategies during read-aloud then scaffolding the students to the strategies through active participation in the lesson. The eight comprehension strategies modeled in START are as follows: predicting/inferring, visualizing, making connections, questioning, determining main idea, summarizing, checking predictions, and making judgments. Each of these strategies is introduced gradually over a period of 40 sessions during a five-month period. The lesson is followed by having the students practice the strategies during independent reading. To ensure that the students are actively engaged in the text during independent reading, the students are required to complete Actively Reading Text (ART) comprehension and self-monitoring recording sheets. In this study, five third grade classrooms that consisted of 81 students and five teachers were randomly assigned to one of three groups: control classroom, strategy-only classroom, or START classroom. In the control classroom, students were provided their regular read-aloud instruction and independent reading without any changes. In the strategy-only classroom, students were taught the eight comprehension strategies during read-aloud without any self-monitoring during independent reading. In the START classroom, the entire START framework was implemented. Student comprehension was measured using a pre and post-test designed based on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading

Comprehension Test for third grade. Results indicated that students who participated in START classrooms made statistically higher gains in reading comprehension than the strategy-only or control groups. This was true for below-grade level, on-level, and above grade level students. This suggests that the START framework is beneficial to all students. The control group made the least amount of gains, which supports the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. In addition, the START group outperformed the strategy-only group, which supports the use of student self-monitoring and recording of strategy use during independent reading (Scharlach, 2008).

Alfassi, Weiss, and Lifshitz (2009) examined the effects of reciprocal teaching on students ages fifteen to twenty-one with special needs. The purpose of the study was to determine how students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities would respond to strategy instruction intended to build comprehension skills. Students were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental group (n=35). To ensure that the two groups were of comparable intelligence, the students were given the Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) test, a nonverbal test of reasoning ability. Both control and experimental groups had comparable intelligence levels. In the control group, students were provided regular instruction in skill acquisition which was a part of a remedial reading program. In the experimental group, students were provided reciprocal-teaching which consisted of comprehension strategy instruction. Students were taught the following strategies using teaching modeling: summarizing, questioning, predicting, and clarifying. This instruction was followed by teacher scaffolding and the gradual release from teacher-directed to student-directed learning. The reading intervention for both groups consisted of two 45 minutes sessions each week over a period of twelve

weeks. Students were provided instruction in small groups of four students. To compare the two groups of students, a pre and post-test design was used. Students' abilities to comprehend were measured using the standardized Ortar Reading Test and two assessments using expository reading passages. Test results for the experimental group revealed that student performance increased significantly on all comprehension assessments. However, the control group did not make significant progress on any of the assessments (Alfassi et al., 2009). These results support the use of reciprocal teaching for increasing student comprehension skills, which are consistent with the findings of Scharlach (2008) and the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (2000b). It also suggests that reciprocal teaching can be used successfully with special needs students (Alfassi et al., 2009).

These research studies represent only a few of the studies that have been conducted over the past decade regarding reciprocal teaching. There are many more studies that support this strategy for comprehension instruction. Sarasti (2007) found that reciprocal teaching was an effective strategy in increasing the comprehension skills of third grade students. He also reported that teachers felt that it was an efficient strategy for comprehension instruction (Sarasti, 2007). Similarly, Halberstam (2008) found that when compared to a traditional teaching treatment method, third grade students in a reciprocal teaching group made significantly higher scores in reading comprehension. While both groups made progress, the reciprocal teaching method of instruction produced more significant results (Halberstam, 2008). Diehl (2005) used a mixed-methods approach to study the effects of reciprocal teaching on at-risk fourth-grade students. Data indicated that over the course of five weeks, each student

advanced at least one grade level in their ability to comprehend text. Students

demonstrated growth in the use of strategies and ability to comprehend text. DiLorenzo

(2010) expanded on this research by studying its effects with more subgroups of

students and across grade levels. DiLorenzo (2010) studied fourth and fifth grade

students identified as: at-risk, students with learning disabilities, and students in

general education.   Results indicated that each of the subgroups, in addition to the

group as a whole, made statistically significant improvements in science

comprehension. Most impressive, the students with learning disabilities made the

greatest improvements, with the average improvement of 35% from pre to post-test

(DiLorenzo, 2010).

Based on prior research, it is clear that direct/explicit comprehension instruction

is a necessary component for reading instruction. A significant body of research has

supported this notion. Research has shown that direct/explicit comprehension

instruction: increases students' comprehension on both formal and informal methods of

assessment (Alfassi et al., 2009; Diehl, 2005; DiLorenzo, 2010; Halberstam, 2008;

Sarasti, 2007; Scharlach, 2008), increases students' use of comprehension strategies

during reading (Diehl, 2005), and is beneficial with various subgroups of students

including below-level, on-level, above-level, and students with special needs (Alfassi et

al., 2009; Diehl, 2005; DiLorenzo, 2010; Halberstam, 2008; Sarasti, 2007; Scharlach,

2008). Therefore, literacy programs that incorporate direct/explicit comprehension

instruction should benefit all students. While it is important for teachers to explicitly

teach comprehension, it is also important that they model the thought process involved.

Students need to be taught the thought process associated with comprehension. Research on think-alouds will be discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

Think-Alouds.

Teacher modeling of reading skills and behaviors, particularly those related to comprehension, is an important part of Reading Workshop (Calkins, 2001). One way teachers model comprehension skills is through a think-aloud. During a modeled think-aloud, the teacher verbalizes what he or she is thinking before, during and after reading the text. As the teacher reads the text, he or she models how to select an appropriate comprehension strategy at various points in the text. In highly effective think-alouds, teachers not only model a strategy, but explain how using it will help them overcome reading difficulty or better understand the text. The purpose of think-alouds is to build students' metacognitive awareness and increase their use of teacher-modeled thought processes (Block & Israel, 2004).

Literature suggests that we teach students how "good readers" comprehend. This idea was first introduced in the early 1980's as a way to enhance comprehension instruction. Researchers focused on the thought process associated with comprehending text. From this early research, the idea of the teacher explaining the reading process to students, teacher modeling of comprehension strategies, and students as "thinking detectives" emerged (Kucan & Beck, 1997). According to Davey (1983), such modeling teaches students how to read for meaning. In 1983, Davey identified five comprehension techniques that teachers should model for struggling readers: how to develop hypotheses and make predictions, how readers make mental images while reading, how to link prior knowledge to information in the text, how to

monitor ongoing comprehension by verbalizing a confusing part, and demonstrating fix-up strategies to correct miscomprehension.

Bereiter and Bird (1985) sought to clarify Davey (1983) by determining greater specification for the strategies "good readers" use and when they use them. Their study was two-fold. First, they examined the strategies adult readers used while reading various passages. Participants were asked to use a think-aloud approach to express their thoughts as they read each passage and express how they dealt with comprehension difficulties. As a result, researchers identified four main strategies that readers used when experiencing comprehension difficulty. The first strategy was restatement of a phrase in the reader's own terms. The second strategy was backtracking, which consisted of looking back at the text, then resuming reading. The third strategy was demanding relationships, or looking for answers in the text to questions they had. The fourth strategy was problem formulation, the realization that they were not understanding part of the text and utilizing a variety of reading strategies to help them understand. Each of these strategies was identified by the researchers as teachable to young readers. Predicting, using imagery, and activating prior knowledge, were other strategies used by "good readers", however, researchers were not sure how such strategies could be taught. Bereiter and Bird (1985) used the identification of teachable strategies to further their research.

The latter part of Bereiter and Bird's (1985) research examined the effects of teacher-modeled think-alouds on students' comprehension.   Their study involved 80 students in seventh and eighth grade. Students were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups or the control group. The three treatment groups consisted of

the following: modeling-plus-explanation, modeling only, and exercise. In the

modeling-plus-explanation group, the teacher identified the four main comprehension

strategies previously identified by Bereiter and Bird (1985), modeled using them, and

explained the thought process during a think-aloud. In the modeling only group, the

teacher modeled using the four comprehension strategies for students without

explaining or explicitly identifying them. In the exercise group, students practiced

comprehension skills during oral and written exercises without having the teacher model

or explicitly describe them. In the control group, students remained in their regular

classes. The treatment occurred over a period of 3 weeks and consisted of nine 40

minute sessions. All students received the same amount of reading instruction.

Students' silent-reading comprehension was assessed using the Nelson-Denny

Reading Test and their strategy use and oral comprehension was assessed using

passages from the Advanced Batteries of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. Based

on their results, Bereiter and Bird (1985) found that the modeling-plus-explanation

groups pre and post-test scores were significantly higher than the other three groups on

both silent and oral comprehension. Students in this group made an average gain of

2.7 grade levels. There was not a significant difference between any of the other

methods of instruction. This suggests that in order for students to reach their fullest

potential, they need to be taught specific comprehension strategies, have the teacher

model them, and explain the thought process involved. Just modeling the strategies is

not enough, teachers must think-aloud as they use the strategies. When comparing the

modeling-plus-explanation group with the modeling only and control group, both

experimental groups increased in the number of think-aloud statements made, while the

control group decreased. This research suggests that teacher modeling of comprehension strategies is an important instructional strategy for teaching students to think about the text while they are reading. It also suggests that metacognitive strategies can be taught to students (Bereiter & Bird, 1985).

The mental processing associated with reading comprehension was also the focus of Duffy, Roehler, Sivan, Rackliffe, Book, Meloth, Vavrus, Wesselman, Putnam, and Bassiri (1987). Duffy et. al. (1987) were interested in the effects of teaching students the mental processes and reasoning of expert readers. They studied its effects on students' awareness, their conscious use of reading strategies, and reading achievement. The study consisted of third grade students from nine different schools, 71 in the treatment group and 77 in the control group. Students in the treatment group were taught reasoning skills through teacher modeling of the thought process. The focus of instruction was to teach students how to think through a repetoir of strategies to help them comprehend text. In contrast, students in the control group were provided traditional basal textbook skill instruction. Student awareness of the need to be strategic when reading was measured using scored interviews at the end of the school year. Results showed a significant difference in scores between the treatment and control group. Students in the control group were more aware of the process of reading. A variety of assessments were used to measure student achievement including: the Supplemental Achievement Measure (SAM), Graded Oral Reading Paragraph (GORP), Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), and Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). When comparing the two group's performance, there was no significant difference on isolated reading skills, however, there was a significant

difference in the treatment group's ability to select statements that explained why they chose an answer. In addition, the treatment group scored significantly higher than the treatment group on word meaning and word recognition. More profound, the difference in overall reading achievement among the treatment group was still significantly higher the next academic school year. Therefore, the students were able to maintain their skills. The research of Duffy et. al. (1987) is significant in that it supports the idea that students can be taught reasoning skills when it comes to comprehension. In addition, teaching students how to reason while reading can increase literacy achievement (Duffy et al., 1987).

Silven and Vauras (1992) studied the effects of teacher modeled think-alouds on six grade students' development of reading skills. An equal number of poor and average learners were selected to participate based on two screening tests related to comprehension and metacognition. Students were assigned to one of four conditions: model and guide, more think-alouds, less think-alouds, or classroom control. All of the subgroups, except for classroom control, were taught text-processing strategies. Daily instruction consisted of: explaining the strategy, observing the teacher model the strategy, and having the students practice it. This occurred over a period of six weeks. For research purposes, slight differences in the teacher's quality of think-alouds varied among the three subgroups. In the "model and guide" subgroup, the teacher described the thought process that leads to comprehension and miscomprehension of text. In addition, students were given teacher guidance during their own think-aloud sessions. In the "more think-alouds" subgroup, students were given the same treatment without the explicit teacher guidance. In the "less think-alouds" subgroup, students were only

taught the process that leads to comprehension. Effects were measured using a pre and post-test design. Data revealed that the students in the subgroups that were taught text-processing strategies improved significantly in five out of seven of the skills practiced. This suggests that explicitly teaching students comprehension skills and giving them time to practice does improve their ability to effectively use comprehension strategies. When compared to the control group, only the "model and guide" subgroup outperformed them. This suggests that explicit teaching of comprehension strategies is not enough. It must be coupled with student practice of the strategy with teacher guidance (Silven & Vauras, 1992).

Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Ted (1996) also studied reading as a process of thinking. Their study focused on Students Achieving Independent Learning (SAIL), a program that implements a transactional strategies instruction approach. SAIL involves the teacher verbally explaining their thinking while modeling appropriate use of comprehension strategies. During instruction, the strategies are used to encourage students to converse about the text and the usefulness of the strategies is emphasized. This is followed by coaching and scaffolded practice of student reading both independently and in small groups. Brown et. al. (1996) studied the effects of SAIL on students' reading achievement. Their sample consisted of 60 low-performing students, half which received SAIL instruction and half which received traditional reading instruction. Students were placed into small groups of six according to their scores on the Stanford Achievement Test. At the beginning of the study, both the experimental and control group had comparable scores. Students were interviewed both in the fall and spring to determine their awareness of comprehension strategies. While no

significant difference existed in the fall between the two groups, the SAIL group was able to verbalize many more comprehension strategies in the spring than the group which had traditional instruction. The SAIL group also had a better concept of reading for meaning, which involved use of comprehension strategies, problem-solving, and thinking about the text. In another assessment, students were ask to conduct a think-aloud as they read a story. During the think-aloud, the number of times students referred to specific comprehension strategies were coded. Results indicated that the SAIL group used significantly more strategies. After the story, the students were assessed according to their ability to retell. Based on a comparison of the two groups, students in the SAIL group had significantly higher scores, which meant that they were more interpretive about the story read. In a final assessment, the Stanford Achievement Test was used once again. Data from this assessment revealed that students in the SAIL group scored significantly higher on the comprehension subtest and the word skills subtest. Additionally, the group which received SAIL instruction had much lower variability among the scores than the comparison group. This means that there were not a wide range of scores, which suggests the majority of the students did really well. Similar to the previous studies, the research of Brown et. al. (1996) and colleagues provides further evidence that teaching students the mental processes involved with reading is critical to increasing student comprehension.

Similar to Brown et. al. (1996), Ghaith and Obeid (2004) examined how training students to think aloud affects their literal and higher-order reading comprehension. However, Ghaith and Obeid (2004) expanded the research by studying learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Participants consisted of 32 eighth grade students

from a school in the Middle East, who were learning English as a foreign language.

Students were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental group. In the

experimental group, students were taught the process of thinking aloud while reading.

Students learned the following think-aloud strategies: predicting, picturing, comparing,

identifying problems, and fix-up measures. Students were also given time to practice

these strategies in their own think-alouds. Students in the control group were taught to

read using textbook procedures focused on teacher explanation, question/answer, and

vocabulary instruction. After four weeks of instruction, the two groups were compared

using a post-test which was designed for the purpose of the study. The test, which

involved the students reading a passage and answering 30 questions, measured

students' literal, interpretive, critical, and creative comprehension skills. Based on the

test results, there was a significant correlation between mastery level of think-alouds

and overall reading comprehension. This suggests that students who are able to use

metacognitive skills during reading have higher comprehension. Further analysis of the

data indicates a significant difference in literal and critical comprehension for students in

the experimental group. This supports previous data that training students to use think-

alouds does increase reading comprehension (Ghaith & Obeid, 2004).

Research on think-alouds has been very promising for increasing student

achievement. Benefits of think-alouds include increasing student use of comprehension

strategies, their ability to reason with text and think critically, word meaning, word

recognition, literal and critical comprehension skills, and silent and oral comprehension

(Bereiter & Bird, 1985; R. Brown et al., 1996; Duffy et al., 1987; Ghaith & Obeid, 2004;

Silven & Vauras, 1992). Such results have even lasted longitudinally, from one school

year to the next (Duffy et al., 1987). Thinking aloud helps readers understand the thought process involved with reading. Therefore, it is important that teachers adopt this strategy as a part of reading instruction. In order for students grow as readers, they need to be given time to practice their skills. The next section will address the importance of time in increasing student achievement in reading.

Time to practice and scaffolding.

Direct/explicit instruction is a reading strategy that should not be implemented alone. Explicit teacher instruction is effective when it is followed by guided practice (Rupley et al., 2009). One of the key elements of Reading Workshop is time for students to practice reading with appropriate teacher scaffolding (Taylor & Nesheim, 2001). Several opportunities exist in a Reading Workshop schedule for students to practice reading. These opportunities include independent reading, partner reading, and guided reading (Calkins, 2001). This practice is an importance piece of the Reading Workshop and has continued to be emphasized in literature. However, there has been some debate regarding the effectiveness of the traditionally implemented silent sustained reading. Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) involves teacher modeling of silent reading, while students are engaged in their own silent reading. The goal of SSR is to foster students' motivation to read. During SSR, students are free to choose their own reading materials and the level of difficulty of reading materials. However, there is no teacher monitoring, feedback, or student accountability for what they read (Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, & Smith, 2008).

Scaffolded Silent Reading (ScSR) is a response to the criticism of traditional silent sustained reading. It transformed the old method into one that is based on recent

findings of effective reading practices. New characteristics of ScSR include: teaching students book selection strategies, a classroom library that is leveled by difficulty and includes a variety of genres, book choice limited to students' independent reading levels, students encouraged to read a variety of genres, focus on increasing students' reading fluency and comprehension, teacher monitoring of student reading through five-minute individual reading conferences, and student accountability through teacher questioning, student goal setting, and response projects (Reutzel et al., 2008). Reutzel et. al. (2008) compared this new form of silent reading with GROR, an evidence-based practice recommended by the National Reading Panel to promote reading fluency. The GROR method consisted of students reading grade-level texts with teacher and peer feedback. A total of 72 third grade students from four classrooms were randomly selected to participate in one of the treatment conditions. Students were scored on accuracy, rate, and expression using the third-grade Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) oral reading fluency test. In addition, their comprehension was evaluated based on their oral retelling of four passages using an idea unit scoring protocol modeled after the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). While groups from both the ScSR and GROR method did make gains in all of the assessment areas, there was not a significant difference between the two groups. This data suggests that both methods of silent sustained reading are equally beneficial to increasing literacy achievement, including comprehension. Therefore, feedback from the teacher and peers is an important part of independent reading and should be included in the daily routine. Results of this study support Reading Workshop's method of implementing independent reading with scaffolded instruction (Reutzel et al., 2008).

In 2006, the National Literacy Trust conducted a synthesis of research regarding reading for pleasure and its effects on literacy achievement, especially for young children. According to the report reading for pleasure is defined as reading on one's own free will, anticipating satisfaction from text, a form of play, and a way to connect with the text. This synthesis of research revealed a correlation between reading for pleasure and many literacy-related benefits. These benefits include: a direct link between learning to read and learning to write, an increase in text comprehension and grammar, a broadened vocabulary, more positive attitudes towards reading, increased self-confidence in reading, and continued enjoyment of reading in later years. Such benefits of reading for pleasure are true for children, adults, and second language learners. Studies also noted the relationship between the amounts of time spent reading and reading achievement. Typically, people who read more were identified as better readers (Clark & Rumbold, 2006).

Research on setting aside time for children to read has shown to increase literacy achievement, especially when scaffolded instruction is provided (Clark & Rumbold, 2006; Reutzel et al., 2008). Results promote the practices that are implemented during Reading Workshop's independent, partner, and guided reading. Time to practice is followed by opportunities for response in a Reading Workshop classroom (Calkins, 2001). In the next section, research on this component of Reading Workshop will be discussed.

Opportunities for response.

Literature suggests that students need multiple opportunities for response to text. However, for discussion to occur the classroom must promote a democratic and

respectful environment (McIntyre, 2007). During Reading Workshop, students are encouraged to respond to what they are reading during independent reading, partner reading, guided reading, and whole class share time (Calkins, 2001). In order for meaningful conversation to occur, students need scaffolding during literature discussions. This can be accomplished by explicit teaching on how to participate, cueing student response, encouraging a student to continue to talk, and responding authentically to a student's contribution. Guided literature discussions should begin with heavy scaffolding from the teacher that is followed by a gradual release of responsibility to the students. Once the students are familiar with the concept of literature discussion, the conversations will become more authentic (McIntyre, 2007).

Based on Vygotsky's theory that learning and knowledge is conducted through social interaction, student talk about text is important to literacy learning (S. A. Brown, 2006). A number of studies have been conducted to support this relationship. Brown (2006) examined such a relationship during partner reading among seven and eight year old children from a public school in a South-eastern region of the United States. Students from the class studied were assigned peer partners based on their reading abilities. While students were give multiple opportunities to discuss literature each day with the class as a whole, peer partners were only scheduled twice a week. This type of peer interaction was observed twice a week over the course of six weeks. Prior to partner reading, students were provided with suggested partner activities through teacher modeled mini-lessons. These mini-lessons provided children instruction on how to: make connections, share questions, figure out unknown words, and look for character traits. Such mini-lessons led students into partner reading for students to

practice newly introduced skills. Data revealed that peer talk was successful during

partner reading and did in fact support literacy learning. Conversations among partners

centered around five themes: organization, disputational, meaning making, word

solving strategies, and personal. Excluding personal talk, which occurred infrequently,

each type of conversation was beneficial to the literacy learning of the children.

Through conversation, students were able to scaffold one another's reading to ensure

understanding of the text. Meaningful peer conversations were attributed to the

teacher's support of such conversations during mini-lessons. This research reveals the

importance of literate talk and teacher encouragement of student conversation during

partner reading (S. A. Brown, 2006).

 A second study (Wolf, Crosson, & Resnick, 2004) examined the relationship

between the quality of classroom talk and the rigor of comprehension lessons. This

study involved 21 teachers and 441 students from first through eighth grade. Each of

the teachers was observed as they conducted a 45-50 minute reading comprehension

lesson and the types of questions they asked their students. In order to maintain

consistency, teachers were asked to include the following three components in their

lesson: a text read aloud, 20 minute group discussion, and teacher assigned task. The

rigor of the lesson was documented based on an Academic Rigor rubric taken from the

Instructional Quality Assessment toolkit (IQA) developed by the University of Pittsburg.

In addition, the discussion between the teacher and students was noted. Discussion

was recorded using an Accountable Talk rubric taken from the IQA toolkit. Results

indicated that the type of accountable talk directed by the teacher was related to the

level of rigor in the lesson. Lessons focused on students' accountability to accurate

knowledge and accountability to rigorous thinking, were associated with quality accountable talk from the teacher. Therefore, the type of questions asked by the teacher directly affects the type of response from the students. This study reinforces purposeful student discussion of text led by the teacher (Wolf et al., 2004).

Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, and Alexander (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of research related to the effects of classroom discussions on students' comprehension and learning. They examined a large body of research on specific approaches to classroom discussion and how they affected students' high-level comprehension of text. A total of 42 studies were selected based on the following components: classified as an empirical study, presented quantitative data, the effect size was noted, reported the effects of discussions about text, measured teacher talk, student talk, and/or student-to-student talk. Sixteen of the studies were conducted between 1964 and 1994, while 26 of the studies were conducted between 1995 and 2002. Based on their meta-analysis, Murphy et al. (2009) found that in a majority of the studies discussion about text had a positive effect on students' literal and inferential comprehension. Additionally, student talk time was increased while teacher talk time was decreased. Examination of such a large amount of research supports the idea of providing students with meaningful opportunities to talk about text (Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, & Alexander, 2009).

On a larger scale, Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, and Socias (2009) examined the effects of a city-wide instructional reform effort on student achievement. Unlike previous studies that examined only a few classrooms, this study focused on 101 classrooms that spanned from kindergarten through fifth grade. The study examined classrooms

from nine low socioeconomic schools in San Diego, California over the course of two years. The reform effort focused on implementing a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading that consisted of: accountable talk that engaged the students in the text, appropriate scaffolding, teacher modeling, and gradual release of students to be responsible for their own learning. The purpose of the study was to determine which specific instructional practices, if any, increased student achievement. Teacher and student behaviors were recorded during five 90 minute observations. In addition, student achievement was recorded based on a variety of reading assessment including the Developmental Reading Assessment for grade K-3, the California Standards Test for grades 2-11 and the Degrees of Reading Power assessment for grades 4-8. Results indicated that student achievement increased when classroom instruction focused on creating meaning from text (comprehension) and included accountable talk. This study suggests that it is possible to implement components of Reading Workshop in a large and diverse urban district with successful results (Bitter, O'Day, Gubbins, & Socias, 2009).

Research on student response to literature has provided insight regarding its effectiveness and application in the classroom. Benefits of providing students with time to respond to literature include: student scaffolding one another's understanding of text (S. A. Brown, 2006), increasing student talk time (Murphy et al., 2009), increasing students' literal and inferential comprehension (Murphy et al., 2009), and increasing students' overall reading achievement (Bitter et al., 2009). In addition, meaningful student conversations are attributed to teachers' support of conversations through mini-lessons and the types of questions they ask (S. A. Brown, 2006; Wolf et al., 2004).

All of the research thus far supports the individual components of Reading Workshop in regards to literacy achievement. As previously mentioned, the key elements of Reading Workshop include: time, choice, response, community, and structure. Direct comprehension instruction, think-alouds, time to practice, scaffolding, and opportunities for response reflect the key elements of Reading Workshop. In the following section, student intrinsic motivation will be addressed and its relationship to the key elements.

Student Intrinsic Motivation and Literacy Achievement

Motivation is an important influence on student's cognitive development, particularly reading achievement. It is up to educators to provide a classroom environment that fosters student motivation to read. Intrinsic motivation involves an individual's engagement in an activity because of their own personal interest. It involves participating in an activity for one's own sake (Wang & Guthrie, 2004). Research suggests that intrinsic motivation has long-term effects on student's reading achievement. Wang & Guthrie (2004) studied the effects of motivation on text comprehension among fourth grade students from the United States and Taiwan. The sample consisted of 187 U.S. students and 197 Taiwan students. Student motivation was measured using the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) and text comprehension was measured using the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Reading Literacy Test. In order to focus on the effects of intrinsic motivation, researchers controlled the following variables: past reading achievement, extrinsic motivation, amount of time spent reading at school, and student enjoyment of reading. Results demonstrated that intrinsic motivation had a positive

direct association with text comprehension for both groups of students. In addition, extrinsic motivation was negatively associated with text comprehension in both groups. This suggests that extrinsic motivation does not promote reading achievement like intrinsic motivation(Wang & Guthrie, 2004).

Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, & Littles (2007) conducted a similar study that examined the relationship between reading motivation and reading comprehension. This study was on a smaller scale and examined 31 fourth grade students who had participated in a reading program called Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). CORI is a program designed to build students' intrinsic motivation for reading. The intervention was conducted over a twelve week period. Student motivation was measured based on interviews, completion of the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ), and a teacher questionnaire called the Reading Engagement Index (REI). A multiple regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which reading motivation predicted reading comprehension. Results revealed that general motivation variables significantly predicted growth in reading comprehension. Specifically, interest, choice, and involvement attributed to most of the variance in reading comprehension growth. Based on this data, it is evident that intrinsic motivation does contribute to reading achievement (Guthrie et al., 2007).

In another study, Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie (2009) examined the effects of motivation and cognitive variables on fourth grade students' reading comprehension (N = 205). Students were assessed on their background knowledge, ability to self-generate questions, multiple-text reading comprehension, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test for comprehension, and internal motivation. When internal

motivation, background knowledge, and student questioning were analyzed, each of the predictor variables had a significant impact on student growth in reading comprehension. These results demonstrated that each of the variables make independent contributions to reading comprehension. According to the researchers, internal motivation is the key to other two variables. It serves as the "energizer" that encourages students to engage in the cognitive processes associated with background knowledge and the ability to question. Together, these three variables account for increased comprehension in students (Taboada, Tonks, Wigfield, & Guthrie, 2009).

In a more recent study, Logan, Medford, & Hughes (2011) examined the effects of cognitive and motivational factors on the comprehension performance of students from varying ability levels. The sample consisted of 111 students that ranged from age 10 to 11. Students were assessed on their reading comprehension, verbal IQ, phonological decoding skills, and intrinsic motivation. A regression analysis determined differences between students from high and low ability groups. These results revealed that in the high ability reading group, verbal IQ was the only factor that contributed to significant variance in reading comprehension. However, in the lower ability reading group, decoding skills and intrinsic motivation contributed to significant variance in reading comprehension. This suggests that intrinsic motivation is especially important for lower ability readers. Once again, intrinsic motivation has been associated with comprehension performance (Logan, Medford, & Hughes, 2011).

Factors that Influence Student Intrinsic Motivation

    Access to books.

        Literature suggests that student intrinsic motivation plays a role in literacy achievement. However, teachers must know how to provide a literacy environment that promotes intrinsic motivation. There are several factors that influence the intrinsic motivation of students. One factor identified in literature is access to books. Children need to have access to a variety of books. Gambrell et. al (1996) studied 330 third and fifth grade students' motivation to read using a Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) and 48 students using a Conversational Interview. Based on this research, access to a variety of books and having frequent opportunities to borrow books has a direct influence on student motivation to read (Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer, 1996). Therefore, it is important that classrooms have a print-rich environment with a variety of books. In another study, Neuman (1999) examined the impact of increased accessibility to books on children at 50 child-care centers. The children ranged in ages from birth through age 5. Results of the study revealed that increased access to books had a positive impact on students' attitudes, skills, and behaviors associated with literacy development. Such access increased literate talk about books among teachers and students, the number of books being read in the classroom, and children's abilities including concepts of print, letter identification, and concepts of narrative books (Neuman, 1999). It is important that classroom libraries contain books that are of high-interest to students. Teachers should include books that are popular among children, not just books they feel should be read (Duncan, 2010).   Allington (2006) recommends that the classroom library contain 500 or more books from a variety of genres including fiction and non-fiction

texts. In addition to a variety of genres, there should also be books from a variety of skill levels (Allington, 2006).

Display and organization of books.

A second factor focuses on the display and organization of books. The display and organization of books plays an important role in motivating readers (Allington, 2006; Duncan, 2010). Books are more enticing to students when they are displayed with the covers showing, rather the spine. They can be organized according to themes that students may be interested in. It is also influential to student motivation when displays are changed fairly often (Allington, 2006). Books should be within reach of children, so that they are able to access them on their own. Students are more likely to read books that are easily accessible (Duncan, 2010).

Student choice.

Another factor that influences student motivation involves student choice or perceived control (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010; Duncan, 2010; Gambrell et al., 1996; Guthrie et al., 2007). Students need to be given the opportunity to make choices about what they read, the authors or characters they want to study, and the types of literature response activities they want to engage in (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Giving students choices allows them to "invest in their own learning" and intrinsically motivates them. Such autonomy is especially important for older children and adolescents. Student choice does not necessarily have to be open-access, but can be more limited to choosing from a specified genre or a list of reading selections (Duncan, 2010). In a study of fourth grade students, Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, and Littles (2007) noted that students who preferred to choose their own books viewed choice as

taking ownership of their own reading. Such ownership has been related to intrinsic motivation. The study also noted the importance of choice to highly motivated readers. Students who were more interested in reading enjoyed choosing their own books and were highly involved in reading (Guthrie et al., 2007). In a study conducted by Gambrell et al. (1996), third and fifth grade students were about the "most interesting" story they've read. According to the interviews, 60% stated that the book was self-selected, while only 10% stated that it was assigned by a teacher. Therefore, books that self-selected have a significant impact on students because they are related to the students' interests (Gambrell et al., 1996).

Relevance of literature.

The relevance of literature and activities to students also plays a role in motivation (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010; Tilley, 2009). In order for students to be dedicated to reading, the books and literature related activities must be important to them. This can be done by making the books and activities relevant to their daily lives. The content and the substance must be relevant to the students (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Teachers can increase student's motivation to read by providing books and activities that have real-world contexts, encourage inquiry, and active learning (Tilley, 2009). Teachers can also make books relevant to their students by providing background knowledge on a topic such as through a video. Establishing such background knowledge brings the print to life for students because they have had a personal encounter with it (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010).

Social interaction.

Social interaction is another factor that influences student motivation(Duncan, 2010; Gambrell, 1996; Tilley, 2009). After reading books, students need the opportunity to connect with others through discussion of the text. Such collaboration fosters students' intrinsic motivation to read. Collaboration helps children feel as if they are a part of a group and accepted, which ultimately influences their motivation (Duncan, 2010). Literature circles, scheduled book sharing opportunities, book clubs, discussion groups, and teacher read-aloud sessions are all examples of social interactions (Duncan, 2010; Gambrell, 1996). Students can also share recent reading experiences that were good, bad, or make recommendations for other students. Discussion of literature exposes students to new books, which might encourage them to try something new (Duncan, 2010). In Gambrell's (1996) study of first, third, and fifth grade students, all students responded passionately about discussing with others about books they've read. According to Gambrell, "opportunities for sharing and talking with others about books is an important factor is developing engaged, motivated readers" (Gambrell, 1996, p. 22). In a similar study, Gambrell, Codling, & Palmer (1996), confirmed the influence of social interaction on student's motivation to read. This was supported by reports that students wanted to read particular books because they had heard about them from teachers, friends, and parents (Gambrell et al., 1996).

Teacher disposition.

The last factor that influences motivation is disposition. "Knowledge can be acquired without having the disposition to use it" (Swanson & Da Ros-Voseles, 2009, p. 30). In other words, students can know how to read but not have the disposition to want

to read. According to the International Reading Association and National Association

for the Education of Young Children, educators of young children are committed to

"fostering and sustaining their [children's] interest and disposition to read and write for

their own enjoyment, information, and communication" (Swanson & Da Ros-Voseles,

2009, p. 31). Positive dispositions for literacy can be nurtured through a structured

environment and developmentally appropriate activities in the early childhood

curriculum. Dispositions that relate to emergent reading are independence, creativity,

self-motivation, problem-solving, and resilience. By enhancing these dispositions in

children, teachers can create life-long readers (Swanson & Da Ros-Voseles, 2009).

The classroom teacher also serves as a motivator to students. In order for

teachers to motivate their students to read, teacher must be avid readers themselves.

Teachers must value reading themselves in order to share the love of reading with their

students (Gambrell, 1996; Tilley, 2009). Teachers can motivate their students by

sharing their own reading experiences with them. It is important that teachers share the

importance of reading in their own lives on a regular basis (Tilley, 2009). In order to

inspire students and make appropriate recommendations for them, teachers must be

familiar with children's literature themselves (Capen, 2010). Teachers must also model

appropriate reading behaviors for students. This explicit modeling should be

accompanied by a think aloud, which explains the thinking that occurs in the mind of a

motivated reader (Capen, 2010; Gambrell, 1996). By sharing personal reading

experiences, students learn the many purposes of reading. They learn that people read

to gain information about the world, for enjoyment, and to improve vocabulary, speaking

and writing skills (Gambrell, 1996).

All of the above mentioned research-based strategies and factors that influence student motivation make up the five elements of Reading Workshop: time, choice, response, community, and structure. These elements are a reoccurring theme in literature. Therefore, a reading program like Reading Workshop that combines all of these elements should increase literacy achievement. Using these elements in the classroom is not only beneficial to older children, but also children in kindergarten through second grade. Literature suggests that it is possible to adapt these elements to include in an early childhood reading program. The next section will discuss the importance of teaching comprehension to children at an early age and what this instruction looks like in an early childhood classroom.

Comprehension in the Early Childhood Years

According to a publication by the National Institute for Literacy, teachers in kindergarten through third grade should build a foundation for reading comprehension as early as possible. Explicit comprehension instruction should not be postponed until students are well-established readers, but instead early in the reading process. Students at all grade levels are able to benefit from explicit modeling of reading comprehension strategies. It is important that all readers, regardless of their skill level understand that the purpose of reading is to construct meaning (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, n.d.).

Research has shown that children in the early childhood years are capable of complex comprehension of literature. Sipe (2000) studied first and second grade students' understanding of picture books read aloud to them. His research demonstrated that young children are capable of the following literacy skills: knowledge

of authors and how books are made, examining an author's use of language, analyzing

illustrations, evaluating and interpreting actions and events, identifying similarities and

differences between fact and fiction, relating the text to other texts and products,

relating the text to their own lives, talking back to the text, and manipulating the story

through use of their imagination. He concluded that "children as young as first and

second grade can demonstrate impressive literary critical abilities" (Sipe, 2000, p. 273).

Dooley and Matthews (2009) also support the idea of teaching comprehension in

the early childhood years. They termed emergent comprehension as the "period when

young children, prior to conventional text comprehension, engage in personally

meaningful experiences that stimulate use of meaning-making strategies with the

potential to affect later reading comprehension" (Dooley & Matthews, 2009, p. 273).

Similar to emergent literacy, the term suggests that children's early experiences serve

as the foundation for later text comprehension. Currently, Dooley and Matthews (2009)

are conducting a longitudinal study to examine the relationship between children's early

meaning-construction and comprehension development. Based on their observations

thus far, they have outlined an Emergent Comprehension framework for understanding

children's early development of comprehension. The first principle in the framework

suggests that young children arrive at meaning differently than older children. The

second principal suggests that children's symbolic development of objects, events, or

actions evolve with experience and interactions with others. While the third principal

suggests that children construct meaning through relationships with primary caregivers

and other adults (Dooley & Matthews, 2009). Such a framework provides insight about

the relationship between early experiences and the development of comprehension, but what does this look like in an early childhood classroom?

In her book *The Art of Teaching Reading,* Lucy Calkins (2001) describes how to conduct a Reading Workshop mini-lesson in which children as early as kindergarten can learn comprehension strategies. These mini-lessons consist of a connection, teaching point, active involvement, link, and follow-up. The connection tells students how the lesson connects to their own lives. The teaching point demonstrates something that the teacher would like the students to try in their own reading. The active involvement gives students the opportunity to discuss with a partner or try out what was just learned. The key to this phase is that students are actively doing something. The link tells the students how they can implement what they've learned today and always when they read. The follow-up allows the students to discuss their feeling about what they've learned after the Reading Workshop is over and they've had a chance to try it (Calkins, 2001).

Migyanka, Policastro, and Lui (2005) describe comprehension instruction in the early childhood setting using think-alouds. Their work describes how the strategy can be used with first and second grade students with diverse needs, including students with learning disabilities and students who need English as a Second Language (ESL) support. According to Migyanka et. al. (2005), think-alouds in the early childhood setting should be adapted based on the students' individual needs and ability levels. Instruction can be differentiated by determining how involved the student will be in the think-aloud process and what skills will be taught. They suggest ways in which early childhood teachers can build students' reading comprehension. Early childhood

teachers can help students activate prior knowledge by asking them questions related to the author, title and illustrations before reading the text. They can have students make predictions about the story and help them reaffirm or disprove those predictions. Teachers can help students learn vocabulary by teaching context clues and thinking about what would make sense. Students can also learn to make connections with the text though teacher modeling of connections to other books, characters, and life experiences. Young children are even capable of understanding story structure, genres, and characteristics of authors. Teachers can use think-alouds to model how authors send messages and teach values. These adaptations reflect how think-alouds can be used with the earliest readers (Migyanka et al., 2005).

Similarly, Gregory and Cahill (2010) describe a Kindergarten classroom in which comprehension instruction is taught using active participation and visible charts. While the instruction itself looks slightly different for young children, the students are still learning comprehension strategies that are typically associated with older children. These strategies include teaching children about schema, making connections with the text, visualizing, and making inferences. They also point out the fact that little research has been conducted on comprehension strategies for young children, yet there is a need (Gregory & Cahill, 2010).

While comprehension strategies can be adapted for teaching young children, very little is known about the effects of this type of instruction on their ability to read independently. Therefore, there is a need for research to be conducted on explicit teaching of comprehension among young children. In the next section, research studies on Reading Workshop will be discussed.

Research Studies on Reading Workshop

A review of the studies on Reading Workshop specifically reveals that few sound research studies exist. The majority of research studies on Reading Workshop are less formal research studies such as master's theses and action research reports conducted by classroom teachers. While these studies provide some insight about the approach, they do not provide sound research. Therefore, a need exists for more rigorous research on the effects of teaching using a Reading Workshop approach. The following paragraphs will discuss formal research studies that have been previously conducted.

In 1992 Kletzien, a university professor, and Hushion, a high school English teacher, published a joint study on the effects of Reading Workshop. Inspired by the work of Nancie Atwell (1987), Kletzien and Hushion (1992) sought to find an instructional approach that would motivate students to read, introduce them to reading strategies, increase comprehension, and provide them time to practice. Their study examined 26 at-risk students in ninth and tenth grade, who were grouped for remedial instruction in English. Students participated in Reading Workshop once a week for 50 minutes from September through May. Mini-lessons consisted of explaining and demonstrating reading strategies, examining the writer's craft of many different authors, and introducing the students to a variety of authors. Student attitudes toward reading were measured using a pre and post-test design that involved questions using a Likert scale and various open-ended questions. While the Likert scale did not show significant change in student attitudes overall, there were several items that students did respond more positively toward. At the end of the school year, more students reported that they read in their spare time, wished they had more time for reading, and felt that they were

a good reader. Positive results were also noted from the open-ended responses on the student survey. Before the intervention, not all students were able to name a book that they had read and liked. Afterwards, every student was able to name a book. More students were also able to name a favorite author after the intervention. Based on their observations, the researchers also noted that they felt the students seemed to enjoy reading more and were able to respond to text with deeper understanding (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992).

Mitev (1994) examined Reading Workshop from a different perspective. She measured teachers' views of the effectiveness of Reading Workshop and how the approach affected students' comprehension and vocabulary. The Reading Workshop intervention was conducted over the course of one academic school year and was compared to the student scores from the previous year. During the 1991-1992 school year, an integrated whole language reading approach was used to teach four classes of fourth graders. The approach consisted of the following: whole group instruction, no student choice, based on whole group needs instead of individual needs, guided reading practice, basal readers, specific skill instruction, and practice of such skills through worksheets or activities. This group, which consisted of 98 students, served as the control group. In 1992-1993, the following year, the Reading Workshop approach was implemented in addition to the whole language approach. This group, which consisted of 85 students, served as the experimental group. In order to determine reading comprehension, a pre and post-test design was used. Student comprehension was measured using the Stanford Achievement Test. Results indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the groups' pre and post-test on

comprehension. However, when analyzed individually, the increases were statistically significant. This suggests that either method of teaching reading is equally effective in increasing comprehension. When comparing comprehension scores by quartiles, students from the 25th and below quartile in the Reading Workshop group made the greatest gains. Such results suggest that Reading Workshop is most beneficial to students who are struggling readers. In regards to vocabulary instruction, the integrated whole language approach was more effective than Reading Workshop. Last, review of teacher interviews reveal increased awareness of students' needs, increased confidence in meeting the needs of all learners, and the perceived belief that providing students with more access to literature and allowing them to choose their own books increased academic success (Mitev, 1994).

A few years later, Shatzer (1996) studied the effects of Reading Workshop on elementary students with learning disabilities. The participants in these case studies consisted of two third grade students, one fourth grade student, and one fifth grade student; all of which were male. Each of the students studied demonstrated an academic need in reading, written language, and social development. The intervention consisted of inclusion in a regular education classroom during Reading Workshop. Such intervention occurred throughout the entire school year. Regular education teachers, special education teachers, and the students' parents all played a role in determining the effectiveness of the approach. Data was collected from interviews, reflective journals, observations, videotapes, and student test scores. Assessments were given at the beginning and end of the study. Due to the diverse needs of the students, a variety of assessments were used. However, all students were given scores

in the following areas: word recognition in isolation, word recognition in context, and comprehension.

Analysis of the results indicated that all four students increased their reading ability by at least one grade level. However, the researcher noted that the approach seemed to be more beneficial to those students who already had an independent reading level. Additional benefits noted from anecdotal records included improved self-esteem and self-confidence. The students seemed to work better with peers and made friends throughout the process. While the study sought to provide insight about the approach in regards to students with learning disabilities, the small sample size makes it difficult to generalize to all students with learning disabilities in reading. While the students made gains, it is inconclusive whether the gains were due to the Reading Workshop approach or if any good reading instruction would have produced the same results. This could have been prevented if a control group would have been established. Based on this study, it is clear that Reading Workshop can be applied to a variety of populations to increase reading achievement (Shatzer, 1996).

Furthermore, Schiavone (2000) examined the effects of two reading models, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and Reading Workshop (RW) on seventh grade students' reading comprehension and their attitudes towards reading. The two main purposes of the study were as follows: to determine if one method would produce higher literacy achievement than the other, and to determine if student accountability affected their reading comprehension or attitudes towards reading. The population studied consisted of four seventh grade classes that had a combined total of 64 students. In addition, more than half of the population was from multilingual homes.

Students in the SSR group were taught based on McCracken's 1971 model of silent reading that consisted of: the whole class reading, including the teacher, a set block of reading time, students selecting their own books, students reading one book for the entire block of time, and no record keeping by the teacher. They received intervention one day a week that consisted of 40 minutes of silent reading and 5 minutes of voluntary sharing with the class about the book they read. The RW group was instructed based on Atwell's 1987 model that consisted of: a set block of reading time, student self-selected books, teacher modeled reading during mini-lessons, and student response journals. They received intervention one day a week that consisted of 30 minutes of silent reading and 15 minutes of response time. Both the SSR and RW interventions occurred over a period of 32 weeks.

Students' comprehension was measured based on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension Test and their attitudes were measured based on the Estes Attitudes Scales. Pre and post tests were administered to both the SSR and RW group. Results indicate that no statistically significant relationship exists between students' attitudes towards reading and their reading comprehension for either group studied. While comprehension in both groups increased from pre to post-test, the results were not statistically significant. In fact, the SSR group has a slightly higher increase. This could be due to the fact that the SSR group received more time to practice reading than the RW group. Such time discrepancies make it difficult to compare the two approaches. Nevertheless, these results suggest that either method of reading instruction is effective in increasing comprehension. In regards to student attitudes,

both groups decreased slightly in the post-test attitudinal survey. Such results suggest that neither approach seemed to motivate the students (Schiavone, 2000).

In the most recent study, Blake (2006) studied the effects of the English Workshop Model on students in eleventh grade. The effects of the model were measured based on the students' performance on the ELA Regents exam and Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (2nd edition), which measured the students' reading comprehension and writing skills. A convenience sample of 25 students was taken from a Title I school in Brooklyn. The sample was comprised of mostly male, Hispanic and African American students of low-socioeconomic status. These students were selected for the intervention based on their low proficiency in reading and writing. Students participated in a 15 week intervention that comprised of the Workshop Model for both reading and writing. Based on pre and post-test scores, all of the students' performance improved on both assessments. In addition, students who participated in the Workshop Model outperformed the comparison group who had not participated. These results were statistically significant. In addition to student performance, Blake (2006) also measured teacher's attitudes towards the model using open-ended questioning. He concluded that the teachers who participated in the model had very positive attitudes toward the model. Overall, teachers felt that the model was successful in improving student performance and recommended it be used by teachers in all subject areas. They felt that reading and writing skills should be taught in context of the subject being studied. This study suggests that the Workshop Model is effective in improving performance of low-achieving students. It also suggests that the model is beneficial for students of low socioeconomic status (Blake, 2006).

Based on this review of formal research, there are several key points made about Reading Workshop. First, it is an effective method of increasing student comprehension, especially for struggling readers (Blake, 2006; Mitev, 1994; Schiavone, 2000). Second, it is effective in increasing teachers' confidence in meeting the needs of all students (Mitev, 1994). Third, Reading Workshop can be applied to a variety of populations, including students with learning disabilities and from low socio-economic status, and produce positive results in reading (Blake, 2006; Shatzer, 1996). Fourth, it has a direct effect on students' attitudes toward reading and the amount of time they spend reading (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992).

Numerous less rigorous studies have been conducted on the effects of Reading Workshop that support the formal studies. While the formal studies serve as foundational research on Reading Workshop, the less formal studies provide more evidence that Reading Workshop does make an impact on students. For example, many of these studies have reported positive effects of Reading Workshop on students' reading abilities, particularly comprehension. Studies have shown that Reading Workshop has increased students' text comprehension, reader response, ability to make meaningful connections and decoding (Anhalt, Ciccone, & Stevens, 1995; Hewitt, 1996; M. E. Miller, 1990; Swift, 1993). In addition to increasing their reading abilities, studies have also shown that Reading Workshop has a positive effect on student attitudes. After participating in Reading Workshop, students were: less frustrated with reading, more motivated, had a more positive attitude towards reading, and had a better view of themselves as readers (Anhalt et al., 1995; Hewitt, 1996; Lause, 2004). Students also reported positive attitudes towards Reading Workshop itself. Students

enjoyed choosing their own books, having many options for reading, student

discussions, and time set aside for reading in school (Greer, 1994). Other positive

effects of Reading Workshop have included increasing students' time spent reading, the

number of pages read, and their time on-task (Anhalt et al., 1995; Hewitt, 1996; Lause,

2004). Literature on Reading Workshop, both formal and informal, has demonstrated

the effectiveness of the approach. In the following section, the gap in literature will be

presented, which supports the need for future research on Reading Workshop.

Summary of the Literature

Chapter 2 presented a review of the existing literature on: research-based

strategies that promote literacy achievement, student intrinsic motivation and literacy

achievement, factors that influence student intrinsic motivation, comprehension in the

early childhood years, and research studies on Reading Workshop. This review

presented a gap in the literature that justified the need for this study. In regards to

Reading Workshop specifically, previous studies have focused mainly on third grade

and higher. All of the studies that examined children in the early childhood years were

less rigorous master's thesis studies (Anhalt et al., 1995; Hewitt, 1996). To date, no

rigorous research has been conducted on its effects in the early childhood years,

kindergarten through second grade. One study examined students in first and second

grade who participated in Reading Workshop classroom, however, the study was limited

due to the small number of participants, four children from each grade level (Anhalt et

al., 1995). In another study, the reading achievement of first and second grade

students was examined after participating in Reading Workshop. However, the study

was inconclusive because there was not a control group and researchers did not know if

the improvement in reading abilities was due to Reading Workshop or reading instruction provided during shared reading and guided reading lessons (Hewitt, 1996). The current study helped fill the gaps in the research by examining a large number of first grade students taught using two different instructional approaches.

In addition, no research of any type, formal or informal, has been conducted regarding the effects of Reading Workshop on normal developing students' independent reading levels. Shatzer (1996) examined student reading levels as one of many components to determine the effectiveness of Reading Workshop on four students with learning disabilities. Results indicated that each of the students increased their reading ability by at least one grade level (Shatzer, 1996). While this study does provide some insight about the benefits of Reading Workshop for students with special needs, it does not tell us the effects on normally developing students' independent reading levels. Therefore, there is a direct need to examine how Reading Workshop affects the independent reading levels of normally developing students. This study helped fill the gap in the research by examining first grade students' independent reading levels.

Last, there has not been any research conducted to this magnitude regarding the Reading Workshop approach. The studies thus far have ranged from only four students to a total of 183 students, 98 in the experimental group and 85 in the control group (Mitev, 1994; Shatzer, 1996). The proposed study will examine 1,200 students total from the pilot and non-pilot schools. This study provided information about how Reading Workshop affects the independent reading levels of a larger sample size and a diverse population that is representative of a large district.

These gaps in the literature demonstrate a need for more rigorous research on Reading Workshop, particularly in the early childhood years. Current research demonstrates a lack of formal comparisons of early childhood students' independent reading levels that were taught using a Reading Workshop approach. After reviewing the literature, the following questions remain unanswered: What are the effects of a Reading Workshop pilot program on first grade students' independent reading levels compared to those in a traditional balanced literacy program, and what are the effects of Reading Workshop on various subpopulations of students (gender, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, English as a Second Language, and ethnicity)? These questions can only be answered through further research of the approach. This study sought to fill the gaps in the literature.

Chapter III

Method

Introduction

In Chapter 2, gaps in the literature were presented and implications for future research were discussed. There is clearly a need for research on the effects of Reading Workshop on students' independent reading levels and on students in the early childhood years. These implications are the basis for the research study outlined in this chapter. In this chapter, the study will be outlined as follows: research design, participants, intervention, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to examine possible differences in reading achievement among first grade students from pilot and non-pilot schools that were taught using different models of instruction for reading. Due to the fact that the pilot groups were previously formed by the district and exposed to the treatment, students were not randomly assigned to control or treatment groups. Therefore, a quasi-experimental research design was employed. In this study, archival data was obtained from district benchmark exams. The district benchmark exams recorded students' independent reading levels at the beginning and end of the 2009-2010 school year. First, a pre-test/post-test design was used to compare student independent reading levels of students from the beginning to the end of the year within each group to determine if each made significant progress. Then, the independent reading levels of students in the Reading Workshop pilot schools were compared to students in the non-pilot schools. This was conducted using a pre-test/post-test design. Then the same

two tests, a dependent groups t-test and independent groups t-test, were used for analyzing each of the subgroups: gender, at-risk, ESL, and economically disadvantaged, and ethnicity.

Participants

The population consisted of 50 elementary schools from a large public school district in Texas. The district population from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade is very diverse. In 2009-2010, the student population consisted of 16.5% African American, 38.9% Hispanic, 35.5% White, 0.3% Native American, and 8.8% Asian/Pacific Islander. Not only is the district ethnically diverse, but also the economically diverse. In 2009-2010, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district was 43.2%. The sample studied was taken from this large and diverse district. The sample consisted of first grade students from 24 elementary schools, 12 pilot schools and 12 non-pilot schools. The pilot schools consisted of a total of 2,431 students and the non-pilot schools consisted of a total of 2,664 students. For data analysis purposes, only students who had both beginning and end of year benchmark scores were included in this study. Therefore, only 2,013 students from the pilot schools and 2,240 students from the non-pilot schools were used in this study.

Twelve schools in the district were chosen by curriculum coordinators to serve as pilot schools for the program. The twelve schools were chosen for one of two reasons: there was a model teacher in first grade on that campus or the campus principal served on the district literacy committee and volunteered to pilot Reading Workshop. These pre-determined pilot schools served as the treatment group. Twelve non-pilot schools with similar socioeconomic status were chosen from the same school district to serve as

a comparison group. Table 1 presents the demographics for each pilot school and their

comparison which was used in the study. While the percentage of economically

disadvantaged students in Table 1 includes pre-k through fifth grade, this study only

examined students in first grade at each of the campuses.

Table 1

2009-2010 Population Demographics

Pilot schools	% Economically disadvantaged Students	Non-pilot schools	% Economically disadvantaged Students
School 1	36.9	School 13	30.2
School 2	42.1	School 14	40.9
School 3	69.7	School 15	68.6
School 4	43.8	School 16	39.6
School 5	50.9	School 17	71.5
School 6	7.6	School 18	8.3
School 7	20.7	School 19	22.6
School 8	53.9	School 20	66.9
School 9	21.9	School 21	19.6
School 10	0.7	School 22	2.9
School 11	9.6	School 23	14.8
School 12	53.3	School 24	67.3

Note. Obtained from *2009-2010 Academic Excellence Indicator System report* (Texas Education Agency) and school district data.

Participants in the study were classified according to the following subgroups:

gender, at-risk, ESL, economically disadvantaged, and ethnicity. Each of these

subgroups was previously determined by the district. The district determines gender and ethnicity based on beginning of the year paperwork that is sent home to parents. At-risk students are determined according to several factors. Students are considered at-risk if they are identified as economically disadvantaged, homeless, ESL or have failed the previous grade. Some students may fall under more than one of these categories. Therefore, the term at-risk encompasses students for a variety of reasons. ESL students are identified based on a home literacy survey that is sent home to parents at the beginning of the school year. On the survey, parents must specify the language spoken most often in the home. Students, whose primary language spoken at home is not English, are considered ESL. Economically disadvantaged students are determined by the district based on records of which students receive free or reduced lunches. Each of the subgroups gender, at-risk, ESL, economically disadvantaged, and ethnicity is coded at the district level along with students' beginning and end of year district benchmark scores.

Intervention

Students from the pilot and non-pilot schools were taught using different models of instruction for reading, Model A and Model B. Model A, which the pilot group received, consisted of a balanced literacy schedule with the addition of Reading Workshop. The Reading Workshop used in this study combined both Nancie Atwell and Lucy Calkin's model of the approach as mentioned previously. The Reading Workshop intervention for the experimental group was conducted during the 2009-2010 school year for 60 minutes each day. The pilot program consisted of the following Reading Workshop components: mini-lesson, independent reading, conferring, partner reading,

and share time. In addition to the Reading Workshop block of time, the pilot schools also received balanced literacy components including: read aloud (just for fun), guided reading, shared reading, interactive writing, word study instruction, read aloud (with accountable talk), and Writing Workshop. These balanced literacy components accounted for 120 minutes of the school day, in addition to the 60 minute Reading Workshop block. Therefore, students received a total of 180 minutes of reading instruction each day.

The first balanced literacy component, read aloud (just for fun), consists of reading a book purely for enjoyment. During this time, the teacher would chose a book that he or she thought the students would enjoy. There is not any instruction that occurs during this oral reading. The second balanced literacy component, guided reading, consists of reading with a small group of students who have similar reading abilities. During this time, the teacher provides the students with a text that is challenging enough for them to read with support. After introducing the book, the teacher listens and coaches students as they read it independently. Then, the teacher chooses a teaching point to discuss with the entire group (Calkins, 2001). The third balanced literacy component is shared reading. Shared reading, a technique developed by Don Holdaway, involves scaffolding a child's learning during reading. The technique involves an adult sharing a book with a child or the whole class. The text must be large enough so that each child can see and read. In a whole class setting, the teacher may use a big book for shared reading or give each child a copy of the text. The teacher reads the text and encourages the students to read along. Key features of the technique include: the teacher and students re-reading favorite selections together, the

teacher pointing to the words as the text is read, and teaching the students reading strategies and various aspects of the text through discussion. The fourth balanced literacy component is interactive writing. Interactive writing or shared writing involves the teacher and students composing text together. Types of writing include: brainstorming lists, drafting, revising, and editing. During this time, the teacher guides the students in writing letters for the sounds they hear in words. For example, the teacher might have a predictable chart that says, "A _____ is soft." Students are asked to come up and fill in the blank with a word that completes the sentence. As the student spells the word the teacher and class help with the spelling (Weaver, 2002). Word study instruction is the fourth balanced literacy component. During this time the students learn phonics such as letters and sounds, practice spelling high frequency words along with other simple words, and practice handwriting strokes. The fifth balanced literacy component is read aloud with accountable talk, also known as interactive read-aloud. This component consists of the teacher reading a book aloud to students and modeling the thinking processes that are common among proficient readers. This type of read-aloud allows the teacher to demonstrate what he or she is thinking as the book is read. At this time, the teacher encourages the students to use the thinking strategies modeled (Calkins, 2001). A typical read-aloud should include two to five "think alouds" by the teacher and two to five "turn and talk" sessions. During "turn and talk," the students turn to a partner and share what they are thinking about the book based on a teacher prompted question. The last balanced literacy component is Writing Workshop. Writing Workshop involves a writing mini-lesson, independent writing, and writing share time. During a Workshop mini-lesson, the teacher models a

specific writing skill for the students to learn. After the teacher models the specific skill, the students are encouraged to try the skill during independent writing. These mini-lessons were based on Lucy Calkin's book *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum (2003).* During independent writing the students are able to free-write on any topic they choose. As the students are writing, the teacher conducts writing conferences with individual students. At these conferences the teacher discusses the student's writing, scaffolds their writing, encourages the student, and teaches him or her new writing skills. At the end of Writing Workshop, the students participate in share time. Writing share time is when several students are asked to share their writing with the class. These are students who the teacher conferenced with during independent writing. Not only does the student share his or her writing, but the teacher also shares what skill the student worked on during the individual conference (Calkins, 2003). Each of the balanced literacy components were a part of the pilot and non-pilot schedules.

Model B, which the non-pilot schools received, consisted of the same balanced literacy components as the pilot schools. However, Model B did not include Reading Workshop. Instead the non-pilot schools participated in a traditional silent reading approach. In the traditional silent reading approach, the students did not have access to a leveled classroom library. Instead students chose books from the classroom library that they thought they would be able to read and that they were interested in. Both the pilot and non-pilot schools received 180 minutes of daily reading instruction, however; the time allocation was slightly different for the non-pilot schools. A comparison of the pilot and non-pilot schedules can be found in Table 2. An "x" in the table indicates that

the component was a part of the school's reading instruction. Based on the table, the major difference between the pilot and non-pilot schedule is Reading Workshop. The pilot school participated in Reading Workshop, while the non-pilot school did not. Specific time allocations for each component in the pilot and non-pilot schedules can be found in Appendix A. Due to the fact that the non-pilot schools did not participate in Reading Workshop, they had time for additional balanced literacy components such as: morning message (5 minutes), guided reading share time (5 minutes), and literacy stations (45-55 minutes). Morning message consisted of a daily meeting with the whole class. The teacher would have a pre-written message for the students to read together. Morning message is very similar to interactive writing. The purpose is to have the students help write the rest of the message. For example, the teacher might leave out words for the students to fill in, misspell a word for students to correct, or misuse capital and lowercase letters for students to correct. Another component added to the non-pilot schedule was guided reading share time. This was a period after formal guided reading with the teacher in which the students were able to share with the class what strategies they learned and what they learned about themselves as readers. The third added component to the non-pilot schedule was literacy stations. During literacy stations, teachers chose specific literacy activities for the students to work on based on skills that the students had already learned. Sample literacy stations include: a listening center with books on tape, a big book center with books the class has already read, and an alphabet center in which students can spell high frequency words with various manipulative such as letter tiles, magnetic letters, and letter stamps.

Table 2

Comparison of Pilot and Non-pilot Schedules

Components	Pilot schools	Non-pilot schools
Morning message/Morning meeting		X
Read aloud (just for fun)	X	
Reading Workshop:		
• Reading mini-lesson	X	
• Independent reading	X	X
• Partner reading	X	
• Teacher-student reading conferences	X	
• Reading share time	X	X
Guided reading groups	X	X
Guided reading share time		X
Shared reading	X	X
Interactive writing	X	X
Writing Workshop:		
• Writing mini-lesson	X	X
• Independent writing	X	X
• Writing share time	X	X
Word study (phonics, spelling, handwriting)	X	X
Read aloud (with accountable talk)	X	X
Literacy stations		X

Teachers in the pilot Reading Workshop program were trained one full in-service day prior to the beginning of the school year on how to set up and begin the implementation of a Reading Workshop. Teachers were also provided with scripted mini-lessons for each day throughout the school year. These lessons were written by the kindergarten through second grade district language arts coordinators and posted on a website accessible only to teachers in the pilot program. These mini-lessons followed the format in Lucy Calkin's book *The Art of Teaching Reading.* Each mini-lesson consisted of a connection, teaching point, active involvement, link, and mid-workshop teaching point or follow-up (Calkins, 2001). Lesson plan ideas were taken from the following resources: *Growing Readers: Units of Study in the Primary Classroom* (Collins, 2004), *Reading with Meaning* (D. Miller, 2002), and *Reading for Real: Teaching Students to Read with Power, Intention, and Joy in K-3 Classrooms* (Collins, 2008)*.*

For additional support, teachers in the pilot schools met with curriculum coordinators, campus instructional specialists, and principals every two weeks to continue training on the Reading Workshop approach. During this time, teachers were given opportunities to share with coordinators what they felt was going well and what they needed more training on. These teacher needs served as the basis for the training session for the next meeting. At each meeting, teachers were given research-based articles to read on teaching reading and ideas on how to implement the strategies. In the non-pilot schools, teachers were given the choice to attend district training on the various balanced literacy components; however, it was not required. In addition,

teachers from the non-pilot schools did not receive any bi-monthly feedback as those from the pilot schools did.

Each teacher's classroom library consisted of a set of leveled books that were a part of the district textbook adoption. These books were a part of the Harcourt Series and could be used for guided reading or added to a teacher's classroom library. The rest of the books in each teacher's classroom library consisted of their own personal books and books from the school's library. The difference in the classroom libraries in the pilot and non-pilot schools was how they were set up. In the Reading Workshop classrooms, the majority of the books were leveled using the Fountas & Pinnell Text Gradient of difficulty. These levels were from A (easiest) to Z (hardest). These classrooms also had non-leveled books sorted by interest for the children to read. For example, books might be sorted by "bat" books or all books by the same author such as Eric Carle. In the Reading Workshop classrooms, students were allowed to choose some books on their level and some personal interest books. The classrooms in the pilot program were set up in this manner. In the non-pilot schools, the classroom library has an assortment of books that were not leveled or sorted in any particular way. The students were free to choose from any of the books in the classroom library.

Instrumentation

The student reading levels were obtained from district benchmarks given at the beginning and end of the 2009-2010 school year. The beginning of year benchmark was administered to students in September, and the end of year benchmark was administered in May. While there were many components of the benchmark, for the purpose of this study only the independent reading levels were examined. Students'

independent reading levels were determined using the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 1* for kindergarten through second grade. The *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment* is comprised of two different assessment systems, System *I and System II. System* I was used for the district benchmark for first grade because it is specifically designed for grades K-2. *System II* is designed for grades 3-8.

Each campus in the district was asked to send a representative to be trained on how to administer the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 1.* These representatives were trained in a one day session using the DVD training video that is included in the assessment kit. During this DVD training, each campus representative was given time to practice the various components. After this training, the campus representative then trained the teachers on their campus how to administer the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 1.* Teachers from both pilot and non-pilot schools were trained by a campus representative. Their training also consisted of watching the DVD training video and practicing the assessment. All teachers were expected to have this training prior to administering the assessment.

The *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 1* is a formative reading assessment administered to individual students to determine their independent reading level. Student independent reading levels are determined based on specific criteria related to accuracy and comprehension. The *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System1* includes 28 leveled texts, both fiction and non-fiction, from levels A through N. Based on the scale, A is the easiest level and N is the most difficult. During the assessment, students are asked to read a section of text or an entire text aloud. The teacher's role during this process is to complete a running record of student

miscues. In order to determine where to begin assessing a child, students are first asked to read a "where to start" word list. If a student is able to read 16-20 of the words on the list, then the teacher moves on to the next word list. It is based on this word assessment that determines what level the teacher should ask the child to begin reading first.

A student's independent reading level is that at which students are able to successfully read a book on their own with little difficulty. To determine a student's independent reading level, he/she must have a 90% accuracy rate or higher on Levels A-K and must be able to demonstrate excellent or satisfactory comprehension. For Levels L-N, the student must have at least a 98% accuracy rate with excellent or satisfactory comprehension. The *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 1* measures student comprehension on a rating scale from (0) no understanding of the text to (3) excellent understanding. Students are rated based on their response to scripted questions which require them to think within the text, beyond the text, and about the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2008).

For the purpose of the district benchmark, students who were not able to pass a level A were marked "reading readiness." This meant that the child was not yet reading on an independent level and still needed practice with emergent literacy skills. The district standard for the beginning of the year was a level C and for the end of the year was a level I. Students who did not meet these standards were considered below-level. These district standards are slightly higher than the ones outlined in the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment 1.* According to the instrument, levels B and C are considered on-level for the beginning of the year in first grade and levels F and G are

considered on-level for the end of the year. In the district, Level I is considered on-level at the end of the year in first grade and Levels J and K are considered to be above level. Therefore, the district does have slightly higher expectations than the suggested reading levels in the instrument's manual. On the beginning and end of year district benchmarks teachers were only allowed to record a score up to level N, which is the highest level on the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* 1. While the student may be able to read higher than a level N independently, the student is still marked level N on the district scan sheet because it is the highest level on the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* 1. Overall, the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* 1 has been accepted as an effective instrument for measuring students' independent reading levels. In the following section, the reliability and validity of the instrument will be discussed.

Instrument Reliability

In a field study of reliability and validity, the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* was evaluated by an outside team of independent researchers. *System I* was tested on 252 students in grades K-2. In order to determine the reliability of the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System,* a test-retest method was used. The consistency and stability of the information acquired by the teacher was evaluated by looking at student scores on fiction and nonfiction books from the same level. It was anticipated that a child's independent reading level would be the same whether they were tested using a fiction or nonfiction text. Student scores from both genres were correlated to determine a reliability coefficient. For *System I* this coefficient

was .93, suggesting that the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* is a reliable reading assessment (Heinemann, 2008).

Instrument Validity

In order to determine the degree to which the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* measures what it is intended to measure, a convergent validity test was used. *System I* was compared to Reading Recovery®, another assessment that measures reading achievement. Reading Recovery® was chosen for the convergent validity test because of several reasons. First, the *Reading Recovery Observation Survey Text Reading Level* assessment measures student independent reading levels by means of running records that document the child's accuracy and reading behaviors. Like the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System I*, it requires students to read increasingly difficult texts to determine their independent reading level. Second, Reading Recovery® was chosen because of its notability. In March 2007, it was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an effective and scientifically based reading program (as cited in Heinemann, 2008). Third, it has been previously correlated with other standardized tests including the Iowan Test of Basic Skills, the Gates-MacGinitic Reading Test, and the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test. When student reading accuracy rates from Reading Recovery® were correlated with those from *System I*, a strong relationship was evident. For *System I* fiction books, the correlation coefficient was .94 and for nonfiction books the correlation coefficient was .93. This indicates that student performance on *System I* is strongly correlated to their performance on Reading Recovery®. Therefore, *System I* is a valid assessment for determining student independent reading levels (Heinemann, 2008).

In this study, the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System I* was used to determine the effectiveness of Reading Workshop. This is a valid method for measuring the effectiveness of Reading Workshop because the purpose of Reading Workshop is to teach reading strategies, comprehension strategies, and help students become better readers. One way to determine if students are making progress in their ability to read is by looking at their independent reading level. The better students get at reading, the higher their reading level will be because they are able to read more difficult texts.

Data Collection

This study examined archival data that was previously collected by the district for monitoring student progress. The data was taken from district benchmark exams given at the beginning and end of the 2009-2010 school year. Permission was obtained from the school district's department of campus improvement and research to access and analyze data from these district benchmark exams. In addition, permission was obtained from the University of Houston's committee for the protection of human subjects. All student identities were concealed in the collection of this data. All student identifiers were masked except for the following: the school in which they attend, gender, special programs (ESL, at-risk, economically disadvantaged), and their scores from the beginning and end of year benchmark exam. A random code was used to record this data for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data for this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). For data analysis purposes, student independent reading levels were coded in

SPSS. Each reading level from A to M was assigned a numerical value from one to ten. For example, Level A was assigned the numeral one. Students, who were not able to read a Level A, were considered at the "Reading Readiness" level and therefore coded as a zero. In addition to coding independent reading levels, the following variables were also coded: pilot schools, non-pilot schools, ethnicity, gender, ESL, at-risk, and economically disadvantaged.

The following research questions guided this study: 1) What are the effects of a Reading Workshop pilot program on first grade students' independent reading levels compared to students in a balanced literacy program, and 2) What are the effects of Reading Workshop on various subpopulations of students (gender, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, ESL, and ethnicity)? The first question was answered by comparing the average independent reading level at the beginning of the school year with the average at the end of the school year for both pilot and non-pilot groups. A dependent groups t-test was used to compare the beginning and end of year data within each group. This determined if each group made significant progress. To determine if any significant difference existed between the groups, an independent groups t-test was used. This compared the average beginning of year reading level from each group. It also compared the average end of year reading level from each group. Such results determined if a significant difference existed between the groups at different points in the school year. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in student independent reading levels at the end of the year between the pilot and non-pilot schools.

The same two t-tests, dependent groups and independent groups, were conducted for each of the subgroups: gender, ESL, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, and ethnicity. These results determined if each of the subgroups made significant progress and if there was a difference between subgroups of students who were taught using two different methods of reading instruction. Reading Workshop is believed to be beneficial for all students because it is individualized. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in independent reading levels at the end of the year between the subpopulations from the pilot and non-pilot schools.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher outlined the methodology of the study including the research design, participants, intervention, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. This study examined first grade students' independent reading levels during the 2009-2010 school year who were taught using two different models of reading instruction, one that included Reading Workshop and one that did not. The next chapter presents the results of the study.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine possible differences in reading achievement among students from pilot and non-pilot schools that were taught using different models of instruction for reading. The pilot group was taught using Model A which consisted of a balanced literacy schedule with the addition of Reading Workshop. The non-pilot group was taught using Model B, which consisted of only balanced literacy. In order to compare the two groups, student independent reading levels were obtained from beginning and end of year district benchmarks. This archival study examined benchmark results from the 2009-2010 school year. The following section discusses the results from the proposed study.

Effects of Reading Workshop on independent reading levels

In order to answer the research questions, a series of analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The first research question examined the effects of the Reading Workshop pilot program on students' independent reading levels compared to students in a balanced literacy program. To help answer this question, a dependent groups or paired samples t-test was run for the pilot and non-pilot schools. This test was used to compare the beginning of year (BOY) and end of year (EOY) independent reading levels within each group to see if there was a significant increase. The alpha level was set to .05 in order to have a 95% confidence level. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics obtained from the dependent groups t-test for the pilot and non-pilot schools.

Table 3

Beginning and End of Year Mean Independent Reading Level for Pilot and Non-Pilot Schools

	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Pilot schools:			
Reading level at BOY	2,013	4.41	3.048
Reading level at EOY	2,013	10.31	2.619
Non-pilot schools:			
Reading level at BOY	2,240	4.35	2.949
Reading level at EOY	2,240	10.18	2.734

BOY (Beginning of Year); EOY (End of year)

The average reading level for the pilot schools on the beginning of year benchmark was 4.41, which is equivalent to a Level D. The average independent reading level on the end of year benchmark was 10.31, which is equivalent to a Level J. Therefore, the average increase from the beginning to the end of year was six reading levels. A dependent group or paired samples t-test was also run for the non-pilot school. The descriptive statistics from this t-test is also shown in Table 3. Again the alpha level was set to .05. The average independent reading level for the beginning of year benchmark was 4.35, which is equivalent to a Level D. For the end of year benchmark, the average independent reading level was 10.18, which is equivalent to a Level J. Therefore, the average increase was six reading levels.

Table 4 shows the results of the dependent groups t-test for the pilot and non-pilot schools.

Table 4

Comparison of Beginning and End of Year Mean Independent Reading Level within the Groups

	Mean	Std. deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Paired differences					
Pilot schools:					
Reading level at BOY & EOY	- 5.902	2.041	- 129.772	2012	.000*
Non-pilot schools:					
Reading level at BOY & EOY	- 5.830	2.192	- 125.913	2239	.000*

*p < .05

When the average independent reading level for the beginning of the year (M = 4.41, SD = 3.048) was compared to the average independent reading level at the end of the year (M = 10.31, SD = 2.619) for the pilot schools there was a statistically significant difference, t(2012) = -129.772, p < .05. Likewise, when the average independent reading level for the beginning of the year (M = 4.35, SD = 2.949) was compared to the average reading level at the end of the year (M = 10.18, SD = 2.734) for the non-pilot schools, there was also a statistically significant difference; t(2239) = -125.913, p < .05. Results of these two paired samples t-tests demonstrate that both pilot and non-pilot schools made significant progress from beginning to end of year regarding student independent reading levels.

Another type of test that was used to answer the first research question was an independent groups t-test. The purpose of this test was to determine if a significant difference existed between the pilot and non-pilot groups at the beginning and end of

the school year. The data in Table 5 provides a summary of the independent groups t-test.

Table 5

Comparison of Pilot and Non-pilot Schools' Beginning and End of Year Mean Independent Reading Level

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean diff.
Pilot vs. Non-pilot BOY	9.809	.002*	.642	4251	.522	.059
Pilot vs. Non-pilot EOY	1.024	.312	1.590	4251	.112	.131

*p < .05

Based on Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, the pilot and non-pilot schools were not equally variable populations at the beginning of the school year, p = .002. Therefore, equal variance was not assumed. At the beginning of the school year, the independent groups t-test indicated that there was not a significant difference in the average reading level for the pilot and non-pilot schools, t(.641) = 4169.416, p > .05. This data suggests that the students in both groups had on average the same independent reading level at the beginning of the year. Based on Levene's Test for Equality of Variances for the end of the school year, it can be assumed that the two populations were equally variable, p = .312. The independent groups t-test for the end of the school year indicated that there was not a significant difference in independent reading levels between the two groups, t(4251) = 1.590, p > .05. This reveals that students in the Reading Workshop pilot schools did not have significantly higher independent reading levels than the non-pilot schools at the end of the year.

The end of year data was further analyzed to determine the percentage of students that scored above the district standard. For this analysis, the frequencies were run for the pilot and non-pilot groups separately. Table 6 displays the frequencies for each of the groups.

Table 6

End of Year Frequencies for each Independent Reading Level by Pilot and Non-pilot Schools

Reading Levels	Pilot Schools (% at each level)	Non-Pilot Schools (% at each level)
Reading Readiness	.3 %	.2 %
Level A	.3 %	.7 %
Level B	.7 %	.8 %
Level C	.7 %	1.6 %
Level D	1.7 %	1.8 %
Level E	1.5 %	1.2 %
Level F	2.4 %	2.6 %
Level G	4.8 %	4.9 %
Level H	4.3 %	3.9 %
Level I	18.6 %	20.4 %
Level J	17.1 %	15.8 %
Level K	11.3 %	11.4 %
Level L	11.2 %	11.5 %
Level M	16.3 %	14.5 %
Level N	8.6 %	8.8 %

The district standard for the end of the school year was for students to be able to read independently on a Level I. Based on the descriptive statistics, 83.1% of students in the pilot schools were reading at or above the district standard at the end of the school year. In the non-pilot schools, 82.4% of students were reading at above the district standard at the end of the school year. Based on this data, the pilot schools had a slightly higher percentage of students meet the district standard in reading.

Effects of Reading Workshop on subpopulations

The same t-tests, dependent groups and independent groups, were used for analyzing each of the subpopulations: gender, at-risk, ESL, economically disadvantaged, and ethnicity. These tests helped answer the second research question which focused on the effects of Reading Workshop on various subpopulations of students. The dependent groups t-test was used to determine if each subgroup made significant progress from the beginning to the end of the year in the pilot and the non-pilot schools. Table 7 displays the results of the dependent groups t-test for the pilot schools.

Table 7

Pilot Schools' Beginning and End of Year Mean Independent Reading Level by Subpopulation

	N	Mean BOY	Mean EOY	# of levels increased	BOY & EOY Sig. (2-tailed)
Female	956	4.72	10.66	+ 6	.000*
Male	1,056	4.13	10.00	+ 6	.000*
At-risk	723	3.08	9.19	+ 6	.000*
ESL	248	4.31	10.31	+ 6	.000*
Econ. Disadvantaged	728	2.76	8.98	+ 6	.000*
White	879	5.31	11.00	+ 6	.000*
African American	208	4.13	10.08	+ 6	.000*
Asian	207	5.65	11.32	+ 6	.000*
Hispanic	715	3.04	9.25	+ 6	.000*
American Indian	4	3.00	10.25	+ 7	.003*

*$p < .05$

Gender.

The first subpopulation examined was gender. There was a significant effect for females, $t(955) = -92.004$, $p < .05$, in reading levels from the beginning to the end of the school year. On average, females increased from a Level D to a Level J. There was also a significant effect for males, $t(1055) = -91.621$, $p < .05$, in reading levels from the beginning to the end of the school year. The males increased on average from a Level D to a Level J or six reading levels.

At-risk.

The second subpopulation examined was at-risk students. Based on the statistical test, there was a significant effect for at-risk students, $t(722) = -74.157$, $p <$ .05. At-risk students increased from a Level C at the beginning of the year to a Level I at the end of the year, which is an increase of six reading levels.

ESL.

The third subpopulation in the analysis was ESL students. There was a significant effect for ESL students, $t(247) = -47.688$, $p < .05$, when comparing reading levels from the beginning to the end of the year. ESL students increased from a Level D at the beginning of the year, to a Level J at the end of the year. This is an increase of six reading levels.

Economically disadvantaged.

The fourth subpopulation was economically disadvantaged students. For economically disadvantaged students in the pilot group, there was a significant effect in reading levels from the beginning to the end of the school year, $t(727) = -76.563$, $p <$ .05. Students in this subgroup increased from a Level B to a Level H or six reading levels.

Ethnicity.

The fifth subpopulation analyzed was ethnicity. There was a significant effect for White students, $t(878) = -88.477$, $p < .05$, African American, $t(207) = -45.293$, $p < .05$, Asian, $t(206) = -40.369$, $p < .05$, Hispanic, $t(714) = -75.294$, $p < .05$, and American Indian, $t(3) = -8.490$, $p < .05$. On average, White students increased from a Level E to a Level K, African American students increased from a Level D to a Level J, Asian

students increased from a Level E to a Level K, Hispanic students increased from a

Level C to a Level I, and American Indian students increased from a Level C to a Level

J. White, African American, Asian and Hispanic populations all increased six

independent reading levels. American Indians increased by seven reading levels.

Similar to the pilot schools, a dependent groups t-test was also conducted for

each of the subpopulations in the non-pilot schools. Table 8 displays the results from

this statistical measure.

Table 8

Non-pilot Schools' Beginning and End of Year Mean Independent Reading Level by
Subpopulation

	N	Mean BOY	Mean EOY	# of levels increased	BOY & EOY Sig. (2-tailed)
Female	1072	4.62	10.48	+ 6	.000*
Male	1168	4.11	9.91	+ 5	.000*
At-risk	1001	3.34	9.14	+ 6	.000*
ESL	248	4.03	9.85	+ 5	.000*
Econ. disadvantaged	1,083	3.39	9.25	+ 6	.000*
White	781	5.14	11.03	+ 6	.000*
African American	310	4.30	10.23	+ 6	.000*
Asian	148	6.14	11.35	+ 5	.000*
Hispanic	994	3.47	9.32	+ 6	.000*
American Indian	7	6.57	11.57	+ 5	.000*

* $p < .05$

Gender.

There was a significant difference in independent reading levels for females when comparing the beginning to the end of the school year, t(1071) = -84.917, p < .05. On average, females increased from a Level D to a Level J or six reading levels. There was also a significant difference in BOY and EOY independent reading levels for males, t(1167) = -93.211, p < .05. Males increased on average from a Level D to a Level I, which is five reading levels.

At-risk.

For at-risk students there was a significant effect for independent reading levels from the beginning to the end of the year, t(1000) = -82.949, p < .05. At-risk students increased six reading levels from a Level C to a Level I.

ESL.

There was also a significant effect for ESL students' independent reading levels, t(247) = -45.163, p < .05. Students increased from a Level D to a Level I from the beginning to the end of the year. This is an average increase of five independent reading levels.

Economically disadvantaged.

In addition to ESL students, there was a significant effect for economically disadvantaged students, t(1082) = -89.362, p < .05, showing reading levels increased. These students increased from a Level C to a Level I, which is six reading levels.

Ethnicity.

A dependent groups t-test was also conducted for each of the ethnicities. There was a significant effect for White, t(780) = -79.758, p < .05, African American, t(309) =

-49.276, p < .05, Asian, t(147) = -26.435, p < .05, Hispanic, t(993) = -81.233, p < .05, American Indian, t(6) = -9.354, p < .05. On average, White students increased from a Level E to a Level K (six levels), African American students increased from a Level D to a Level J (six levels), Asian students increased from a Level F to a Level K (five levels), Hispanic students increased from a Level C to a Level I (six levels), and American Indian students increased from a Level F to a Level K (five levels). Results from the dependent groups t-test demonstrate that all subpopulations in the pilot schools and non-pilot schools made significant progress from the beginning to the end of the school year.

In order to answer the second research question, an independent groups t-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between subgroups of students taught using different methods of reading instruction, based on their end of year reading levels. The data in Table 9 provides a summary of the independent groups t-test.

Table 9

Comparison of Pilot and Non-pilot Schools' End of Year Mean Independent Reading Level by Subpopulation

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean diff.
Pilot vs. Non-Pilot EOY						
Female	1.225	.268	1.576	2026	.115	.179
Male	.891	.345	.789	2222	.430	.093
At-risk	.017	.895	.325	1722	.745	.047
ESL	2.133	.145	2.038	494	.042*	.456
Econ. Disadvantaged	.009	.925	-1.988	1809	.047*	-.271
White	.058	.810	-.244	1658	.807	-.027
African American	3.829	.051	-.647	516	.518	-.149
Asian	.027	.870	-.146	353	.884	-.033
Hispanic	.052	.819	-.528	1707	.597	-.075
American Indian	.015	.907	-.928	9	.378	-1.321

* p < .05

According to Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, if the p-value is .05 or higher then you keep the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the two groups, meaning there is homogeneity of variance. Based on Levene's Test, the pilot and non-pilot schools had equally variable populations at the end of the year for females (p = .268), males (p = .345), at-risk (p = .895), ESL (p = .145), economically disadvantaged (p = .925), White (p = .810), African American (p = .051), Asian (p = .870), Hispanic (p = .819), and American Indian students (p = .907).

Next, the significance level for the independent groups t-test was examined for each of the subpopulations. Based on this data, there was not a significant effect for females, $t(2026) = 1.576$, $p > .05$, males, $t(2222) = .789$, $p > .05$, at-risk, $t(1722) = .325$, $p > .05$, White, $t(1658) = -.244$, $p > .05$, African American, $t(516) = -.647$, $p > .05$, Asian $t(353) = -.146$, $p > .05$, Hispanic, $t(1707) = -.528$, $p > .05$, and American Indian, $t(9) = -.928$, $p > .05$. However, there was a significant effect between the pilot and non-pilot schools for ESL students, $t(494) = 2.038$, $p < .05$, and economically disadvantaged students, $t(1809) = -1.988$, $p < .05$, at the end of the year. Results indicate that ESL students in the pilot schools scored significantly higher than the non-pilot schools. This difference equates to one reading level higher. For the pilot schools, the average independent reading level for ESL students was a Level J. For the non-pilot schools, the average independent reading level was a Level I. Results also indicated that economically disadvantaged students in the non-pilot schools scored significantly higher than the pilot schools. This difference also equates to one reading level higher. The average independent reading level for the pilot group was a Level H, while the non-pilot group was a Level I.

Summary

Results from this study indicate that both pilot and non-pilot schools made significant gains in student independent reading levels from beginning to end of the year. This was also true for each of the subgroups in the pilot and non-pilot schools. When both schools end of year benchmark scores were compared, the results revealed that there was not a significant difference between the pilot and non-pilot schools. In regards to the subpopulations, there was a significant difference between the pilot and

non-pilot schools for ESL students. This was in favor of the pilot schools. Data also revealed that there was a significant difference between the pilot and non-pilot schools for economically disadvantaged students, which was in favor of the non-pilot schools. The chapter to follow will discuss these results in further detail.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Introduction

Presently, no rigorous research has been conducted on the effects of Reading Workshop in the early childhood years, kindergarten through second grade. Previous studies have focused on third grade and higher. In addition, no research has been conducted regarding the effects of Reading Workshop on normal developing students' independent reading levels. Lastly, no studies have been conducted on the magnitude of this study (Blake, 2006; Kletzien & Hushion, 1992; Mitev, 1994; Schiavone, 2000; Shatzer, 1996). This study contributes to the literature in the following ways: provides a formalized study on Reading Workshop with early childhood students, documents newly discovered information about the effects of Reading Workshop on student independent reading levels, and documents the effects of Reading Workshop on a large sample size. This chapter provides an overview of the study and its findings, recommendations, limitations of the study, suggestions for future studies, and conclusions.

Findings

This study examined the effects of Reading Workshop on first grade students' independent reading levels. The effects were measured by comparing reading achievement among students taught using different models of reading instruction, one with Reading Workshop and one without. Students in the pilot schools received Reading Workshop instruction in addition to balanced literacy. Students in the non-pilot received only balanced literacy instruction. Participants were 4,254 first graders from a large suburban district in Texas. The pilot group consisted of 2,013 students from

twelve schools and the non-pilot group consisted of 2,240 students from twelve schools. Each of the schools had similar demographics based on their percentage of economically disadvantaged students. Archival data was collected from beginning and end of year district benchmarks given during the 2009-2010 school year.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of a Reading Workshop pilot program on first grade students' independent reading levels compared to students in a balanced literacy program?

2. What are the effects of Reading Workshop on various subpopulations of students (gender, at-risk, economically disadvantaged, English as a Second Language, and ethnicity)?

In order to answer the first research question, a series of statistical tests were run. Results demonstrated a statistically significant difference in student independent reading levels from beginning to end of the year in both the pilot and non-pilot schools. When analyzed separately, each group made significant progress toward increasing students' independent reading levels. This suggests that Reading Workshop and balanced literacy are both effective in increasing students' independent reading levels. Not only are students able to read at higher independent reading levels, but also with excellent or satisfactory comprehension. Based on the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System I,* students must demonstrate at least satisfactory comprehension in order to move to the next independent reading level. This data helps answer the first research question by providing insight about whether students in the Reading Workshop pilot program made significant progress from the beginning to the end of the school

year. Prior research on Reading Workshop suggests that the approach is beneficial to students in a variety of ways including: student attitudes toward reading, student reading behaviors, self-confidence with reading and academic achievement in reading (Blake, 2006; Kletzien & Hushion, 1992; Mitev, 1994; Schiavone, 2000; Shatzer, 1996). The current study supports this notion by demonstrating that Reading Workshop is beneficial to students by increasing academic achievement in reading, particularly independent reading levels.

The data was further analyzed to determine if a significant difference existed between the scores of students from each of the groups, pilot and non-pilot. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in independent reading levels between the pilot schools and the non-pilot schools at the end of the school year. At the beginning of the school year, both the pilot and non-pilot schools had an average independent reading level of C. Therefore, there was not a significant difference in student reading levels between the pilot and non-pilot schools. This was also true for the end of the school year. At the end of the school year there was not a significant difference in student reading levels between the pilot and non-pilot schools; therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. The average independent reading level for both groups at the end of the year was a Level J. A possible explanation for this finding might be that both methods of reading instruction are effective; therefore, students at both pilot schools and non-pilot schools had high independent reading levels. While there was not a significant difference in end of year reading levels for the pilot and non-pilot schools, the pilot schools had a slightly higher percentage of students above the district standard in reading, 64.5% compared to 62%.

The subpopulations of students were also examined from each group, pilot and non-pilot. These statistical analyses helped answer the second research question. The subpopulations included: gender, at-risk, ESL, economically disadvantaged and ethnicity. When the beginning of the year reading levels for each subpopulation was compared to the end of year, each subpopulation made significant growth. This was true for the pilot schools and the non-pilot schools. Therefore, either method of instruction, balanced literacy with the addition of Reading Workshop or balanced literacy alone, is effective for teaching students in each of the subpopulations with significant results. These results are promising considering the achievement gaps noted among various subgroups on the *National Adult Literacy Survey* and *The Nation's Report Card for reading* (Kirsch et al., 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Immigrants, persons considered as living in poverty, and males have been specifically identified as falling behind their counterparts. Literacy continues to be a problem at the national level for both children and adults. Results from these national studies support the need for a literacy program that meets the needs of all individuals (Kirsch et al., 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). One main concern for districts that are responsible for demonstrating adequate yearly progress is students in each of the subgroups. Data reported at the national and state level is reported based on the progress of subgroups. The two models of instruction used in this study have demonstrated to be successful with male, female, at-risk, ESL and economically disadvantaged students. This study has also shown that the two models of instruction are highly effective with all ethnicities.

Next, the end of year reading levels for each of the subpopulations were compared to see if there was a significant difference between the pilot and non-pilot schools. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference in independent reading levels at the end of the year between the subpopulations from the pilot and non-pilot schools. For ESL and economically disadvantaged students, the hypothesis was accepted. Results from the statistical analysis revealed that ESL students in the pilot schools scored significantly higher than the non-pilot schools. The difference consisted of one reading level higher. This data suggests that adding Reading Workshop to a balanced literacy schedule is more effective in getting ESL students to reach higher independent reading levels than balanced literacy alone. Districts with high populations of ESL students might consider using this instructional model for this reason. There was also a significant difference in reading levels for economically disadvantaged students. Economically disadvantaged students scored significantly higher in the non-pilot group. This data suggests that balanced literacy alone is more effective for students who are economically disadvantaged. Therefore, districts with high populations of economically disadvantaged students might consider implementing balanced literacy. For gender, at-risk, and ethnicity there was not a significant difference in scores between the pilot and non-pilot schools. For these subpopulations, the hypothesis was rejected. From this data we can conclude that both models of instruction are equally effective for females, males, at-risk, White, African American, Asian, Hispanic, and American Indian students.

Recommendations

This study examined two models of instruction, one that consisted of Reading Workshop in addition to balanced literacy and the other that consisted of balanced literacy alone. When compared, the reading achievement among students taught using different models of instruction were not statistically significant. While the differences were not statistically significant between the two models of instruction, each model demonstrated a significant increase in independent reading levels from the beginning to the end of the school year. Therefore, districts can use either model of instruction to successfully increase student independent reading levels.

Literature suggests that students in the state of Texas in the upper elementary grades are struggling with reading comprehension. In 2009, 72% of fourth grade students in Texas were at *basic* or *below basic* achievement levels in reading, based on their levels of comprehension (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Comprehension directly affects a student's independent reading level. Students must be able to comprehend a text before they are able to move to higher reading levels. It is apparent that reading comprehension is an area of need in Texas. If schools wait to address these needs when students are termed at-risk, students will fall further behind their age-level peers. It is important that comprehension instruction begins with formalized reading instruction. In the public school setting, formalized reading instruction often begins in kindergarten or first grade. Therefore, schools in Texas would benefit from implementing either balanced literacy alone or with Reading Workshop in their early childhood classrooms.

If schools begin comprehension instruction in the early childhood years, students will have a strong foundational knowledge when they get to the upper grades. This way of thinking is supported by Lucy Calkins, an educational leader from the Teachers College at Columbia University. She believes that students should be taught that "reading is thinking" from the start. Her adaption of Reading Workshop demonstrates how the approach can be used in the early childhood setting. In Jerome Bruner's book *The Process of Education,* he states that:

> Experience over the past decade points to the fact that our schools may be wasting precious years by postponing the teaching of many important subjects on the ground that they were too difficult…The foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form. (Calkins, 2001, p. 13)

If we teach comprehension as a part of the reading process and expose students to it during the early childhood years, they will have a stronger foundation for reading. Therefore, districts must choose an instructional approach that will build comprehension in the early childhood years and increase reading achievement.

Reading Workshop, when added to a balanced literacy program is one effective approach for increasing reading achievement. This study shows that Reading Workshop can successfully be applied in first grade and increase students' independent reading levels from beginning to end of the school year. It also demonstrates that Reading Workshop, when added to a balanced literacy schedule, is beneficial to all subpopulations for increasing literacy achievement. Based on the findings balanced literacy is another effective approach for increasing reading achievement, particularly independent reading levels. Like Reading Workshop, it can successfully increase

student independent reading levels among various subpopulations including gender, at-risk, ESL, economically disadvantaged, White, African American, Asian, Hispanic, and American Indian. Therefore, districts who are concerned about increasing reading achievement in each of the subpopulations would benefit from implementing either balanced literacy alone, or with the addition of Reading Workshop. Since there was not a significant difference in student independent reading levels between the two models of instruction, there is not enough evidence to support the addition of Reading Workshop based on this study alone. There is a need for further examination of the approach before any conclusions can be made. When compared to balanced literacy, the addition of Reading Workshop only had a significant effect for ESL students. While these results are very promising, more research needs to be conducted. If districts are only concerned about student independent reading levels, either model of reading instruction would be equally effective. This study has supported this conclusion. However, there are many other factors that cannot be measured using standardized tests, such as student motivation. These factors, which will be discussed in future studies, must also be considered in the decision-making process when determining which model of instruction is best for the students in the district.

Limitations

Due to the fact that this was an archival study, there were some variables that could not be controlled or manipulated by the researcher. These variables serve as limitations to the study. First, the classroom library of each teacher varied. While teachers were able to use district adoption texts for their classroom libraries, the majority of the books were from each teacher's own personal collection. Some teachers

had a larger collection of books than others. Therefore, students in all classrooms did not have equal access to the same amount of books and genres for independent reading. Students with more books in their classroom library would have access to a larger variety of texts, while students with fewer books in their classroom library would have more limited choices.

In addition to lack of control over classroom libraries, no inter-observer reliability was used due to the large size of the district, although, teachers received training on the use of the instrument. The *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System I* was used in almost every first grade classroom in the district. Therefore, it was not feasible for the district to have more than one teacher score the students on both the beginning and end of year benchmark exam. However, due to the nature of the assessment, very little is left to teacher interpretation. The accuracy score is based on whether or not the child read the word correctly, so there is little room for error. The comprehension score is based on a Likert-scale, which allows more room for interpretation. However, the *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System I* provides specific responses for teachers to look for when asking the students comprehension questions. This helps prevent interpretation error. Therefore, the design of the assessment itself helps reduce error by the testing administrator.

Last, this study only examined the effects of Reading Workshop based on students' independent reading levels. There are many alternate ways to measure the effectiveness of Reading Workshop. These alternate measures will be discussed as future studies that need to be conducted. Before making important decisions regarding the implementation of a new instructional approach, districts must consider all aspects

of the approach. Since the effectiveness of an approach can be measured in many different ways, each of these should be considered in the decision-making process.

Future Studies

There is a need for more experimental studies on the effects of Reading Workshop in early childhood classrooms. As mentioned previously, there are no other rigorous studies on the effects of Reading Workshop in the early childhood years documented at this time. Additional studies on Reading Workshop need to be conducted to determine if they yield the same results. For districts who wish to implement the approach in each of its elementary schools, future studies might want to consider the cost effectiveness. The current study did not consist of a cost analysis. However, future studies may consider including an itemized list of all of the expenses of implementing Reading Workshop. Expenses such as out-of-district personnel used to train teachers, teacher resources, and books for the classrooms should all be considered in the analysis of cost effectiveness. This information can help districts with decision-making regarding whether or not the approach is feasible to implement with current funds.

While this study only examined the effects of Reading Workshop on students' independent reading levels, there are many alternate ways to measure the effectiveness of Reading Workshop. For example, this study did not examine student motivation towards reading. Many districts consider student motivation to be a factor in determining the effectiveness of an approach to teaching reading. It is important for students to be motivated to read so that they will become lifelong readers. Therefore, future studies need to be conducted on the effects of Reading Workshop on student

attitudes in the early childhood setting. This study also did not measure teachers'

attitudes about the effectiveness of the approach. Teachers see what occurs in the

classroom on a daily basis and can attest to what really happens during allotted reading

times. Since teachers are directly involved in the process, they would be helpful in

determining the effectiveness of the approach in their own classroom. They would also

be able to determine if the approach was more effective than what the district had

previously used. Future studies need to be conducted on the effectiveness of Reading

Workshop based on early childhood teachers' attitudes. Furthermore, this study did not

measure how Reading Workshop affects the classroom environment. The effectiveness

of Reading Workshop could be measured based on the amount of time students spend

reading, student discussion of literature, and peer scaffolding of reading. Future studies

need to be conducted in each of these areas in the early childhood setting.

Lastly, this study did not measure whether or not the students were actually

using the strategies they were taught. This could be measured by observing the

students during independent and partner reading to see if they are using known reading

strategies. It could also be measured by collecting the students' written reading

responses to determine if they are applying the comprehension strategies they have

learned during mini-lessons. Future studies need to focus on student use of

comprehension strategies after participating in Reading Workshop.

Conclusion

Reading Workshop is an age-appropriate approach for teaching reading

comprehension in the early childhood years. It teaches children at an early age that

reading is "thinking guided by print" (Calkins, 2001, p. 13). It involves the teacher

modeling various comprehension strategies, then allowing time for the students to

practice. Balanced literacy incorporates a variety of teaching strategies to meet the

needs of all learners. Each of the strategies used for teaching reading is equally

important. These strategies include phonological awareness, sight word identification,

word identification strategies, word meanings, and learning to interpret and respond to

literature (Fitzgerald, 1999). When considering which approach to teaching reading is

best for the early childhood years, districts must consider the needs of its students.

Reading achievement is a problem at both the national and state level. This

problem begins in childhood and remains throughout adulthood (Kirsch et al., 2002;

National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). There is a need for better reading

instruction in the state of Texas that will help students achieve more advanced levels of

comprehension. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Texas is

marginally behind 36 other states based on the percentage of fourth grade students

who are able to read with *proficient* and *advanced* levels of comprehension. Texas'

percentage also falls below the national average (National Center for Education

Statistics, 2009). In order to help alleviate this problem, something must be done about

the current educational practices used for teaching reading in early childhood

classrooms. Balanced literacy alone and balanced literacy with the addition of Reading

Workshop are two effective models of instruction for increasing student independent

reading levels. At higher independent reading levels, students are able to demonstrate

more complex comprehension skills. These two models of instruction can provide

students with the foundational knowledge they need to be successful, lifelong readers.

By implementing either of these instructional models, schools can not only help children

build good reading habits at an early age, but help prevent deficits that may surface in

later years.

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Appendix A

2009-2010 Reading Workshop Pilot Schedule

Component	Minutes
Read aloud (just for fun)	15

Reading Workshop (60 minutes):
Reading mini-lesson
Independent reading
   • Guided reading group (10-15 min.)
   • Teacher-student conferences (3-4 min. each)
Partner reading
   • Guided reading group (10-15 min.)
   • Teacher-student conferences (3-4 min. each)
Reading share time
	
	10
	20-25
	
	20-25
	
	5

Shared reading (3 times a week) Interactive writing (2 times a week)	15
Writing Workshop (45 minutes): Writing mini-lesson Independent writing Writing share time	 10 30 5
Word study (phonics, spelling, handwriting)	30
Read aloud (with accountable talk)	15
Total instruction time	**180**

2009-2010 Non-Pilot Schedule

Component	Minutes
Morning message	5
Independent reading	15-20
Reading share time	5

Literacy Stations
   • 3 literacy stations per day
   • Guided reading groups
	45-55

Guided reading share time (whole group)	5
Shared reading (3 times a week) Interactive writing (2 times a week)	10-15
Read aloud (with accountable talk)	10-15
Writing Workshop: Writing mini-lesson Independent writing Writing share time	 10 20-25 5
Word study (phonics, spelling, handwriting)	20-30
Total instruction time	**180**

Note: Schedule determined by the school district involved

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY *of* HOUSTON

COMMITTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

October 5, 2011

Ms. Christin Baker
c/o Dr. Nicole Andrews
Curriculum and Instruction

Dear Ms. Christin Baker,

Based upon your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "The Effects of Reading Workshop on First Grade Students Independent Reading Levels" was conducted on August 24, 2011.

At that time, your request for exemption under **category 4** was approved pending modification of your proposed procedures/documents.

The changes you have made adequately respond to the identified contingencies. As long as you continue using procedures described in this project, you do not have to reapply for review.* Any modification of this approved protocol will require review and further approval. Please contact me to ascertain the appropriate mechanism.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-9215.

Sincerely yours,

Anne Sherman
Interim Director, Research Compliance

*Approvals for exempt protocols will be valid for 5 years beyond the approval date. Approval for this project will expire **August 1, 2016**. If the project is completed prior to this date, a final report should be filed to close the protocol. If the project will continue after this date, you will need to reapply for approval if you wish to avoid an interruption of your data collection.

Protocol Number: 11491-EX