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A Case Study on the use of Best Practices Within the MRI Program in a Midwest School District

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by

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Dr. Jackie Ramey, Dissertation Chair	4/27/18 Date
Dr. Kevin Winslow, Committee Member	4/27/18 Date
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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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Abstract

The ability to read proficiently is a comprehensive skill necessary for success at all academic levels. Students who consistently read below grade level continue to struggle throughout their school years with little chance of recovery. The administrative leaders of the Ocean View School District (a pseudonym) noticed a decline in reading scores and recognized a need for a significant shift in its instructional practices to reach its struggling readers.

The purpose of this study allowed school leaders an opportunity to investigate the effectiveness of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) reading strategy within the structure of the Missouri Reading Initiative Program (MRI) regarding student achievement in reading at a small mid-western urban elementary school. During the study, the small mid-western urban school's Reading Specialists utilized two gradual release models, a Three-Step gradual release method and a Four-Step gradual release method in Grade 3 through Grade 5. The Primary Investigator collected secondary data in the form of reading and Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores, to evaluate student outcomes.

The implementation of Reader's Workshop at the Valley Breeze Elementary School (a pseudonym) led to a discussion of the effectiveness best practices, balanced literacy, and small group instruction on student achievement and reading levels. Increase in student reading levels was gauged by an increase as assessed by the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Reading Assessment.

The Primary Investigator formulated two hypotheses organized around the following questions: (1) How do reading scores differ in comparison to the

implementation of two different models of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program? (2) How do ELA MAP scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program?

Overall, the Primary Investigator determined the results of the study as inconclusive. However, trends in growth due to student moving levels during a given school year, as well as, a positive average growth percentage of reading scores was noted. The Primary Investigator recommended another form of assessment to validate the increased achievement of student readers.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The first section of Chapter One focused on the purpose of the study that took place in a large public elementary school located in the Midwest. The second section explained the purpose and rationale. The next sections of Chapter One explained limitations, defined terms, and gave a short conclusion of the chapter.

Purpose

Reading is one skill that is essential in all subject areas. The ability to read proficiently is a universal skill necessary for success at all academic levels. Students who consistently read below grade level continue to struggle throughout their school years with little chance of recovery. Pretorius (2000) stated research findings in applied linguistics and reading research consistently show a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages, from the primary school right through to university level: students who read a lot and who understand what they read usually attain good grades (p. 35).

School leaders in the district of the study began to evaluate the approach to how teachers taught reading and writing, and analyze student achievement in the area of English Language Arts. The Missouri Department of Education began to recognize priority schools, which forced school leaders to reevaluate and make necessary changes in their English Language Arts instructional focus.

In an attempt to increase the reading levels of students in 2013, the local school district employed the idea of enhancing their use of Benchmark Literacy, a Balanced Literacy approach, by additionally incorporating Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI). Prior to the use of the Balanced Literacy and MRI model, the district curriculum was phonics based and teachers used Imagine It, Open Court (McGraw Hill), and a phonics

based reading program. According to the publisher, McGraw Hill, Open Court Reading, is a comprehensive K-5 reading, writing, and language arts curriculum. When teachers use an explicit, systematic approach to teaching, learning is exciting and engaging for all students. In addition, when teachers teach and model instructional routines, they establish predictable patterns for learners to know what is expected of them and how to perform independently (McGraw Hill, n.d.). Teachers did not incorporate the use of a specific best practice within an instructional model at the school district study site. Teachers did not utilize predictable patterns as an instructional best practice and therefore was not a piece of the daily practice in the Benchmark Literacy program as it was in the MRI and Balanced Literacy approach. For this reason, the school district adopted MRI, in 2013, which is based on the principles of effective and research-based literacy strategies, including the most current findings by the National Reading Panel (MRI, 2018). MRI is a Missouri state reading program designed to assist public school districts with research-based best practices for reading instruction. The original purpose of MRI was to assist teachers of Kindergarten through Grade 3 with strategies to help students become grade-level proficient in reading. In 1998, the MRI program began facilitating the support of public school teachers of grades Kindergarten through third grade and at the time of this writing, continues to support public school districts in all grade levels (MRI, 2018).

The purpose of the study allowed school leaders an opportunity to investigate the effectiveness of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) teaching model within the structure of the Missouri Reading Initiative Program (MRI) regarding student achievement in the area of reading at a small mid-western urban elementary school. During the study, the small mid-western urban school utilized two gradual release

models, a Three-Step method of GRR and a Four-Step method of GRR in Grade 3 through Grade 5. The Primary Investigator used secondary data in the form of reading and Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores, to evaluate student outcomes.

The Primary Investigator investigated success at Valley Breeze Elementary (pseudonym) by comparing student outcomes for the two differing gradual release models utilized in the MRI program, by comparing the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method of the gradual release model. To analyze scores, the Primary Investigator compared pre-test and post-test benchmark tests scores from two consecutive years from the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

The Primary Investigator determined whether one method yielded higher test scores and determined if differences existed between the last benchmark for the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment (F&P) and the Missouri Assessment Program outcomes (MAP).

The Primary Investigator used a *t*-test for a difference in means to determine the results of hypothesis one. The *t*-test for difference in means is a statistical test used for testing the mean of a population, which researchers use when the population is normally, or approximately normally distributed, or the population standard deviation is unknown (Bluman, 2013). The Primary Investigator used this statistical test to determine the existence of significant differences between the means of at least two groups (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2013). For hypotheses two, the Primary Investigator determined the difference of proportion of students scoring Proficient and Advanced on ELA MAP as calculated by the *z*-test of proportions.

Rationale

The use of best practices in the educational world began to be a part of discussions several years ago. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2012) explained:

> The expression "best practice" was originally borrowed from the professions of medicine, law, and architecture, where "good practice" and "best practice" are everyday phrases used to describe solid, reputable, state-of-the-art work in a field. If a professional is following best practice standards, he or she is aware of current research and consistently offers clients the full benefits of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures. (p. 1)

The MRI (Missouri Reading Initiative) program provides a comprehensive approach to staff development in all areas of literacy. Ocean View School District (a pseudonym) administrators identified and adopted the MRI to address the lack of improvement of reading literacy and, ultimately, student achievement. Educators utilized MRI in elementary schools across the state of Missouri for several years. The initial work of the Missouri Reading Initiative supported educators working with Missouri public schools' enabling teachers and administrators to guarantee every child would read proficiently by the end of Grade 3. However, because of the successful results of the program, the initiative expanded to include literacy assistance at all grade levels. MRI works with Missouri public schools to achieve the following goals:

- Provide ongoing, systemic professional development to enhance the quality of literacy instruction leading to improved student achievement throughout all grade levels.

- Examine and disseminate research in reading and writing to educators throughout the state, assisting schools with the implementation of instructional best practices in literacy through modeling lessons, coaching, and collaboration.
- Assist schools with assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of school improvement efforts in literacy toward a comprehensive model. (MRI 2018)

MRI utilizes a method of implementation, which includes the use of the Three-Step Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Figure 1, p. 33). Duke and Pearson described Gradual Release of Responsibility as a structure that shifts the cognitive load from teacher modeling, to teacher/student work, to independent practice and application by the learner (as cited in Fisher & Frey, 2014). Fisher (2008) also noted that this Three-Step method omits an important step in the process, which is the ‘you do it together' phase. The school administrators represented in this study implemented a Four-Step gradual release method (Appendix A). A complete implementation of this model, as stated in Fisher and Frey (2014), identified the recursive nature of learning and as teachers progress with intentional instruction through purpose setting and guided instruction, collaborative learning, and independent experiences.

The Primary Investigator understood the importance for decision makers to determine which method is superior to implement the most effective model in the future, which led to the rationale of the study. When decision makers can determine greater student achievement, utilizing different methods of gradual release, teachers and administrators may determine which model to incorporate into future practice. Therefore, the rationale of this study guided administration and teachers in the decision-making process of which strategy suggested a significant positive difference in reading

achievement. The Primary Investigator determined the rationale allow the school leadership team to make informed decisions as to which method yielded higher growth measures.

Hypotheses

This dissertation allows curriculum leaders to make informed decisions regarding which Gradual release method to implement within the MRI model based upon achievement outcomes. The Primary Investigator formulated two hypotheses. The following two questions guided the Primary Investigator's research organized around the following questions: (1) How do reading scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program? (2) How do ELA MAP scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program?

Hypothesis 1. There is a difference in the increase in levels on the F&P between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Hypothesis 2. There is a difference in proportion of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Limitations

The Primary Investigator assumed that participants followed the program guidelines the program provided. The Primary Investigator did not include data regarding differences in the testing environments due to limited availability in the study. The archived data is not representative of multiple demographics, specifically race and

socioeconomic status. The participants in the study are also categorized socioeconomic status and African American ethnicity, which may not be indicative of comparisons to groups that are not of the same ethnic background and low socioeconomic status.

Definition of Terms

The Primary Investigator defined the terms of the study to provide an accurate understanding of the study. The Primary Investigator defined those terms in this section of the dissertation, which allows readers to understand terms specific to the study.

Achievement scores. For the purpose of this study, the Primary Investigator measured achievement scores utilizing the following tools: Fountas and Pinnell and MAP.

Balanced Literacy. Balanced literacy is a philosophical orientation that assumes that reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and support in multiple environments using various approaches that differ by level of teacher support and child control (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Fountas & Pinnell (F&P). F&P stands for Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment, a research-based formative assessment tool used by Valley Breeze Elementary to place students in small guided reading groups. F&P measures students' instructional and independent reading levels according to standardized norms.

Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model provides teachers with an instructional framework for moving from teacher knowledge to student understanding and application. The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model ensures that teachers support students in their acquisition of the skills and strategies necessary for success (Fisher, 2008).

Guided Reading. Guided reading is an instructional approach that involves a teacher working with a small group of students who demonstrate similar reading behaviors and can all read similar levels of texts ("What is guided," 2015).

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). The MAP is a testing program teachers administer annually to elementary, middle, and high school students in the state of Missouri to measure program effectiveness and to comply with federal regulations outlined in NCLB.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MO DESE). For purposes of this study, MO DESE represents the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the state of Missouri.

Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI). "A comprehensive approach to professional development in all aspects of literacy which, in its initial year of implementation, includes 22 days of on-site training that encompasses seminars, peer coaching, modeling, and other approaches to professional development" (MRI, 2018, p. 1).

Ocean View School District. For the purpose of this study, to follow procedure, and keep the anonymity of participants, the Primary Investigator created this pseudonym for the school district name.

Reading Workshop. For the purpose of this study, Reading Workshop is defined as a 90-minute block of time in which students are taught guided reading according to the MRI model.

Research-based instructional strategies. For the purpose of this study, research-based, instructional strategies are strategies that are identified as having a positive effect on student learning.

Urban Education. School districts classified as urban intensive, urban emergent, or urban characteristic, as determined by population density and outside environmental challenges such as housing, poverty, transportation, and scarcity of resources (Milner, 2012).

Valley Breeze Elementary. For the purpose of this study, to follow procedure, and keep the anonymity of participants, the Primary Investigator created this pseudonym for the school name.

Summary

The introduction to Chapter One provided a brief overview of the case study setting's background. The next section of Chapter One gave an overview of the methodology, problem statement, and rationale for the case study, followed by a brief explanation of the study focus, and the achievement of elementary students participating in the Missouri Reading Initiative. The study focused on the use of the Three and Four-Step Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. The final section in Chapter One stated each hypothesis, definition of terms, and study limitations, followed by a conclusion.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Chapter Two focused on the review of literature relating to this study on educating transient population of students. The Primary Investigator portrayed the literature review through several studies that examined current reading theories, balanced literacy, best practices, and reading comprehension strategies that have an effect on reading instruction and student achievement.

Reading Ability

Every aspect of academic life involves reading. While students live in a society immersed in the written word, the process of learning to read is not a natural phenomenon. As cited in Joseph (n.d.), according to the National Assessment Education Progress Report, 38% of Grade 4 students and 29% of eighth graders are reading below basic levels (p. 1163). Wren (2002) stated, "It has often been suggested that children will learn to read if they are simply immersed in a literacy-rich environment and allowed to develop literacy skills in their own way" (p. 1). Burns, Roe, and Smith (2002) suggested, "children who do not understand the importance of learning to read will not be motivated to learn" (p. 3). Since the process of learning how to read takes time and effort, students who value this process are more likely to work harder than those who do not understand the benefits. According to The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR, 2007), if students are to become proficient readers, it is important for educators to offer quality instruction in the following manner:

- Provide explicit, differentiated reading instruction for all students.
- Offer engaging opportunities for all students to practice reading.
- Facilitate an organized classroom. (p. 1)

A child's ability to read is the primary key to achieving overall success throughout their educational journey. The FCRR (2007) cited many students in the United States struggle to become competent readers by Grade 4. The importance of students participating in high success reading activities has an extensive research base (Ellington, 2012). However, only the best readers in most schools engage in huge amounts of high-success reading. Kinberg (2007) stated a common misconception about teaching literacy is that it should be taught separately from other content (p. 11). Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989, as cited in Kinberg, 2007) argued that concepts are learned and cannot be decontextualized from the contexts in which they are learned. Kinberg continued to address the concept that teachers typically assume that reading is taught during the Language Arts period, not other times. Meltzer (2001) stated "Literacy-the ability to read, write, speak, and think effectively enables students to communicate clearly in and out of school" (p. 1). Kinberg (2007) stated reading is the ability to process text, communicate in oral and written form. All of which are literacy skills (p. 6).

Mobility & Student Achievement

Rumberger, Larson, Ream, and Palardy (1999) defined student mobility as students moving from one school to another for reason other than progressing to the next grade. Research indicated that students in the United States make at least one non-progressive change per school year. Sparks (2016) quoted "school mobility refers to the frequency of such moves among students in a particular classroom, school, or district. High churn (mobility) in schools not only can hurt the students who leave, but also those who remain enrolled." Stated by Rumberger (2003) and Franke, Isken, and Parra (2003) as cited in Ramey (2013), the impact of transiency in schools affected not only mobile students, but also non-mobile students in the schools these students attended. Educators

had great concerns about students moving in and out of school systems because of negative impacts on student learning and achievement (Franke, Isken, & Parra, 2003; Rumberger, 2003). Numerous studies have examined the impact of mobility on several aspects of academic achievement such as

> test scores, grades, retention, and high school completion. As with all research studies, there are limitations to what these studies tell us. Most important, because mobile students may have personal and family problems that contribute to their mobility, studies should take into account those prior characteristics in order to determine whether mobility itself is the cause of subsequent achievement and other problems in schools. (Rumberger, 2003, para. 3)

According to Hattie (2012), mobility has a -0.34 effect on student achievement. More recent research states that students will likely lose about three months of reading and math learning each time a switch of schools occurs (Sparks, 2016). Ramey (2013) further stated, mobility can be particularly difficult for student in the early grades as the foundational skills are being addressed. According to Beatty (2010):

> In terms of the impact of mobility, the researchers found that children who change schools during kindergarten (though, relatively few in number) ended up behind their peers in literacy skills, even when their prior achievement levels are taken into account; this effect is strongest for low-SES children. (p. 14)

Reading Theories

Literacy skills are necessary for student success in today's world. “Every child a reader” as stated by Allington and Gabriel (2012) has always been the goal of instruction, education research, and reform for at least the last three decades (p. 10). Allington and Gabriel continued to stress that researchers now know even more about how to teach

reading, yet few students in the United States regularly receive the best reading instruction available. Hattie (2012) stated visible teaching and learning occurs when learning is the explicit and transparent goal, when it is appropriately challenging, and when the teacher and the student both seek ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained (pp. 17-18).

However, students who have limited literacy skills have little chance of scoring in the proficient target range on the district or state assessments. Dorn and Saffos (2001) asked the question ‘is there a link between the types of instructional opportunities provided for children and the development of their literacy knowledge?' Questions such as these can provide a framework for researching how children become literate and how a curriculum shapes that literate behavior (p. 29). According to Armbruster and Osborn (2001), reading is a skill learned in primary school, one that continues to serve children through adulthood. Reading is a difficult task to accomplish. Strong, Silver, Perini, and Tuculescu (2002) pointed out that reading is important for three reasons. Reading is an essential skill in our culture, reading is a skill we count on, and reading is thinking (pp. vii-viii).

While educators implement many models and reforms, no one model appears to have an ongoing positive affect universally for all school districts. Allington and Cunningham (2002) researched the implementation of various educational reform models, which suggested that nothing works everywhere, but most ideas can be adapted to work somewhere. Other researchers, Dorn and Saffos (2001) discussed the literacy continuum. Dorn and Saffos stated teachers should be required to study children's reading and writing progression. The reading and writing progression continuum allows teachers to examine the development of individual reading behaviors that change over

time as students gain knowledge of strategies and skills. The reading and writing progression continuum also forces teachers to look beyond grade level expectations and focus more closely on the learning patterns of students (p. 29). Effective teachers manage to produce better achievement regardless of which curriculum materials, pedagogical approach, or reading program is selected (Allington, 2002).

A misconception about successful reading instruction relates closely to the paradox that claims reading is a natural process. Research conducted by Wren (2002) claimed that if teachers give children enough time, children would eventually learn to read. Wren (2002) also discussed the stipulations that coincide with this theory by introducing the idea of “The Matthew Effect”, explained best through his research statement as, "That certainly describes what happens as children enter school and begin learning literacy skills. Over time, the gap between children who have well-developed literacy skills and those who do not get wider and wider" (p. 3). Wren continued to say that if students do not have a strong grasp on literacy skills by Grade 4, the odds are very slim that they will ever develop successful reading skills and strategies.

Allington and Gabriel (2012) discussed six elements essential to essential reading instruction:

1. Every child reads something he or she chooses.
2. Every child reads accurately.
3. Every child reads something he or she understands.
4. Every child writes about something personally meaningful.
5. Every child talks with peers about reading and writing.
6. Every child listens to a fluent adult read aloud. (p. 14)

Allington and Gabriel continued to state that "it's time for the elements of effective instruction described here to be offered more consistently to every child, in every school, every day" (p. 14).

Balanced Literacy

Included in Dorn, French, and Jones' (1998) recommendation is a plan for assimilating reading: "successful teaching practices include (a) reading and rereading familiar fiction and nonfiction books to students, (b) implementing shared reading strategies using various media, and (c) utilizing guided reading principles in small groups with students" (p. 29). Dorn et al. stated the following questions as examples teachers used during instruction.

> What can the children learn alone? What can the children do with my help? What types of materials will support the children in applying their current knowledge, strategies, and skills? How does each type of literacy activity support the children in building effective reading systems? What sort of guidance do I provide the children in each activity? (p. 29)

According to Berverstein (2005), Balanced Literacy is a framework that gives equal attention to reading and writing instruction. As reading and writing are interdependent, instruction in one supports learning in the other. The Balanced Literacy approach to teaching literacy provides students' success in the area of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Balanced literacy is the classroom application of reading recovery and early literacy groups. Berverstein (2005) continued to discuss that this approach develops competencies of students using varieties of tools, materials, resources, and strategies. Balanced Literacy highlights oral language, thinking and collaboration, and understanding the foundation of literacy learning. The use of formative assessments

guide teacher instruction and determine the levels of support used in a Balanced Literacy classroom. Balanced Literacy provides explicit skill instruction for problem-solving and strategic thinking, during an uninterrupted block of time. Balanced Literacy also offers individual learning chances, multiple ways to acquire knowledge, and show and engage students in learning opportunities that are multi-leveled and cross-curricular (Yukon Education, 2015). Dorn et al. (1998) described the components of a balanced reading program. Balanced literacy involved planning a carefully selected variety of activities designed to guide children through the developmental reading processes with expected movement to higher levels of understanding (Dorn et al., 1998, p. 29).

Berverstein (2005) provided teachers with five important instructional elements that organize the Balance Literacy classroom. The instructional elements include excellent models of reading and writing behavior, systematic, intentional skill instruction, copious amounts of rich and various literature, authentic reading and writing activities, and ongoing assessment and evaluation. According to Berverstein, there are eight cluster activities in a Balanced Literacy Framework: Read Aloud, Shared Reading, Guided Reading, Independent Reading, Modeled Writing, Shared Writing, Guided Writing, and Independent Writing. However, Mermelstein (2013) considered the components of Balanced Literacy to include Read Aloud, Shared Reading, Reading Workshop, Shared Writing, Interactive Writing, and Writing Workshop.

The Literacy block begins with a Read Aloud in which the teacher reads various types of text while modeling metacognitive thinking. The lessons are from units of study or class needs. Teachers often refer to a text for instructional clarity such as a Read Aloud or a Shared Reading (Goltche, 2015). Yukon Education (2015) compared the Read Aloud to Modeled Reading as the teacher demonstrates for the students, the

students hear examples of good reading. Mermelstein (2013) discussed the student participation as listening to the text and the teacher participation as using thinking strategies. Mermelstein argued students watch the modeled strategies, and then try them by talking with a partner. When teachers talk and read the text, the teacher takes away the visualization piece forcing the students to focus on using their learned visualization strategy. Mermelstein continued by stating that Read-Aloud allows students to focus on independence in the meaning and structure sources of information.

Shared Reading, according to Goltche (2015), involves the teacher reading an enlarged text, where the teacher models while students sit around her. The focus of the lesson is often phonics or grammar; student participation is highly encouraged (2015). Yukon Education (2015) pointed out that the teacher explicitly teaches strategies while extending an understanding of the reading process, thus the title ‘Shared Reading'. The students have a choice in the text read during this sharing time. Teachers also encourage students to read when they can during this time (2015).

According to Goltche (2015), Caulkins, and the Teachers Reading Writers Teachers College (TRWTC), the Reader's Workshop, which includes the mini-lesson and the Read-Aloud, is the most important piece and the main component. During the Read-Aloud time, teachers focus on teaching about book elements, author style, character development, illustration, vocabulary, setting, strategies, and other reading skill teaching points. Goltche (2015) explained a powerful teaching point as making connections between students' lives and stories, whereas, Mermelstein (2013) stressed the importance of teachers allowing students to work as partners or independently during this time, while the teacher works one-on-one with small groups, teaching strategies, improve quality reading. Mermelstein also stressed the importance of a share time. The lessons are from

units of study or class needs. Teachers often refer to a text for instructional clarity such as a Read Aloud or a Shared Reading (Goltche, 2015). Yukon Education (2015) compared the Read Aloud to Modeled Reading, as the students hear what good reading sounds like, when the teacher demonstrates reading aloud for the students.

Guided Reading allows teachers the opportunity to observe students as they read from texts at their instructional reading levels. The Guided Reading strategy guide describes ideas that support guided reading, including practical suggestions for implementing Guided Reading in the classroom; students grouped homogeneously for instruction in groups of five or six students with a teacher leading the lesson (Goltche, 2015). Guided Reading includes a reading list for further investigation.

Yukon Education (2015) suggested the teacher role as one that models and instructs reading strategies, extends the understanding of the reading process, and models how to read and choose a text. Teachers also share the reading process with students (Yukon Education, 2015). While students are not engaged in the Guided Reading lesson with the teacher, they are reading a ‘just right book’. ‘Just right books' are depicted as a book at a child's instructional level one that stretches the child just a bit — not so much as to make him frustrated but enough to continue his growth as a reader (Taylor, 2017).

Mermelstein (2013) explained Shared Writing as a time when teachers compose different pieces with the texts. Teachers model the thinking process while writing, and the students listen to the thought process and try to mimic the strategies. Teachers and students compose a piece of writing together. Yukon Education (2015) emphasized the idea of the teacher and students choosing the topic together and explicitly teaching an understanding of the writing process. As mentioned in the Read Aloud section,

according to Mermelstein, the Shared Writing focuses is on building up students' gaining independence in understanding meaning and noting sources of information.

Much like Shared Reading, Interactive Writing is when the teacher composes a variety of texts with students. The teacher models her thinking as she writes while students listen to the thought process and then try the process during the lesson. As in Shared Reading, the teacher takes away visual sources of information, forcing students to focus on using meaning and visualizing strategies as they compose meaning into the written text (Mermelstein, 2013). The main purpose of Interactive Writing is devoted to writing. Teachers and students work together to create written text. After deciding what to write, the teacher prompts students to participate in the writing (Goltche, 2015). Peha (1995-2003) defined Writer's Workshop as:

> A workshop approach to the teaching of writing works well for aspiring professional writers, why shouldn't we use this approach in our classrooms? As in a professional writer's workshop, each student in the class is a working author. The teacher is a writing professional and peer coach, guiding authors as they explore their craft. (p. x)

Like Reading Workshop, the structure is the same. Teachers begin with a mini-lesson and a new strategy or skill. Teachers also conduct one-on-one conferences with students and provide small group instruction. The one-on-one conferences is possible when teachers know and assess their students' daily progress. Writer's Workshop focuses on the individual students' needs and always ends with a share time (Mermelstein, 2013).

Successful independent reading is the end result of a well-executed balanced literacy program. It allows students the chance to "practice" the strategies they have learned through Guided Reading, Shared Reading, and teacher Read Aloud – the other

components of balanced literacy (K12 Reader, n.d.a.). Independent Reading is where reading becomes a more enjoyable experience. During Independent Reading, students begin to realize that reading must be an important skill (K12 Reader, n.d.b). When students read independently, students apply learned strategies to improve comprehension. Teachers often will ask students to place post-it sticky notes on pages that denote particular skills or strategies to determine if students accurately comprehend the text.

Teachers often give names for independent reading time as, Drop Everything and Read (DEAR TIME), Super Quiet Uninterrupted Individual Reading Time (SQUIRT), and Silent Uninterrupted Reading Fun (SURF).

Balanced Literacy is a structure that is most often used by elementary school teachers. Educators state that before there was the Balanced Literacy approach to teaching reading the approach was ‘unbalanced' (K12 Reader, n.d.b), when actually how to teach reading has been the heart of a heated controversy for decades.

Best Practices

The use of best practices in the educational world began to be a part of discussions several years ago. Zemelman et al. (2012) explained:

> The expression "best practice" was originally borrowed from the professions of medicine, law, and architecture, where "good practice" and "best practice" are everyday phrases used to describe solid, reputable, state-of-the-art work in a field. If a professional is following best practice standards, he or she is aware of current research and consistently offers clients the full benefits of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures. (p. 1)

According to Robb (2013), there are five best practices that teachers can immediately implement to teach students to perform successfully on the Common Core

State Standard New Generation Assessments. Robb (2013) stressed how teachers can intertwine current practice with those of Common Core, such as instruction in close reading while providing text-based responses requires quality professional development. The five best practices, Robb (2013) argued are "the use of anchor texts, use of formative assessments to inform teaching decisions, amplify writing about reading, recognizing that independent reading the big accelerator, and acquire and select books for instructional reading" (p. 14).

The five best practices Robb mentioned included practices that support many reading structures and programs that are being implemented in schools today. Robb (2013) argued providing professional development for the proper implementation of these best practices is paramount to student success. Teachers provide a common read-aloud text for instruction, enabling students to have a choice in instructional reading. Teachers also provide lessons that utilize an anchor text to provide instruction in inference, author's purpose and tone, and how to reveal text closely. Teachers use formative assessments to make informed decisions to differentiate instruction based on the foundation of students' work, behaviors, and attitudes on a daily basis. Teachers should make decisions about placement and learning, and then plan support from the performance-based data. Hattie (2012) stated the act of teaching requires deliberate interventions to ensure that there is cognitive change in the student; thus, the key ingredients are being aware of the learning intentions, knowing when a student is successful (p. 19). Robb (2013) stated:

> If school leaders value formative assessment, students stand a far better chance of meeting the end of year Common Core State Standards (CCSS) benchmarks; formative assessments help teachers become more diagnostic in their teaching day

> to day, and in turn assure students are making sufficient progress day-to-day, week-to-week, and month-to-month. (p. 14)

Teachers who practice amplifying reading and writing instruction produce students who write about what they read; comprehension is improved. If educators begin in Grade 3 teaching students to write analytical paragraphs, by Grade 4 and Grade 5, students will write essays. In Graham and Hebert's "Write to Read" (as cited in Robb, 2013) it was stated "that writing that unveils student's understandings of a text, his/her thinking with the ideas of the text improves comprehension. The teacher traits will allow for the acceleration of independent reading in our children" (p. 14).

The last best practice idea of Robb's (2013) research studied the ability to acquire and choose various books for instructional reading. Robb suggested that teachers acquiring enough books can be a challenge, however, if teachers are creative, this challenge negates itself. Selecting and providing various books into a unit, genre study or a theme, exposes students to books on an instructional reading level as well as exposes them to nonfiction text (Robb, 2013, p. 14).

Robb (2013) discussed the teachers' need to differentiate instruction to better understand his or her students. Robb defined differentiation as "a method of teaching that asks teachers to know their students so well that they can respond to individual needs and provide tasks and learning experiences that move each student forward" (p. 14). Robb stated students would not reach the high expectations set forth in the CCSS without differentiated instruction. Robb suggested the foundation of differentiation is when teachers provide instruction through diverse reading levels, formative assessment, and tiered instruction to help students' progress. These foundational structures allow teachers the amount of support needed to move students in the right direction. The five best

practices mentioned, support many reading structures and programs that are implemented in schools today. Robb believed providing teachers professional development, to properly implement these best practices, are paramount to student success.

Rekar Munro (2005) introduced a model designed to support a paradigm shift for best practices in education. Use of best practices has become standard nomenclature pervading the teaching and learning discipline. Best practices refer to the tools teachers have and use to motivate and enhance the learning process for students. Rekar Munro explained three paradigm shifts that improve teacher effectiveness and student learning. The strategies are: conducting a needs analysis, developing a useful feedback, and engaging in personal reflection.

Stated by Rekar Munro (2005), the goal of the needs analysis is to encourage educators to conduct the needs analysis in the way a business does. In a school setting, the teacher profiles student learners' similarities and differences to provide learning interventions. The second component included teachers having an effective feedback system to assess the effectiveness of teaching interventions. Feedback should be continuous and woven into the daily teaching and learning relationship. Last, personal reflection allows educators to examine teaching philosophies, assumptions, and practices that contribute to the everyday teaching and learning process.

Best practices for classroom teachers and reading specialist, according Zemelman et al. (2012) can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

More and Less

More	Less
Read aloud daily	Round robin reading by students
Independent reading	Emphasis on whole class reading
Use of trade books, magazines, and picture books	Primary dependence on basal, textbook, literature block
Student choice of reading materials	Teacher selection of reading material
Teacher modeling of skills and strategies	Lectures, worksheets, workbooks
Content area reading	Use of lower-level questions
Use of higher level questions	Less rote learning and memorization
Use of critical and creative thinking	

Note. The Primary Investigator created this table to illustrate research outcomes for previous research according to Zemelman et al. 2012.

As confirmed by Peha (1995-2003), the use of best practices by educational practitioners continues to improve. Specific teaching strategies or skills would not be considered a best practice if those strategies or skills are not considered research based or proven to be effectively used by educators. Educators often utilize different strategies in order to get a different result. Peha argued the best teaching is a moving target, just as best science and best medicine. Therefore, best practice becomes a process, something fluid and dynamic that the educator should stay as actively involved with, as much possible (Peha, 1995-2003). NC Teacher, 2006 stated best practices be defined as:

> Interjecting rigor into the curriculum by developing thinking and problem-solving skills through integration and active learning and are applicable to all grade levels and provide building blocks for instruction. Best practices motivate, engage and prompt students to learn and achieve. (p. 2)

Teachers who teach a balanced curriculum and students who receive that balanced curriculum will possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to transfer and connect ideas and concepts across disciplines. Connections made by students allow the opportunity to be successful on standardized tests and formative assessments. Public Schools of North Carolina (2006) stated the four best practices for educators as: teach a balanced curriculum, teach an integrated curriculum, differentiate instruction, and provide active learning opportunities (p. 2).

A balanced curriculum, according to Squires (2013), is nothing more than a web-based tool used to create, align, and manage the district curriculum, and it is divided into sections that are inclusive of time-bound units with significant tasks that are developed by district teachers. Squires and Arrington (1999) stated the balanced curriculum allows schools to put child development in the center of the curriculum development process. It is imperative that the process involves the three steps: defining curriculum, aligning and balancing the curriculum, and assessing the curriculum (Squires, 2013). Walker and Doll (1974) reported, "a balanced education program for the individual learner would meet the educational needs of that individual learner in his or her current development state" (p. 210). Public Schools of North Carolina (2006) included that the implementation of a balanced curriculum helps students:

- Find relevance in and connections with what they are learning;
- Develop a love of learning and become lifelong learners;
- Understand themselves and those around them;
- Demonstrate talents they bring with them to school and

- Develop new, necessary skills and abilities to be successful in school and in life. (p. 4)

According to Public Schools of North Carolina (2006) “an integrated curriculum allows students the chance to identify topics, develop questions, plan inquiry, divide tasks, research and share information” (p. 4). Drake and Burns (2004) stressed, “innovative educators concerned with improving student achievement are seeking ways to create rigorous, relevant, and engaging curriculum” (para. 1). According to Public Schools of North Carolina (2006), implementing an integrated curriculum strategies help students:

- See the connectivity and interaction among disciplines;
- Choose appropriate activities;
- Examine organizational patterns;
- Develop research skills;
- Attack multi-levels of activity and challenge;
- Assume authentic responsibility;
- Work collaboratively with others and
- Refine their technology skills. (p. 5)

Educators differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs and adapt the curriculum in different ways to meet all students’ needs. During differentiated instruction, teachers provide students active; hands-on learning opportunities that allow learning to be internalized as "key” to the learning experience. Tomilson (2000) defined differentiation as "a means of tailoring instruction to meet individual needs. Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, the use of

ongoing assessment and flexible grouping makes this a successful approach to instruction" (p. 1).

Teachers who combine best practices and differentiation are crucial in closing the achievement gap in literacy. When teachers differentiate for learners at the basic level, teachers focus to respond to the varying reading levels within the classroom. Differentiation in instruction allows teachers to reach out to individual students, or small groups, to vary the instruction creating the best learning experience possible for his or her students (Tomlinson, 2000). Public Schools of North Carolina (2006) continued to state that differentiating the curriculum helps students:

- Master core concepts of the curriculum;
- Utilize their strengths, learning styles, and background knowledge;
- Set individual learning goals and
- Develop their personal skills and projects. (p. 5)

Hattie (2012) stated for differentiation to be effective, teachers need to know where each student begins in a particular learning skill and where he/she is going toward meeting the educational goal. Furthermore, when teachers know students' strengths and gaps in knowledge, teachers can plan students' journeys to becoming proficient or somewhat capable learners (p. 109).

Active learning, according to the Center for Educational Innovation (2015), is an "approach to instruction in which students engage the material they study through reading, writing, talking, listening and reflecting." Public Schools of North Carolina (2006) defined active learning "as a process in which students are engaged in hands-on activities rather than passively receiving knowledge." Active learning allows learners to:

- Engage in higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation;
- Student ideas, solve problems and apply what they have learned;
- Construct hypotheses and make decisions;
- Provide meaning and organization to experiences;
- Work collaboratively with others;
- Connect real-life work between school and what will take place in the rest of their lives and
- Address cultural influences and individual learning styles. (p. 6)

Research determines what is considered "Best Practices in Teaching Reading" and identifies strategies defined as being the most challenging and needing more emphasis for school and student achievement. The article "14 Best Reading Practices" (n.d.) stated:

1. Explicit word analysis instruction with phonics- teachers provide explicit modeling in the area of word knowledge while teaching skill and strategy word work
2. Assessment to inform instruction-the routine monitoring and assessment of reading levels and individual progress.
3. Instructional planning-teacher planning should be considered in three phases (before, during, and after).
4. Collaboration reflection-reflection and collaboration on instructional practices and student progress practiced routinely.

5. Learning standards-knowledge of the English Language Arts learning standards with the ability to facilitate knowledge.
6. Independent reading-allowing students the opportunity for sustained reading every day will increase vocabulary and fluency.
7. Use a variety of genre-providing students with a variety of reading and writing experiences.
8. Appropriate instructional levels-allowing students to read at instructional levels each day.
9. Reading for a purpose-students have the opportunity to read a variety of text for a variety of purposes for thinking and reflection purposes.
10. Building comprehension skills and strategies- providing students the opportunities to apply the comprehension strategies in order to construct meaning using the seven comprehension strategies.
11. Building cognitive skills and strategies-teaching students and giving the opportunities to learn and implement cognitive comprehension strategies.
12. Integration- teaching reading and writing to support all content areas.
13. Literacy rich environment-providing students with words displayed everywhere with the opportunity to engage in reading and writing.
14. School/family/community partnerships-collaboration to support literacy of students at home and school. (p. 4)

Gradual Release of Responsibility

Hattie (2012) conducted a meta-analysis on teaching strategies and achievement. Hattie examined hundreds of studies, which resulted in the following results for the years:

(2015) N=195 d=0.61; (21011) N=150 d=0.61, and (2009) N=138 d= 0.61. According to Hattie (2012), "there is a balance between teachers talking, listening, and doing; there is similar balance between students talking, listening, and doing" (p. 84). According to Fisher and Frey (2014-15), the gradual release of responsibility framework is:

> The gradual release of responsibility instructional framework purposefully shifts the cognitive load from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility of teacher and learner, to independent practice and application by a learner. (p. 2)

The gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student can take place over a week, a month, or a year (Fisher & Frey, 2014, p. 2). According to Graves and Fitzgerald, as noted in Fisher and Frey (2014), effective instruction often follows a progression in which teachers gradually do less of the work and students gradually assume increased responsibility for their learning. Through this process of gradual release, while students assume more and more responsibility for their learning, students become competent, independent learners. The instructional process of gradual release of responsibility framework was initially developed for teachers to use during reading instruction and reflects the connection of many other theories (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Hattie stated, "when teachers are able to provide multiple ways of knowing and multiple ways of interacting, and provide multiple opportunities for practice" (p. 112).

Fisher and Frey (2014) discussed the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bandura, and Wood, Bruner, and Ross as being integral behind the idea that learning occurs through interactions with others; when these interactions are intentional, specific learning occurs. Fisher and Frey asked how educators can set students on a path to true independent learning. One way, is to purposefully, yet gradually, release responsibility for learning from teacher to student (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Fisher and Frey (2008) continued to

explain this transfer of responsibility, and educators stressed that teachers must give students the support needed as students take the lead—not just push the student onto the path and hope each find their way. Fisher and Frey (2008) recognized that the thinking behind the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model is that the teachers must plan to move from providing extensive support to no support. Unfortunately, too many classroom teachers release responsibility too sudden and the methods practiced are unplanned resulting in student misunderstandings and failures. Teachers provide supports that include models of the thinking students will need to do, access to academic language, peer collaboration, and guided instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Research continues to determine if students are really learning in Gradual Release of Responsibility activities.

Fisher and Frey (2008) stated with any lesson, it is important teachers state the objective and establish the purpose of the lesson. Teachers need to include what exactly students are supposed to do to perform learning tasks successfully. Fisher and Frey (2008) stated when teachers provide a coherent objective, or purpose, learners' gain an opportunity to explore background knowledge. Teacher modeling is another crucial component of releasing responsibility. Stated in Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, and Rodriquez (2002) more effective teachers use modeling and explanation to teach students strategies for decoding words and understanding texts (p. 270). Fisher and Frey stated that humans are hardwired to imitate other humans (as cited in Winerman, 2005). Students deserve to see an example of the kind of thinking and language a new task will require before they engage in that task independently, and teachers can provide that example (Fisher & Frey, 2008).

As within the framework of MRI, interactions within the current implementation for teacher and student are limited to exchanges that include "I do it, we do it, you do it." According to Levy (2007), scaffolded instruction, also called gradual release model, is the approach effective teachers' use for moving classroom instruction from teacher-centered, whole group delivery, to student-centered collaboration and independent practice. In this model, during the beginning of the lesson, the teacher simply delivers the content, thus the 'I do' phase. As the students acquire knowledge, new skills, and information, the learning becomes the responsibility of the student; this is the 'We do' phase, the teacher continues to model, question and prompt students, allowing students to move into the 'You do' phase of learning. During this phase, students rely less on the teacher and more on themselves for learning (Levy, 2007).

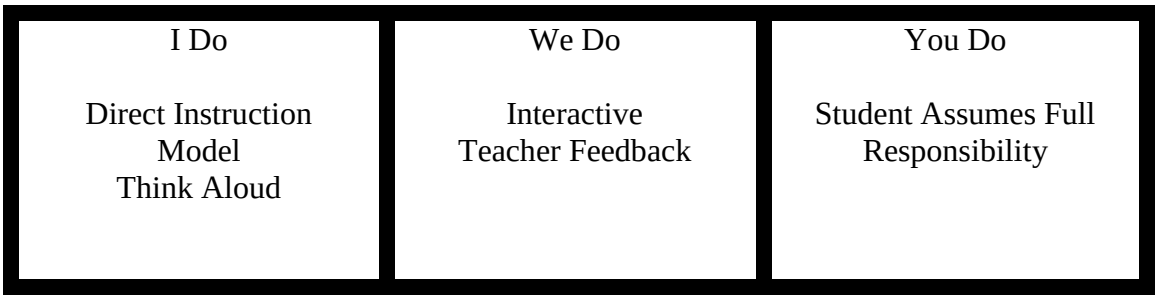

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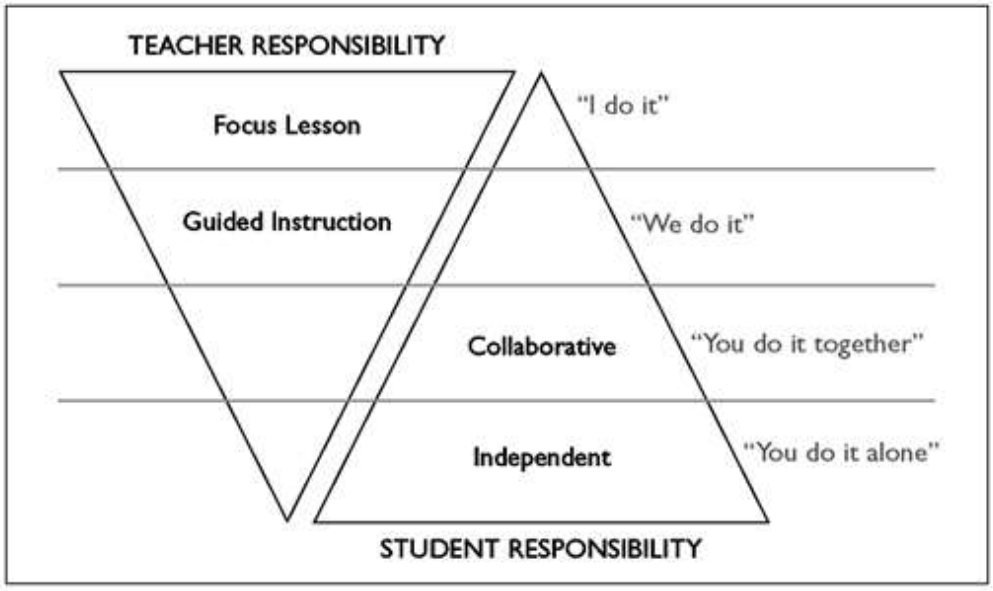
Figure 1. Three-step gradual release method.

The Three-Phase model omits the last piece and most often thought of as the most important piece, which is the "you do it with a partner" phase. The use of the scaffolds is most effective with the interaction between a more knowledgeable other and learner. According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross scaffolding (1976, as cited in Fisher and Frey, 2007) is a process "that enables a child or novice to solve a task or achieve a goal that would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90). The ability to solve the task, due to collaborative practice, is included in the fourth phase of the Gradual Release of

Responsibility four-part model. The "Success Model for All" originally created by Fisher and Frey (2008) illustrated the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model utilizing the Four-Step Gradual Release of Responsibility Strategy.

Figure 1.2. Gradual Release of Responsibility



Source: From *Better learning through structured teaching: A framework for the gradual release of responsibility* (p. 4), by D. Fisher and N. Frey, 2008, Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Copyright 2008 by ASCD. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 2. Success model for all: Four-step model (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

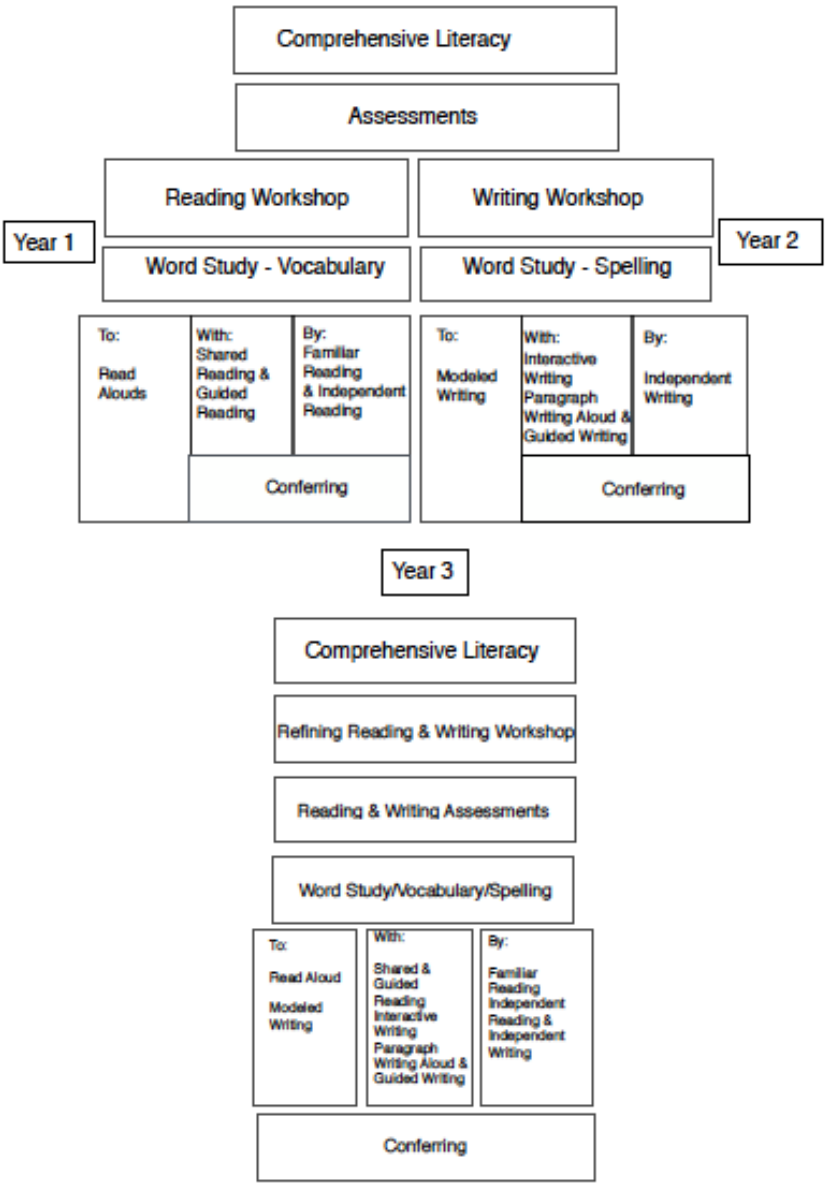
Fisher and Frey's (2008) interpretation of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model included four components: focus lesson (I do), guided instruction (we do), collaborative tasks (you do together), and independent learning (you do it alone). Fisher and Frey suggested that the implementation of this framework leads to more student success and increased student engagement. In the model suggested by Fisher and Frey, the focus lessons will typically last 10 to 15 minutes and accomplish two things: establish

a purpose and provide students with a model. The most effective teachers write the purpose of learning on the board and discuss the purpose with students. The focus of the lesson also includes a model, which allows students to picture expert thinking, and begin practicing the new skill. Teachers help students activate background knowledge, and then teachers provide a model for students to see. Thus, the teacher introduces and model's instruction during the 'I do' part of the release model. (Fisher, 2008). Sweet (2000) with the National Education Association, U.S. Department of Education, determined 10 proven principles for teaching reading. Among those was the importance of teacher modeling. Scaffolding is a form of modeling where educators show students how to breach the task of reading comprehension. The scaffolding appears in two forms, implicit and explicit (Sweet, 2000). Roehler and Duffy (1991) stated implicitly modeling takes place during the literacy experience while explicit modeling involves the student exhibit a task (as cited in Sweet, 2000). Each type of modeling has a place in the well-balanced literacy classroom. Furthermore, each is designed to show students how to use strategies to improve understanding while reading.

Guided Instruction is intended to provide students greater cognitive understanding. Teachers include their thinking out loud during this portion of the lesson with strategic cues, prompts, and questions that lead to cognitive work to guide their students in their thinking. The Guided Instruction part of the lesson allows teachers to plan, understand, and see the learning of students strategically. Teachers who provide collaborative tasks intend for students to be engaged in productive group work that requires interactions (Frey & Fisher, 2009). Tasks are designed to give students an opportunity to interact and converse with each other using specific content area language. According to Sarafini (2013) the level of responsibility a teacher provides must be in

response to the amount of "expertise" a learner develops. The optimal amount of support, or scaffold, can only be determined in the context of the actual learning event through close observation of the learner's ability and competence. Teachers hold students accountable for what he or she contributes to the group. Individual student learning is an integral part of the process as it is where students are asked to apply what they have learned (Frey & Fisher, 2009). Teachers may provide some formative assessments that students can apply to elucidate what students think about the subject. Teachers who use Individual Learning must be vigilant as to use individual learning as homework. In these cases, Fisher and Frey noted that students reinforce misunderstandings because students practice ineffectively and incorrectly.

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model is not a linear model but one in which students move back and forth among each of the components as they master skills, strategies, and standards (Fisher, 2008). Fisher continued to say that the vertical alignment piece of is one that accommodates the learner at all developmental levels. Vertical Alignment is noted to increase intellectual, personal, physical, social and career development of all students. The program alignment ensures that all educational content is systematically reinforcing and assessing student growth. Vertical alignment guarantees that instruction targets the intersection between student needs and content standards (Fisher, 2008).



*Three-Step Gradual Release of Responsibility Strategy: For the purpose the Three-Step model of gradual release of responsibility will consist of a model of instructional method that includes "I do," "We do," "You do."

*Gradual Release of Responsibility: The gradual release of responsibility model provides teachers with an instructional framework for moving from teacher knowledge to student understanding and application. The gradual release of responsibility model ensures that students are supported in their acquisition of the skills and strategies necessary for success (Fisher, 2008).

Figure 3. Comprehensive literacy model K-3. This figure is a recreation of the actual Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI) system that was used within the case study school (Valley Breeze, Elementary, 2013). This is an adapted version based upon the Missouri Reading Initiative, 2014.

Figure 3 was recreated by the Primary Investigator and inserted to represent a visual model from the Missouri Reading Initiative and an interpretation of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model.

Reader's Workshop

The Children's Literacy Initiative (2017) discussed the workshop model is an incredibly efficient method of teaching reading and writing. The Children's Literacy Initiative explained the workshop structure where teachers address both the whole group's needs, as well as, differentiate the needs of small groups and individuals. The workshop model allows students to not only meet standards, but also provide students the time and support they need to grow into fluent readers and writers when teachers implement the model correctly. The workshop is a component of a Balanced Literacy block, which is standards-based, driven by student assessment, and uses differentiated instruction (by level, interest, groupings). Children's Literacy Initiative (2017) stated when teachers use a workshop lesson, teachers' model reading and writing in front of students:

- Have students spend time engaged in independent reading and writing
- Have students share writing by helping you/classmates compose, revise or edit a piece of writing
- Have student share in the reading by utilizing partner reading strategies
- Confer with students, guiding their reading and writing and teaching them skills and strategies. (Children's Literacy Initiative, 2017, p. x)

The workshop structure is made up of the mini-lesson, work time, and share time. The mini-lesson is when the teacher teaches the students a skill or strategy through demonstration and direct instruction. Students' work time is when students read and write and then directly apply the lesson they just learned. Work time is also when

teachers meet with students in small groups and individually confer with students. Student share time is when students have the opportunity to share with the rest of the class how they used the skill or strategy just learned or reinforced in the mini-lesson.

> Daniels and Bizar (2005) reminded educators of the value of reading workshop: In this model, elementary and secondary classrooms are no longer merely locations where information is transmitted. Instead, educators become working laboratories or studios, where genuine knowledge is created, real products are made, and authentic inquiry is pursued. The classroom workshop is the pedagogical embodiment of constructivist learning theory. (p. 153)

Sibberson and Szymusiak (2008) stated Reader's Workshop is the only, truly differentiated approach to teaching and learning. During Reader's Workshop, students act as, and are known as individuals. Teachers recognize and support the needs and growth of individual students. Reading Workshop is an organized set of language and literacy experiences (mini-lesson, individualized reading, one-on-one conferences, and sharing) designed to help students become more effective readers. Students become more active in their own learning and are exposed to a greater variety of texts. Teachers provide daily conferences to tailor instruction to the individual needs of each student (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Candler (n.d.) stated reading workshop is defined as a powerful way to structure a reading class. Educators use this model to involve and encourage students to choose their own books and to provide significant amounts of time for them to read independently. Candler also claimed students who choose books on their own will foster a love of reading for a lifetime.

Reader's Workshop is an incredibly powerful and efficient method of teaching reading and writing (Children's Literacy Initiative, 2017). Reader's Workshop, as developed by Fountas and Pinnell, is an extended period each day when students participate in authentic reading experiences, which target skills and strategies students need to develop as readers (Fowle, 2014).

Current research suggests that Reader's Workshop is very effective, especially with moderately proficient readers (Candler, n.d.). "Students learn by "doing" in a workshop, with guidance of a knowledgeable other" (Riddle-Buly, 2011, p. 1). According to Vygotsky (1978):

> a knowable other is one who knows just a little bit more than about the topic or skill and can support the learner with their knowledge. Students who are unable to read at all probably need more explicit reading instruction before they are ready for this model. Buly suggested that the reliability of gradual release of responsibility combined with very short, focused and explicit instruction based on ongoing formative assessment of student strengths and needs for lower achieving students. (p. 2)

Teachers use the Reading Workshop model with their proficient readers while continuing to provide more support and instruction with nonreaders (Candler, n.d.). Fowle continued to discuss that as a teacher, it is difficult to balance what is most important and, how to teach the skill and concepts students need to advance. The balanced approach in literacy is emphasized in reader's workshop, writer's workshop, and word study:

> We can't learn to swim without swimming, to write without writing, to sing without singing, or to read without reading. If all we did in the independent

reading workshop was to create a structure to ensure that every child spent extended time engaged in reading appropriate texts, we would have supported readers more efficiently and more effectively than we could through any elaborate plan, beautiful ditto sheet, or brilliant lecture. (Calkins, 2001, p. 3)

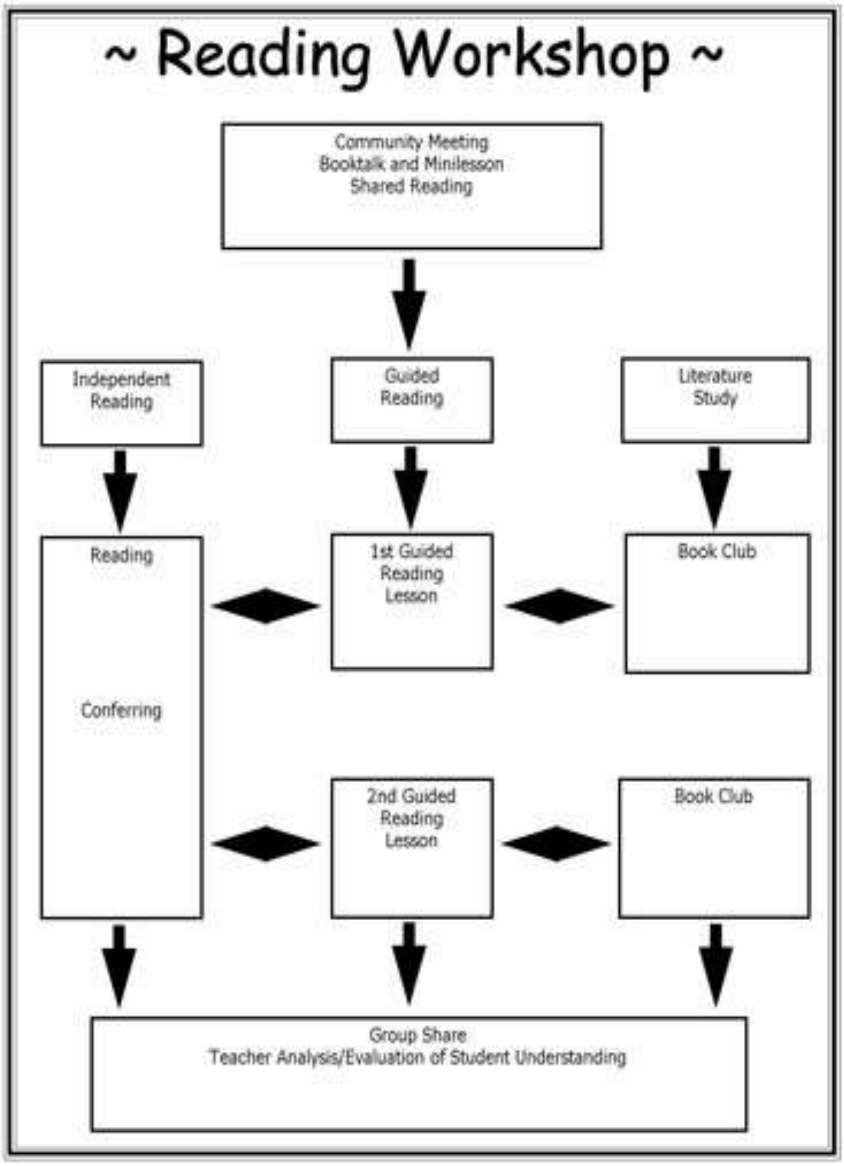


Figure 4. Reader's workshop model. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 3.0 License. Obtained from a contribution to http://carvajalwritingworkshop.wikispaces.com

The Reader's Workshop program allows teachers to emphasize the interaction between readers and text. Students learn to ask questions, make connections with prior knowledge and previously read texts, and ask questions to clarify faulty comprehension they recognize has occurred (Reader's Workshop.org, n.d.). Students see a purpose that goes beyond the classroom wall, there is a greater chance of engagement, learning, and application. Reader's Workshop provides this experience for students (Riddle-Buly, 2011). Reader's Workshop typically follows a format that includes, but is not limited to, a Read Aloud, Mini-Lesson, Workshop Time, Independent Reading, and Share Time.

Teachers provide the Gradual Release method during the Mini-Lesson and Workshop time. Newingham (2009) stated in her blog that Richard Allington believes effective elementary literacy instruction incorporates six common features. Newington (2009) continued to discuss Allington's Six T's. Allington's (2007) features are: time, texts, teaching, talk, tasks, and, testing. Newingham (2009) went on to discuss that if executed effectively, Reader's Workshop allows teachers to incorporate these Six T's into reading instruction seamlessly (p. 2). Allington's (2007) Six T's provide teachers a succinct way to evaluate instruction and whether instruction will measure up to the exemplary teachers he studied. When scientists seek the answers to a probably, the first thing they do is conduct research to see if anyone else has found the solution (Allington, 2012). Educators too, continuously look for answers regarding which strategies best serve the population they work with. During the instructional time, teachers balance instruction with what Allington (2012) described as 'true reading and writing' opportunities for students. Successful students in exemplary classrooms spend almost 50% of their day actually reading and writing. Allington (2012) also stated for students to become independent, proficient readers, they need an enormous amount of quantities

of successful reading. Allington (2007) defined successful reading as times when students read with a high level of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Teachers must teach students how to be an independent and successful reader. Allington (2007) referred to modeling and demonstrating as useful strategies that good readers utilize. When teachers encourage, model, and support more talk throughout the day, meaningful reading experiences for students occurs. The meaningful talk takes place between student/teacher and student/student where there is engagement in open-ended, thought-provoking questioning techniques. In the end, teachers look at and give feedback on the process the students followed rather than the end product implored a more rewarding opportunity for learning (Allington, 2007, 2012).

According to Riddle-Buly (2011), a powerful workshop model requires a gradual supported release of responsibility from teacher to student, with an instructional focus on the specific needs of a particular group of students with specific reasons for instructions (p. 2). Riddle-Buly also stated that the reliability of Gradual Release of Responsibility combined with very short, focused, and explicit instruction based on ongoing formative assessment of student strengths and needs for lower achieving students (p. 2). Research suggested that most effective teachers spend most of their time providing instruction rather than giving directions (Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2000). Dole (2000) as stated in Taylor et al. (2000) believed when teachers provide a well-executed lesson format in a literacy workshop with direct and explicit instruction, low achieving readers improve in reading comprehension. Gutherie and Wigfield (1997) stated when students are engaged in reading they are able to self-generate learning opportunities (as cited in Serravello, 2010, p. 70). Further, Allington explained that when working with struggling readers

what matters most is teacher and student engagement in the instructional activity (as cited in Serravello, 2010).

Reading Comprehension

Stated in Teaching Reading Comprehension (n.d.) as cited in Duke and Pearson (2002), stated good readers make predictions, read actively and selectively, draw on prior knowledge, and question and evaluate the text and author. Additionally, Winch, Johnston, March, Ljungdahl, and Holliday (2010) believed 'good readers' have efficient comprehension strategies, while 'poor readers' do not. Another author, Konza (2011) noted good readers understand the purpose of the text they are reading, monitor their own comprehension and are able to adjust their own reading strategies. Additional research, as cited in Manset-Williamson and Nelson's (2005) study, stated many students are able to recognize words and meanings, but students are unable to draw literal and implicit meaning from sentences and passages.

Ample research regarding the process of reading comprehension is based on what good readers know and do (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Allington (2011) stated, struggling readers need the precise same thing good readers get, successful reading experiences. Educators who study best practices in teaching reading comprehension asked the question:

> Can we teach students and educators to engage in these productive behaviors? The answer is yes. A large volume of work indicates that we can help students acquire the strategies and process used by good readers-and that this improves their overall comprehension of text, both the text used to teach the strategies and texts they read on their own in the future. (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 206)

Dorn and Saffos also stated, “the goal of curriculum is to ensure that all children, regardless of where they are on the path to literacy, are provided with appropriate opportunities for reaching their highest potential” (Dorn and Saffos, 2001, p. 18).

Also, stated by Dorn and Saffos (2001), “reading experts may disagree on the specific details of teaching reading, but shared are the common beliefs about children’s literacy development,” (p. 19). For example, Minkel (2017) commented with “school having a way of messing up even the inherently joyful act of reading a good book. (p. 9). The important learning principles that support a primary literacy curriculum are:

1. Children become better readers and writers with practice.
2. Reading and writing are reciprocal processes.
3. Children’s past experiences form a knowledge base for new learning.
4. Beginning readers should have many opportunities to learn about print.
5. Hearing books read aloud is a vital part of learning how to read.
6. Children engage in active book discussions and share their reading and writing with others
7. Reading is a meaning-making, problem-solving process.
8. Beginning readers should have a well-designed phonics programs.
9. Children should write every day. (Dorn & Saffos, 2001, pp. 19-21)

The common beliefs, stated by Dorn and Saffos (2001), provide a framework of sorts for educators designing a curriculum. The events included in the classroom must emulate the elements. Whereas, Minkel (2017) suggested simple decisions the teacher can make to ensure a love of reading includes: books vs. not-books, reading vs. worksheets, conversation vs. lecture, and depth vs. frequency. Educators are good at breaking the complex task of reading apart into various pieces. Minkel (2017) explained

how students struggle when the same educators try to give students time to fit those various pieces into a coherent whole. Today's students need to learn to love all aspects of the reading process to become strong readers (Minkel, 2017).

Summary

Chapter Two was a culmination of the literature in the areas of: (a) reading abilities, (b) mobility and student achievement, (c) reading theories, (d) balanced literacy, (e) best practices, (f) gradual release of responsibility, (g) reader's workshop, and (h) reading comprehension. The Primary Investigator discussed pertinent aspects of the components of reading instruction and the strategies used by educators was developed throughout the literature review. The literature review allows readers to understand various researchers' study outcomes to help properly evaluate reading comprehension programs. Current research explains how the effects of the strategies used within different research studies affected student achievement. Chapter Three will outline the methodology of the study including discussion of the research site, intervention, data collection and analysis procedures, and participants.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Educators strive to improve everyday instructional practices in an attempt to improve student achievement. Educators around the country are implementing Literacy programs that support research-based best practices in the educational setting. The implementation of the Missouri Reading Initiative Program (MRI) and the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) is an attempt by School Districts to improve student achievement in the area of literacy. Chapter Three is comprised of the following topics: (a) the research site; (b) developing the intervention; (c) data collection and analysis procedures; (d) participants; and (e) summary.

The Research Site

The study took place in an elementary school located in a Midwestern Urban School District in North St. Louis County. The school site was fictitiously named Valley Breeze Elementary per the school district's confidentiality policy. As indicated in Table 2, Valley Breeze Elementary was a Title 1 School with a population of 338 students with a 68% free and reduced lunch rate. Fifty-eight percent of the population were males and 42% were female. The returning population of the research site was 47% in the 2014-15 school year and 49% in the 2015-16 school year. Many of the returning students from year-to-year were not the same students although the numbers look similar.

Table 1

Valley Breeze Demographics

Valley Breeze Elementary Demographics					
School Population	Free and Reduced Lunch	Male	Female	Returning Students 2014-15	Returning Students 2015-16
338	68%	58%	42%	47%	49%

As cited in Ramey (2013) the impact of transiency in schools affected not only mobile students, but also non-mobile students in the schools these students attended. Educators had great concerns about students moving in and out of school systems because of negative impacts on student learning and achievement (Franke, Isken, & Parra, 2003; Rumberger, 2003). More recent research stated that students will likely lose about three months of reading and math learning each time a switch of schools occurs (Sparks, 2016). Further stated, mobility can be particularly difficult for student in the early grades as the foundational skills are being addressed. According to Beatty (2010)

> In terms of the impact of mobility, the researchers found that children who change schools during kindergarten (though, relatively few in number) ended up behind their peers in literacy skills, even when their prior achievement levels are taken into account; this effect is strongest for low-SES children. (p. 16)

Developing the Intervention

The Primary Investigator investigated data from each of the six classes in Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 for the study. Teachers in each grade level had one class where they instructed using GRR. One class from each grade level utilized the Three-Step method of GRR and one class in each level used the Four-Step method of GRR within the Reader's Workshop. Reader's Workshop took place in Grades 3 through 5 for the first 90 minutes of the school day five days a week. The Instructional Coach at the research site grouped students according to reading level ability. Each participating classroom teacher was given students reading within three consecutive reading levels. Each group had students from a variety (3-5) of grade levels. Yee (2013) stated that the use of ability grouping has begun to be seen in classrooms all over the country. This trend is one that surprises many educators however according to “new analysis of data collected by the

government's National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that of the Grade 4 teachers surveyed, 71 percent said they had grouped students by reading ability in 2009, up from 28 percent in 1998" (Yee, 2013, para. 3). For all learners to reach full potential, educators use differentiated reading strategies during instruction. These strategies are intended to accommodate the individual learning style, readiness, and interest of each individual student. This differentiated method is known as flexible grouping (Cox, n.d.).

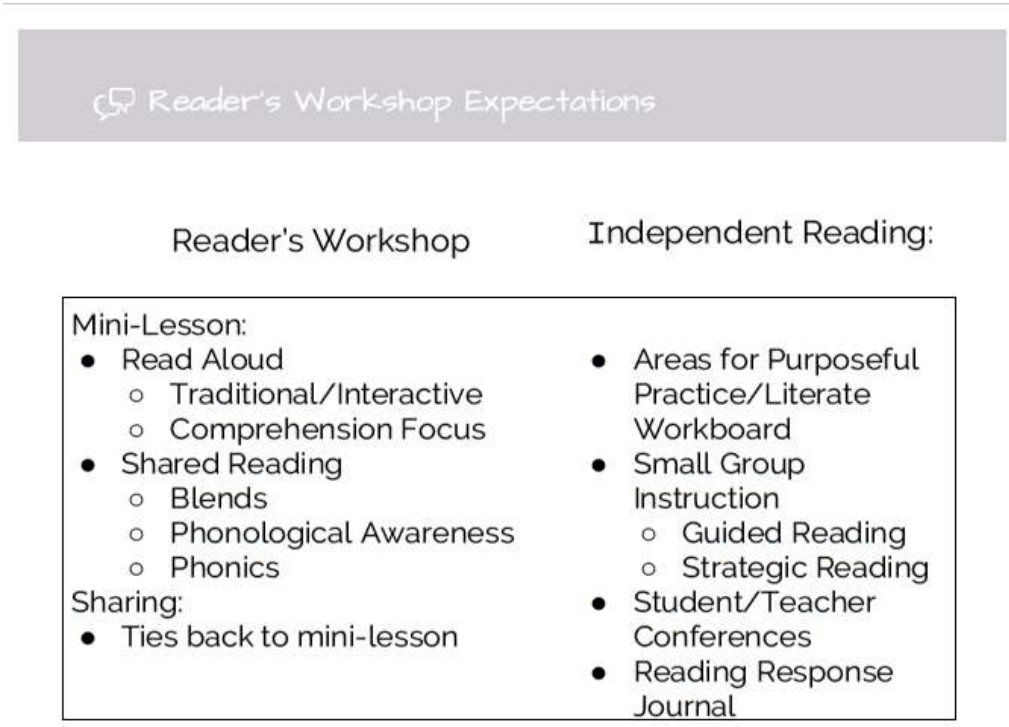


Figure 5. School GRR reading workshop model. Adapted from Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI, 2018) system that was used within the case study school (Valley Breeze, Elementary, 2013).

The 90-minute period began with a Shared Reading and whole group strategy lesson, which is where the GRR strategy was employed. From here the teacher and students transitioned into a setting in which students received Guided Reading Instruction, participated in centers, and Independent Reading. Each class worked on the

same comprehension strategy provided by the Missouri Reading Initiative reading program. The consistency of the instruction came from this single document.

Comprehension Strategy Instruction for the School Year

Metacognition/Monitoring for Meaning is continually being modeled, instructed, and reinforced throughout the year. K-5 will teach all strategies in sequence as they build upon each other. Each grade level will focus on one specific strategy for a 9-week unit.

Grade	Weeks:	3-Jan (9/06-9/23)	6-Apr (9/26-10/13)	9-Jul (10/17-11/04)	12-Oct (11/7-12/02	13-15 (12/05-1/13	16-18 (1/17-2/03)	19-21 (2/06-2/24)	22-24 (2/27-3/16)	25-27 (3/28-4/13)	28-30 (4/17-5/05)	31-33 (5/08-5/25)
K	Establish Literacy Block	Connections/Prior Knowledge (Schema)			Visualizing/Sensory Imagery		Asking Questions		Predicting and Making Inferences		Determining Importance	Synthesis and Summary
1	First 15 Days	Connections/Prior Knowledge (Schema)	Visualizing/Sensory Imagery			Asking Questions		Predicting and Making Inferences		Determining Importance		Synthesis and Summary
2	First 15 Days	Connections/Prior Knowledge (Schema)	Visualizing/Sensory Imagery		Asking Questions			Predicting and Making Inferences		Determining Importance		Synthesis and Summary
3	First 15 Days	Connections/Prior Knowledge (Schema)	Visualizing/Sensory Imagery	Asking Questions		Predicting and Making Inferences			Determining Importance		Synthesis and Summary	
4	First 15 Days	Connections/Prior Knowledge (Schema)	Visualizing/Sensory Imagery	Asking Questions		Predicting and Making Inferences		Determining Importance			Synthesis and Summary	
5	First 15 Days	Connections/Prior Knowledge (Schema)	Visualizing/Sensory Imagery	Asking Questions		Predicting and Making Inferences		Determining Importance		Synthesis and Summary		

Figure 6. Comprehension scope and sequence chart. Adapted from Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI, 2018) system that was used within case study school (Valley Breeze, Elementary, 2013).

Individual teachers created and carried out their lessons according to the school-wide comprehension scope and sequence, with the expectation the implementation of either the Three-Step or Four-Step GRR model was utilized with fidelity.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The Primary Investigator collected archived data from the English Language Arts (ELA) Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) and Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Reading Assessment from two consecutive years, beginning with the 2014-15 school year through the 2015-16 school year. Data collections included pre-test and post-test data sets from

students in Grades 3 through 5 from the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. The Primary Investigator compared reading level increases from pre-test and post-test F&P reading scores, and compared ELA MAP assessment scores and its correlation to F&P level jumps at each grade level for the two consecutive school years. The Primary Investigator also used descriptive statistics to describe summary results which included, yearly growth (for each method, each grade level) for two consecutive years. The Primary Investigator included data analysis of range and median to report central tendencies. The Primary Investigator's analysis goals of this study were to determine the success of two different Gradual Release of Responsibility methods (Three-Step and Four-Step) to become aware of the differences in level growth and proficiency achievement within each method.

For purposes of this study the Primary Investigator collected data according to district policy. Data was de-identified and organized into a spreadsheet, which allowed the Primary Investigator to determine which data had complete data sets for each assessment type. The spreadsheet was also utilized to check for normal distribution of data, run the appropriate statistical tests to compare differences in achievement, which included, *t*-test for difference in means and a *z*-test of proportions.

The Primary Investigator then organized data according to grade level, method used, and year participated, as noted in the Tables 3 and 4. The Primary Investigator inserted data for the Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method for Hypothesis 1 in the example shown in Table 3, whereas, the Primary Investigator inserted data for the Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method for Hypothesis 2 in the example shown in Table 4.

Table 2

Data Collection Table: Hypothesis 1

Grade 3 Populations						
	2014-15			2015-16		
Student	Fall Letter F&P	F&P Number	Spring F&P Level	F&P Number	Growth #	Level Jumps

Grade 4 Populations						
	2014-15			2015-16		
Student	Fall Letter F&P	F&P Number	Spring F&P Level	F&P Number	Growth #	Level Jumps

Grade 5 Populations						
	2014-15			2015-16		
Student	Fall Letter F&P	F&P Number	Spring F&P Level	F&P Number	Growth #	Level Jumps

Table 3

Data Collection: Hypothesis 2

2014 and 2015 MAP Scores		
Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
THREE STEP METHOD A/P #	THREE STEP METHOD A/P #	THREE STEP METHOD A/P #
FOUR STEP METHOD A/P #	FOUR STEP METHOD A/P #	FOUR STEP METHOD A/P #

Note. A= Advanced; P = Proficient; The Primary Investigator separated the MAP data collection for the Three-Step and the Four-Step Gradual Release Method Model into a similar data table noting use of the Four-Step method in the 2014 and 2015 school year. This is just an example.

The Primary Investigator analyzed data sets for normal distribution according to Bluman's (2013) Table I to determine quartiles and eliminate outliers. Then, the Primary Investigator used a *t*-test to test for differences in means for each of the Gradual Release Method types, the Three-Step and the Four-Step method. In each data set from each grade level, teacher one utilized the Three-Step method of gradual release within the MRI program, while teacher two utilized the Four-Step method of gradual release within the MRI program. The Primary Investigator used these score sets to test for differences of mean using the appropriate *t*-test for differences for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Participants

Approximately 155 students attended Valley Breeze Elementary in Grades 3 through 5 during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. As a part of the usual classroom routine, approximately 79 students made up groups a, b, and c. Student groups included a variety of grade levels however, students were reading at similar grade levels. Teachers instructed groups a, b, and c using the Three-Step gradual release model. The instruction took place during the whole group lesson of Reader's Workshop. As part of the usual classroom routine, approximately 76 students, which consisted of groups A, B, and C. Student groups included a variety of grade levels, however students were reading at similar grade levels. Students received instruction from teachers employing the Four-Step Gradual Release instructional model. Instruction took place during the whole group lesson of Reading Workshop.

As noted in Table 5 students in group a, b, and c received Three-Step GRR instruction and students in groups A, B, and C received the Four-Step GRR instruction during 2014-15 school year. There were two groups of Grade 3 students in 2015-16, one

group received one year of Three-Step and the other group received on year of the Four-Step instruction, as they were previously second graders (2014-15). In 2015-16 groups, aa and bb were in their second year of Three-Step GRR instruction, presuming they attended Valley Breeze Elementary during the 2014-15 school year. In 2015-16, groups AA and BB were in their second year of Four-Step GRR instruction, presuming they attended Valley Breeze during the 2014-15 school year. The variance in numbers of students from year-to-year is due to the mobility rate of the school.

Table 4

Participation Groups and Instruction Method: Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis	*Group*	*Population*	*Participants*	*Year*	*Gradual Release Model*
1	a	30	Grade 3 students	2014-15	Three-Step
	NEW	27	Grade 3 students	2015-16	
	b	23	Grade 4 students	2014-15	
	aa	21	Grade 4 students	2015-16	
	c	26	Grade 5 students	2014-15	
	bb	21	Grade 5 students	2015-16	
1	A	27	Grade 3 students	2014-15	Four-Step
	NEW	25	Grade 3 students	2015-16	
	B	24	Grade 4 students	2014-15	
	AA	22	Grade 4 students	2015-16	
	C	25	Grade 5 students	2014-15	
	BB	25	Grade 5 students	2015-16	

Note. Populations differ between MAP scores and F&P scores due to mobility during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school year.

Table 6 is indicative of the students who participated in the study and took the MAP test during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Table 5

Participation Groups and Instruction Method: Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis	*Group*	*Population*	*Participants*	*Year*	*Gradual Release Model*
2	C	27	Grade 3 students	2014-15	Three-Step
		25	Grade 3 students	2015-16	
	D	21	Grade 4 students	2014-15	
		19	Grade 4 students	2015-16	
	E	23	Grade 5 students	2014-15	
		22	Grade 5 students	2015-16	
2	F	24	Grade 3 students	2014-15	Four-Step
		24	Grade 3 students	2015-16	
	G	19	Grade 4 students	2014-15	
		19	Grade 4 students	2015-16	
	H	21	Grade 5 students	2014-15	
		22	Grade 5 students	2015-16	

Note. Populations differ between MAP scores and F&P scores due to mobility during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school year.

Statistical Tests Analysis Procedures

The Primary Investigator conducted the statistical tests described and collected data for each instructional model and grade level. Descriptive statistical data was provided for each of the Three-Step and Four-Step GRR instructional models (for two consecutive years) when comparing F&P reading scores and MAP Proficiency Levels for Hypothesis 1 and 2.

Table 6

MRI Instructional Model, Data Collection, Hypotheses, and Statistical Tests

MRI Instructional Model and Grades	Data Collected	Null Hypotheses	Statistical Test
Three-Step method: Grades 3, 4, and 5	F&P Scores	1. There is not a difference in the increase in levels on the F&P between students in the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years	two-sample t-test
Four-Step method: Grades 3, 4, and 5	F&P Scores		two-sample t-test
Three-Step method: Grades 3, 4, and 5	MAP scores	2. There is not a difference in proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP between students in the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.	z-test of proportions
Four-Step Mode: Grades 3, 4, and 5	MAP scores		z-test of proportions

Null Hypotheses

The Primary Investigator formulated two hypotheses organized around the following questions: (1) How do reading scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program? (2) How do ELA MAP scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program?

Null Hypothesis 1. There is not a difference in the increase in levels on the F&P between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Null Hypothesis 2. There is not a difference in proportion of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Missouri Reading Initiative

The Missouri Reading Initiative Program (MRI) is a three-year professional development program designed to assist teachers with essential teaching skills necessary to help students learn to read (Missouri Reading Initiative, 2018). "A comprehensive literacy approach is inclusive of a wide range of materials used by the responsive teacher as in MRI," as cited in Roberts' (2013) research study; "the foundational concept of the MRI program is to employ teachers who move students to a higher level of understanding" (Dorn et al., 1998, p. 29). A comprehensive literacy model of assessments, Reading Workshop, Word Study, and Writing Workshop are the key component categories of the program. According to Roberts (2013):

> each year a school employed the MRI program teachers agreed to the use of three actions (to/with/by) defined as to the children, with the children, and by the children; these actions represented the layout of how the comprehensive literacy program components fit together. (as cited in Dorn et al., 1998, p. 4)

Additionally, as cited and in Roberts (2013) "The mission of MRI included a commitment to provide teachers in Missouri public schools support using the program to ensure children can read and write proficiently" (MRI, 2018, p. 1). The goals of the program were as follows:

> (a) Provide ongoing systematic professional development to enhance the quality of literacy instruction leading to improved student achievement throughout all grade levels. (b) Examine and disseminate research in reading and writing to educators throughout the state, assisting schools with the implementation of instructional best practices in literacy through modeling lessons, coaching, and collaboration. (c) Assist schools with assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of school improvement efforts in literacy toward a comprehensive model. (Roberts, 2013, p. 1)

Many of the strategies teachers use are adapted from Marie Clay's Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Programs (MRI, 2018). Clay's work led to what she called a literacy processing theory upon which Reading Recovery is based (Reading Recovery Council, 2017).

Balanced Literacy assessment is the guiding principle. Teachers learn to find the present performance level of each student through assessment. Teachers learn after one year how to take a close look at each student individually and customize students' lessons accordingly. Also, included in this review is a comprehensive picture of each program year, and how to implement MRI in schools. However, as stated by Ramey (2013), "it is important to persuade district policy makers that a 'one-size fits all model' does not align with educational research. Therefore, the same is true when evaluating schools within the school district" (p. 204).

Summary

The study took place in a Midwestern urban school in North St. Louis County and was comprised of six elementary classrooms; 2 third, 2 fourth, and 2 Grade 5. The Primary Investigator gathered data from pre-test and post-test F&P test scores and spring

ELA MAP scores for two consecutive years, 2014-15 and 2015-16. A *t*-test was performed to test for a difference of means, testing hypothesis one, and a *z*-test of proportions was performed to analyze and compare reading improvement with MAP ELA achievement levels, testing hypothesis two. The Primary Investigator collected data from students' pre-test and post-test scores in six classrooms using the Three-Step versus the Four-Step GRR method during the students' Reader's Workshop instruction. The Primary Investigator compared the reading scores from the two different models used.

Chapter Four data was compiled and analyzed to determine if a difference existed between student reading scores and instructional methods applied. The Primary Investigator displayed data for different instructional practices and methods applied to individual classrooms to improve reading scores.

Chapter Four: Results

Although there are many strategies to teach reading, the strategies that are considered best practice are indicative of how educators implement the strategy with fidelity. The purpose of this study was to allow school leaders an opportunity to investigate the effectiveness of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) reading strategy within the structure of the Missouri Reading Initiative Program (MRI) regarding student achievement in the area of reading. Chapter 4 includes the results from a *t*-test for difference in means and *z*-test of proportions. The results provided valuable insight into the effectiveness of F&P reading levels and proficiency level on the MAP test of the difference between the Three-Step and Four-Step GRR reading methods.

Statistical Tests Analysis Procedures

The Primary Investigator formulated two hypotheses organized around the following questions: (1) How do reading scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program? (2) How do ELA MAP scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program?

Null Hypothesis 1

There is not a difference in the increase in levels on the F&P between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Descriptive Statistics Grade 3, 2015. Descriptive statistics revealed that Grade 3 students who participated in the Three-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2014-15 school year had a mode of 4 and a range of 4.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics Grade 3: 2014-15; Three-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 3: 2014-15
Mean	3.43
Standard Error	0.18
Median	3
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	0.97
Sample Variance	0.94
Kurtosis	0.38
Skewness	0.44
Range	4
Minimum	2
Maximum	6
Sum	103
Count	30
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.36

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics Grade 3: 2014-15; Four-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 3: 2014-15
Mean	3.26
Standard Error	0.21
Median	3
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	1.13
Sample Variance	1.28
Kurtosis	0.68
Skewness	0.14
Range	5
Minimum	1
Maximum	6
Sum	88
Count	27
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.45

Students who participated in the Four-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2014-15 school year had a mode of 3 and a range of 5. Additional descriptive statistics for Grade 3, 2014-15 using the Three-Step and Four-Step Methods are displayed in Tables 8 and 9.

Results Grade 3, 2014-15. A two-sample *t*-test was conducted comparing the Fountas and Pinnell letter level increases for Grade 3 students in the Three-Step program with Grade 3 students in the Four-Step program for the 2014-15 school year. A preliminary test of variances revealed that the variances were equal. There was not a significant difference between the Grade 3 students in the Three-Step program (M = 3.43, SD = 0.97) and the Grade 3 students in the Four-Step program (M = 3.26, SD = 1.13); t (55) = 0.625, p = 0.534. The data analysis indicated that there was no difference between the grade level increases between the two groups in the 2014-15 school year. Additional *t*-test: two-sample assuming equal variances for Grade 3 for the 2014-15 results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances: Grade 3; 2014-15

	Three-Step	Four-Step
Mean	3.43	3.26
Variance	0.94	1.28
Observations	30	27
Pooled Variance	1.10	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	55	
t Stat	0.625	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.534	
t Critical two-tail	2.004	

Descriptive statistics Grade 3, 2015-16. Descriptive statistics for Grade 3, 2015-16 using the Three-Step and Four-Step Methods are displayed in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics Grade 3: 2015/16; Three-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 3: 2015/16
Mean	2.79
Standard Error	0.18
Median	3
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	0.96
Sample Variance	0.91
Kurtosis	-0.69
Skewness	-0.36
Range	3
Minimum	1
Maximum	4
Sum	78
Count	28
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.37

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics Grade 3: 2015-16; Four-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 3: 2015-16
Mean	3.24
Standard Error	0.28
Median	3
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	1.39
Sample Variance	1.94
Kurtosis	1.12
Skewness	0.64
Range	6
Minimum	1
Maximum	7
Sum	81
Count	25
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.57

Descriptive statistics revealed that Grade 3 students who participated in the Three-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2015-16 school year had a mode of 3 and a

range of 3. Students who participated in the Four-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2014-15 school year had a mode of 3 and a range of 6.

Results Grade 3, 2015-16. A two-sample *t*-test was conducted comparing the Fountas and Pinnell letter level increases for Grade 3 students in the Three-Step program with Grade 3 students in the Four-Step program for the 2015-16 school year. A preliminary test of variances revealed that the variances were equal. There was not a significant difference between the Grade 3 students in the Three-Step program (M = 2.79, SD = 0.96) and the Grade 3 students in the Four-Step program (M = 3.24, SD = 1.39); t (42) = -1.37, p = 0.179. The results suggested that there was no difference between the grade level increases between the two groups in the 2015-16 school year. Additional *t*-test: two-sample assuming equal variances for Grade 3 for the 2015-16 results are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

T-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances; Grade 3, 2015-16

	Three-Step	Four-Step
Mean	2.79	3.24
Variance	0.92	1.94
Observations	28	25
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	42	
t Stat	-1.37	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.089	
t Critical one-tail	1.681	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.179	
t Critical two-tail	2.018	

Descriptive statistics Grade 4, 2014-15. Descriptive statistics revealed that Grade 4 students who participated in the Three-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2014-15 school year had a mode of 3 and a range of 6.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics: Grade 4: 2014-15; Three Step F&P Scores

	Grade 4: 2014-15
Mean	2.61
Standard Error	0.33
Median	3
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	1.56
Sample Variance	2.43
Kurtosis	-0.46
Skewness	0.41
Range	6
Minimum	0
Maximum	6
Sum	60
Count	23
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.67

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics: Grade 4: 2014-15; Four Step F&P Scores

	Grade 4: 2014-15
Mean	3.13
Standard Error	0.24
Median	3
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.19
Sample Variance	1.42
Kurtosis	0.99
Skewness	-1.10
Range	5
Minimum	0
Maximum	5
Sum	75
Count	24
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.50

Students who participated in the Four-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2014-15 school year had a mode of 4 and a range of 5. Additional descriptive statistics for Grade 4, 2014-15 using the Three-Step and Four-Step method are displayed in Tables 14 and 15.

Results Grade 4, 2014-15. A two-sample *t*-test was conducted comparing the Fountas and Pinnell letter level increases for Grade 4 students in the Three-Step program with Grade 4 students in the Four-Step program for the 2014-15 school year. A preliminary test of variances revealed that the variances were equal. There was not a significant difference between the Grade 4 students in the Three-Step program (M = 2.61, SD = 1.56) and the Grade 4 students in the Four-Step program (M = 3.13, SD = 1.19); t(45) = -1.279, p = 0.207. The data analysis indicated that there was no difference between the grade level increases between the two groups in the 2014-15 school year. Additional *t*-test: two-sample assuming equal variances for Grade 4 for the 2014-15 results are displayed in Table 16.

Table 16

T-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances: Grade 4; 2014-15

	Three-Step	Four-Step
Mean	2.61	3.13
Variance	2.43	1.42
Observations	23	24
Pooled Variance	1.91	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	45	
t Stat	-1.279	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.207	
t Critical two-tail	2.014	

Descriptive statistics Grade 4, 2015-16. Descriptive statistics revealed that Grade 4 students who participated in the Three-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2015-16 school year had a mode of 2 and a range of 5. Students who participated in the Four-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2015-16 school year had a mode of 2 and a range of 4.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics Grade 4: 2015-16; Three-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 4: 2015-16
Mean	2.33
Standard Error	0.29
Median	2
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	1.28
Sample Variance	1.63
Kurtosis	0.85
Skewness	0.41
Range	5
Minimum	0
Maximum	5
Sum	49
Count	21
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.58

Additional descriptive statistics for Grade 4, 2014-15 using the Three-Step method and Four-Step method are displayed in Table 17 and 18.

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics Grade 4: 2015-16; Four-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 4: 2015-16
Mean	2.64
Standard Error	0.22
Median	3
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	1.05
Sample Variance	1.10
Kurtosis	0.41
Skewness	-0.53
Range	4
Minimum	0
Maximum	4
Sum	58
Count	22
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.46

Results Grade 4, 2015-16. A two-sample *t*-test was conducted comparing the Fountas and Pinnell letter level increases for Grade 4 students in the Three-Step program with Grade 4 students in the Four-Step program for the 2015-16 school year. A preliminary test of variances revealed that the variances were equal. There was not a significant difference between the Grade 4 students in the Three-Step program (M = 2.33, SD = 1.28) and the Grade 4 students in the Four-Step program (M = 2.64, SD = 1.05); t(41) = -0.852, p = 0.399. The data analysis indicated that there was no difference between the grade level increases between the two groups in the 2015-16 school year. Additional *t*-test: two-sample assuming equal variances for Grade 4 for the 2015-16 results are displayed in Table 19.

Table 19

T-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variances: Grade 4; 2015-16

	Three-Step	Four-Step
Mean	2.33	2.64
Variance	1.63	1.10
Observations	21	22
Pooled Variance	1.362	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	41	
t Stat	-0.852	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.200	
t Critical one-tail	1.683	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.399	
t Critical two-tail	2.020	

Descriptive statistics Grade 5, 2014-15. Descriptive statistics revealed that Grade 5 students who participated in the Three-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2014-15 school year had a mode of 4 and a range of 5.

Table 20

Descriptive Statistics Grade 5: 2014-15; Three-Step F&P Scores

Grade 5: 2014-15	
Mean	2.77
Standard Error	0.32
Median	3
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.61
Sample Variance	2.58
Kurtosis	-0.76
Skewness	-0.53
Range	5
Minimum	0
Maximum	5
Sum	72
Count	26
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.65

Students who participated in the Four-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2014-15 school year had a mode of 3 and a range of 3. Additional descriptive statistics for Grade 5, 2014-15 using the Three-Step and Four-Step method are displayed in Tables 20 and 21.

Table 21

Descriptive Statistics Grade 5: 2014-15; Four-Step F&P Scores

Grade 5: 2014-15	
Mean	2.48
Standard Error	0.18
Median	3
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	0.92
Sample Variance	0.84
Kurtosis	-0.68
Skewness	-0.11
Range	3
Minimum	1
Maximum	4
Sum	62
Count	25
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.38

Results Grade 5, 2014-15. A two-sample *t*-test was conducted comparing the Fountas and Pinnell letter level increases for Grade 5 students in the Three-Step program with Grade 5 students in the Four-Step program for the 2014-15 school year. A preliminary test of variances revealed that the variances were not equal. There was not a significant difference between the Grade 5 students in the Three-Step program ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.61$) and the Grade 5 students in the Four-Step program ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.92$); $t(40) = 0.793$, $p = 0.433$. The data analysis indicated that there was not a difference between the grade level increases between the two groups in the 2014-15 school year.

Additional *t*-test: two-sample assuming unequal variances for Grade 5 for the 2014-15 results are displayed in Table 22.

Table 22

T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances: 2014-15; Grade 5

	Three-Step	Four-Step
Mean	2.77	2.48
Variance	2.58	0.84
Observations	26	25
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	40	
t Stat	0.793	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.433	
t Critical two-tail	2.02	

Descriptive statistics Grade 5, 2015-16. Descriptive statistics revealed that Grade 5 students who participated in the Three-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2015-16 school year had a mode of 3 and a range of 3. Students who participated in the Four-Step Gradual Release Method for the 2015-16 school year had a mode of 2 and a range of 4. Additional descriptive statistics for Grade 5, 2015-16 using the Three-Step and Four-Step method are displayed in Tables 23 and 24.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics Grade 5: 2015-16; Three-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 5: 2015-16
Mean	2.15
Standard Error	0.212
Median	3
Mode	3
Standard Deviation	1.08
Sample Variance	1.18
Kurtosis	-0.49
Skewness	-0.94
Range	3
Minimum	0
Maximum	3
Sum	56
Count	26
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.42

Table 24

Descriptive Statistics Grade 5: 2015-16; Four-Step F&P Scores

	Grade 5: 2015-16
Mean	1.88
Standard Error	0.24
Median	2
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	1.20
Sample Variance	1.44
Kurtosis	-0.63
Skewness	0.25
Range	4
Minimum	0
Maximum	4
Sum	47
Count	25
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.50

Results Grade 5, 2015-16. A two-sample *t*-test was conducted comparing the Fountas and Pinnell letter level increases for Grade 5 students in the Three-Step program with Grade 5 students in the Four-Step program for the 2015-16 school year. A preliminary test of variances revealed that the variances were not equal. There was not a significant difference between the Grade 5 students in the Three-Step program (M = 2.15, SD = 1.08) and the Grade 5 students in the Four-Step program (M = 1.88, SD = 1.20); t(49) = 0.855, p = 0.397. The data analysis indicated that there was not a difference between the grade level increases between the two groups in the 2015-16 school year. Additional *t*-test: two-sample assuming unequal variances for Grade 5 for the 2015-16 results are displayed in Table 25.

Table 25

T-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances: 2015-16; Grade 5

	Three-Step	*Four-Step*
Mean	2.15	1.88
Variance	1.185	1.44
Observations	26	25
Pooled Variance	1.31	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	49	
t Stat	0.855	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.198	
t Critical one-tail	1.677	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.397	
t Critical two-tail	2.010	

The results of the two-sample *t*-test conducted for each of the third, fourth, and fifth grade students receiving instruction using the Three-Step GRR model did not yield a significant difference from those third, fourth, and fifth grade students receiving

instruction using the Four-Step GRR model. Therefore, the Primary Investigator failed to reject Null Hypothesis 1.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is not a difference in proportion of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Grade 3, 2014-15 MAP. Grade 3 included a sample of 27 students, which included nine students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2014-15 school year utilizing the Three-Step method were compared to a sample of 24 students, which included eight students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2014-15 school year who utilized the Four-Step method as indicated in Table 26.

Table 26

Z-Test of Proportion Grade 3 2014-15: Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method MAP Scores

Method	Sample 1	P/A	Proportion
Three-Step	27	9	33.3%
Four-Step	24	8	33.3%

Three-Step Four-Step (Grade 3) 2014-15 results. In order to determine if there was a difference in the proportion of Grade 3 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP in the 2014-15 school year, the Primary Investigator ran a *z*-test of proportions comparing students in the Three-Step method and students in the Four-Step method. The analysis revealed that the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Three-Step method (N = 27, p = 33.3%) was not significantly different from the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Four-Step method (N = 24, p

= 33.3%); z = 0.00, p = 1.0000. The data analysis indicated that the proportions of students scoring Proficient or Advanced were the same in the two model.

Grade 3, 2015-16 MAP. Grade 3 included a sample of 25 students, which included seven students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2015-16 school year utilizing the Three-Step m**e**thod were compared to a sample of 24 students, which included five students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2015-16 school year who utilized the Four-Step method.

Table 27

Z test of Proportion Grade 3 2015-16: Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method MAP Scores

Method	Sample 1	P/A	Proportion
Three-Step	25	7	28.0%
Four-Step	24	5	20.8%

Three-Step Four-Step (Grade 3) 2015-16 results. The Primary Investigator ran a z-test of proportions comparing students in the Three-Step method and students in the Four-Step method to determine if there was a difference in the proportion of Grade 3 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP in the 2015-16 school year. The analysis revealed that the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Three-Step method (N = 25, p = 28.0%) was not significantly different from the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Four-Step method (N = 24, p = 20.8%); z = 0.586, p = 0.5580. The data analysis indicated that the proportions of students scoring Proficient or Advanced were the same in the two models.

Grade 4, 2014-15 MAP. Grade 4 included a sample of 21 students, which included 10 students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2014-15 school year utilizing the Three-Step method were compared to a sample of 19 students, which

included eight students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2014-15 school year utilizing the Four-Step.

Table 28

Z test of Proportion Grade 4: 2014-15; Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method MAP Scores

Method	Sample 1	A/P	Proportion
Three-Step	21	10	47.6%
Four-Step	19	7	36.8%

Three-Step Four-Step (Grade 4) 2014-15 results. The Primary Investigator ran a *z*-test of proportions comparing students in the Three-Step method and students in the Four-Step method to determine if there was a difference in the proportion of Grade 4 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP in the 2014-15 school year, The analysis revealed that the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Three-Step method (N = 21, 47.6%) was not significantly different from the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Four-Step method (N = 19, 36.8%); z = 0.690, p = 0.4902. The data analysis indicated that the proportions of students scoring Proficient or Advanced were the same in the two models.

Grade 4, 2015-16 MAP. Fourth Grade included a sample of 19 students, which included eight students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2015-16 school year utilizing the Three-Step method were compared to a sample of 19 students, which included five students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2015-16 school year utilizing the Four-Step.

Table 29

Z test of Proportion Grade 4: 2015-16; Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method MAP Scores

Method	Sample 1	A/P	Proportion
Three-Step	19	8	42.1%
Four-Step	19	5	23.3%

Three-Step Four-Step (Grade 4) 2015-16 results. The Primary Investigator ran a *z*-test of proportions comparing students in the Three-Step method and students in the Four-Step method to determine if there was a difference in the proportion of Grade 4 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP in the 2015-16 school year. The analysis revealed that the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Three-Step method (N = 19, 42.1%) was not significantly different from the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Four-Step method (N = 19, 23.3%); z = 1.027, p = 0.3047. The data indicates that the proportions of students scoring Proficient or Advanced were the same in the two models.

Grade 5, 2014-15 MAP. Grade 5 included a sample of 23 students, which included eight students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2014-15 school year were compared to a sample of 21 students, which included nine students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2014-15 school year. Table 30 indicates the results.

Table 30

Z test of Proportion Grade 5: 2014-15; Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method MAP Scores

Method	Sample 1	A/P	Proportion
Three-Step	23	8	34.8%
Four-Step	21	9	42.9%

Three-Step Four Step (Grade 5) 2014-15 Results. The Primary Investigator ran a z-test of proportions comparing students in the Three-Step method and students in the Four-Step method to determine if there was a difference in the proportion of Grade 5 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP in the 2014-15 school year. The analysis revealed that the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Three-Step method (N = 23, 34.8%) was not significantly different from the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Four-Step method (N = 21, 42.9%); z = -0.5551, p = 0.5815. The data analysis indicated that the proportions of students scoring Proficient or Advanced were the same in the two models.

Grade 5, 2015-16 MAP. Grade 5 included a sample of 22 students, which included six students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2015-16 school year were compared to a sample of 22 students, which included five students who scored either Proficient or Advanced for the 2015-16 school year. Table 31 indicates the results.

Table 31

Z test of Proportion Grade 5 2015-16: Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release Method MAP Scores

Method	Sample 1	A/P	Proportion
Three-Step	22	6	27.3%
Four-Step	22	5	22.7%

Three-Step Four Step (Grade 5) 2015-16 Results. The Primary Investigator ran a *z*-test of proportions comparing students in the Three-Step method and students in the Four-Step method to determine if there was a difference in the proportion of Grade 5 students scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP in the 2015-16 school year. The analysis revealed that the proportion of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Three-Step method (N = 22, 27.3%) was not significantly different from the proportion of

students scoring Proficient or Advanced in the Four-Step method (N = 22, 22.7%); z = 0.352, p = 0.7246. The data analysis indicated that the proportions of students scoring Proficient or Advanced were the same in the two models.

The results of the *z* test for proportions for each of the third, fourth, and Grade 5 students receiving instruction using the Three-Step GRR model did not yield a significant difference from those third, fourth, and Grade 5 students receiving instruction using the Four-Step GRR model. The Primary Investigator failed to reject Null Hypothesis 1 and Null Hypothesis 2. Results for Hypotheses 1 and 2 are displayed in Table 32.

Summary

Chapter Five is an interpretive summary of the data collected throughout the study. Data was analyzed and is triangulated in order for the primary investigator to reflect on the study and make suggestions for future research.

Table 32

Null Hypotheses Test Outcome

	Statistical Test	Test Outcome
1. There is not a difference in the increase in levels on the F&P between students in the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 for the 2014-2015 and 2015-16 school years.	two-sample t-test	There is no significant difference/fail to reject
2. There is not a difference in proportion of students scoring Proficient of Advanced on the MAP between students in the Three-Step and Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.	z-test of proportions	There is no significant proportions/fail to reject

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

The rationale behind this research study was the use of a best practice reading strategy used within the Missouri Reading Initiative Program model. As scores declined in the district of the study, there was a need to change the instructional practices in reading instruction throughout the elementary schools. District administrators adopted a Balanced Literacy approach based on current research as to what works in low-income urban schools.

Review of Methodology

In pursuance of the effective use of the Three-Step and Four-Step Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) strategies used by teachers at Valley Breeze Elementary School, data from each of the six classes in third, fourth, and fifth grade were investigated for the study.

The Primary Investigator investigated data from each of the six classes in Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5 for the study. Teachers in each grade level had one class where they instructed using Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. One class from each grade level utilized the Three-Step method of GRR, while another class in each grade level used the Four-Step method of GRR within the Reader's Workshop. Reader's Workshop took place in Grades 3 through 5 for the first 90 minutes of the school day five days a week. The Instructional Coach at the research site grouped students according to reading level ability. School leaders divided students by levels and gave each participating classroom teacher students who fell within three consecutive reading levels. Each teacher’s group had students from a variety of (3-5) grade levels. Yee (2013) stated that teachers utilized ability grouping in classrooms all over the country. This trend is one that surprised many educators, however according to “new analysis of data collected

by the government's National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that of the Grade 4 teachers surveyed, 71 percent said they had grouped students by reading ability in 2009, up from 28 percent in 1998" (Yee, 2013,para. 3). For all learners to reach full potential, educators use differentiated reading strategies during instruction. These strategies accommodated the individual learning style, readiness, and interest of each student. This differentiated method is commonly known as flexible grouping (Cox, n.d.). The 90-minute period began with a Shared Reading and whole group strategy lesson, which is where the GRR strategy was employed. From here the teacher and students transitioned into a setting in which students received Guided Reading instruction, participated in centers, and Independent Reading. Each class worked on the same comprehension strategy provided by the Missouri Reading Initiative reading program. The consistency of the instruction came from this single document (Figure 6). Individual teachers created and carried out their lessons according to the school-wide comprehension scope and sequence, with the expectation that they implemented either the Three-Step or Four-Step GRR model with fidelity.

Hypothesis Results

The Primary Investigator formulated two hypotheses. The following two questions guided the Primary Investigator's research: (1) How do reading scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program? (2) How do ELA MAP scores differ in comparison to the implementation of two different methods of Gradual Release of Responsibility within the Missouri Reading Initiative program?

Hypothesis 1. There is a difference in the increase in levels on the F&P between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Hypothesis 1 Results. Results from the *t*-test indicated no significant change in reading level scores between classroom teachers who used the Three-Step and Four-Step GRR strategy for two consecutive school years in Grades 3, 4, and 5.

Hypothesis 2. There is a difference in proportion of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

Hypothesis 2 Results. The results of the *z*-test for proportions for each of the students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 receiving instruction using the Three-Step GRR model did not yield a significant difference from those students in grades 3, 4, and 5 receiving instruction using the Four-Step GRR model.

Interpretation of Results (Hypothesis 1)

Hypothesis 1. There is a difference in the increase in levels on the F&P between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method for students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

There was no consistent significant difference in student reading level jumps for classroom teachers who utilized the Three-Step versus the Four-Step gradual release of responsibility during Reader's Workshop whole group instruction for either school years. Although there were some differences in the median number of level jumps (2) among student readers described in Tables 39 – 42, statistical testing indicated that no one group showed more growth, as noted by level jumps, than the other. The Primary Investigator concluded that each method yield similar rates of student achievement. Given the fact

that students in each instructional model are performing at different reading/achievement levels, it would be difficult to determine what caused growth or increase of achievement.

The median number of reading levels students moved during the first year of receiving the Three-Step method of instruction, was between three and four, while during the second year of receiving the Three-Step method of instruction, the median number of levels students moved was between three and five. These results are somewhat perplexing, as it appears the number of level jumps per year is higher using the Three-Step method, which is not what a classroom teacher might infer. To explain further, teachers would infer that the Four-Step method, which utilizes an additional level of practice, would significantly increase student achievement. However, according to this study, having the additional step in the Four-Step method does not appear to be as important to student understanding and achievement. Tables for analysis of Hypothesis 1 are shown in Tables 33 and 34.

Table 33

Analysis Hypothesis 1: Three-Step Gradual Release Method 2014-15

Year	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Median	4	3	2
Range	4	6	2

Table 34

Analysis Hypothesis 1: Three-Step Gradual Release Method 2015-16

Year	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Median	3	2	5
Range	3	5	4

The median number of levels students moved during the first year of instruction was between three and four, while during the second year of receiving the Four-Step

method of instruction, the median number of levels of students moved was between two and three. This multiple number of movements can be contributed to the addition of the fourth step of GRR in which students work with another student practicing the skill, strategy, or content before trying it by themselves during the "doing it alone" step. Tables for analysis of Hypothesis 1 are shown in Tables 35 and 36.

Table 35

Analysis Hypothesis 1: Four-Step Gradual Release Method 2014-15

Year	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Median	3	4	3
Range	5	5	3

Table 36

Analysis Hypothesis 1: Four-Step Gradual Release Method 2015-16

Year	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Median	3	2	2
Range	3	4	4

As previously indicated, students, in Grades 3, 4, and 5 are expected to increase/jump four reading levels per academic school year to be considered a Proficient/On-level reader (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Table 37, and the following discussion, describes how this expectation affects a below-level and an on-level reader in the program. Columns 1 through 3 are indicative of the proficiency requirements for each grade K-5. Columns 5 through 10 provided an example of specific scenarios.

Table 37

Reading Level/ Grade Equivalent Chart

GLE	JUMPS	Finish	Grade Level	Actual Start	Required End	Actual End	Jumps Made	Jumps needed	Proficiency
K	4	D	K	A	D	F	5	4	Above
1	7	J	1	D	J	J	6	6	At
2	4	M	2	J	M	M	4	4	At
3	4	P	3	M	P	T	6	4	Above
4	4	S	4	G	S	Q	10	12	Below
5	4	V	5	D	V	J	6	18	Below

For example, the Grade 4 student in Table 37 who made 10 level jumps, has made progress, however, for this student to become Proficient, he would need to have jumped 12 levels. Therefore, the Grade 4 student from this example is below grade level.

When students in first grade read at levels D through J, seven level jumps are required to remain Proficient, to be considered as having a full one year of growth, whereas, all of the other grade levels require four jumps to remain Proficient, and having one full year of growth.

Students in Grades 3, 4 and 5 who start at a Level D and end at a Level J, have increased the four required levels for growth per school year. However, these students are still considerably behind grade level in reading and a Below Basic reader. Other students on higher levels, who jumped fewer levels in a year, remained Proficient because they were already on-level readers.

Students who begin the year, eight or more levels below, have less of a chance of being considered on grade level readers during any subsequent academic school year. Many state standards expect students to grow eight or more levels in a school year, which the Primary Investigator considered a barrier for the student, as there are many factors involved in the process of learning to read.

Interpretation of Results (Hypothesis 2)

Hypothesis 2. There is a difference in proportion of students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 scoring Proficient or Advanced on the MAP between the Three-Step method and the Four-Step method during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

There was no consistent significant difference in student performing Proficient or Advanced on MAP when classroom teachers utilized the Three-Step versus the Four-Step

gradual release of responsibility during Reader's Workshop whole group instruction for either school years.

When comparing students from the same Three-Step or Four-Step GRR method from one grade level to the next, the data appeared to be on target. However, the number of students returning from Year 1 to Year 2 in each method is uncertain due to the school's mobility numbers reported each school year. Also, taken into consideration was the fact that students beginning reading level was substantially lower to start than needed to be considered on grade level. The Primary Investigator also considered the outcome of results knowing that each beginning reading for each student in the program and how many reading levels those students were already below the level that considered them an on-level reader. The Primary Investigator organized descriptive data to determine changes in proficiency for students who received two years of instruction for each grade as displayed in Tables 38 - 40.

Students in data table 38 are labeled as the class of 2027 to help readers to understand the population data sets. It is important to note that due to the mobility at the studied school, scores are not necessarily representative of the same students from one year to the next. These students had received the Three-Step method of GRR for the two-year collection of MAP data regarding Proficient and Advanced indicated little difference in *z*-test proportion for third and Grade 4. The Primary Investigator suggested that the results could be indicative that it was the first year of the program implementation and that students had received just one year of instruction that focused on the Four-Step method of instruction. Whereas, during the 2015-16 school year there was a significant difference in the *z*-test proportions (28% for Grade 3 students and 42% for Grade 4 students). The Primary Investigator contributed the results to the fact that the Grade 4

students were in their second year of Three-Step instruction, thus having some background knowledge of its usage. The Grade 3 students during this school year were 'new' to the instruction, as well as, to the test-taking process.

Table 38

Three-Step GRR Method Class of 2027

	2014-15 MAP			2015-16 MAP		
Grade	P/A	% Proportion	Population	P/A	% Proportion	Population
3	9	33%	27	7	28%	25
4	10	48%	21	8	42%	19

Table 39 displays data that represents the percentage proportions of MAP scores of students who scored Advanced or Proficient for the 2014-15 school while in Grade 4 and percentage proportions of MAP scores of students who scored Advanced or Proficient for the 2015-16 school year. These students are labeled as the class of 2028 to help readers to understand the population data sets. Again, it is important to note that due to the mobility at the studied school, scores do not necessarily represent the same students from one year to the next.

The students' data from students who received the Three-Step method of GRR for the two-year collection of MAP data regarding Proficient and Advanced, indicated there is little difference in the *z*-test proportion for the first-year student population groups in (2014-15) when students moved from fourth to Grade 5. The Primary Investigator suggested the results are indicative that this was the first year of the program implementation and that these students had received just one year of instruction that focused on the Three-Step method of instruction. Whereas, during the 2015-16 school year there was a larger difference in the *z*-test proportions (42% for Grade 4 students and 27% for Grade 5 students). This is an unexpected difference for

the Primary Investigator, as it is the second year of the Four-Step GRR Method of instruction for both grade levels. The Primary Investigator contributed the difference to the increased mobility rate of students in each grade level. The Primary Investigator indicated that students in the 2015-16 Grade 4 population group were less transient when moving from Grade 3 to Grade 4 than when the 2014-15 Grade 4 student population moved from Grade 4 to Grade 5. The Primary Investigator also recognized that the 2015-16, Grade 4 student population group began at a higher achievement level than the 2015-16 Grade 5 student population group. One last consideration is that the 2015-16 Grade 4 student population had more consistency in teachers from year-to-year than the 2015-16 Grade 5 student population group.

Table 39

Three-Step GRR Class of 2028

	2014-15 MAP			2015-16 MAP		
Grade	P/A	% Proportion	Population	P/A	% Proportion	Population
4	10	48%	21	8	42%	19
5	8	35%	23	6	27%	22

Table 40 displays data that represents the percentage proportions of MAP scores of students who scored Advanced or Proficient for the 2014-15 school while in Grade 5. This data table does not include the next consecutive year, since those students went on to middle school. These students are labeled as the class of 2029 to help readers to understand the population data set. The students represented in the populations for the students in Table 40 were here for one year beginning 2014-15, and moved to Grade-6 the preceding year. The data, from students' one-year collection of MAP data regarding Proficient and Advanced, indicated that 8 out of 23 students scored Proficient or

Advanced on the state test with a *z*-test proportion of 35%. During the second year of receiving instruction using the Four-Step method, only 6 out of 22 students scored Proficient or Advanced on the state test with a *z*-test proportion of 27%. The Primary Investigator determined that the students who received the Three-Step GRR instruction method had no significant difference in student achievement when compared. However, it is unknown how many of the students are the same from one year to the next due to the high mobility rate of the school.

Table 40

Three-Step GRR Class of 2029

	2014-15 MAP			2015-16 MAP		
Grade	P/A	% Proportion	Population	P/A	% Proportion	Population
5 n/a	8	35%	23	6	27%	22

As indicated in Table 41, the students who received the Four-Step method of GRR for the two-year collection of MAP data regarding Proficient and Advanced, indicated little difference in *z*-test proportion for third and fourth grades. This could be indicative that this was the first year of the program implementation and that students had received just one year of instruction that focused on the Four-Step method of instruction. Whereas, during the 2015-16 school year there was a greater difference in the *z*-test proportions (21% for third graders and 23% for fourth graders).

Table 41

Four-Step GRR Class of 2027

	2014-15 MAP			2015-16 MAP		
Grade	P/A	% Proportion	Population	P/A	% Proportion	Population
3	8	33%	27	5	21%	24
4	7	37%	19	8	23%	19

Table 42 displays data that represents the percentage proportions of MAP scores of students who scored Advanced or Proficient for the 2014-15 school, while in Grade 4, and percentage proportions of MAP scores of students who scored Advanced or Proficient for the 2015-16 school year, who potentially continued to Grade 5. These students are labeled as the class of 2028 to help readers to understand the population data sets. Again, it is important to note that due to the mobility at the studied school, scores are not necessarily representative of the same students from one year to the next.

Table 42

Four-Step GRR Class of 2028

	2014-15 MAP			2015-16 MAP		
Grade	P/A	% Proportion	Population	P/A	% Proportion	Population
4	7	37%	19	8	23%	19
5	9	43%	21	5	23%	22

The students' MAP results, who received the Four-Step method of GRR for the two-year collection of MAP data regarding Proficient and Advanced, indicated there is little difference in the *z*-test proportion for the first year (2014-15), Grade 4 students, when they moved to Grade 5. The Primary Investigator determined the results to be indicative that this was the first year of the program implementation and that those students received just one year of instruction that focused on the Four-Step GRR instructional method. Whereas, during the 2015-16 school year, there was a larger difference in the *z*-test proportions (48% for Grade 4 students and 23% for Grade 5 students). The Primary Investigator also determined that the students from the 2015-16 Grade 4 population group began at a higher achievement level than the 2015-16

Grade 5 population group. One last consideration is that the 2015-16 Grade 4 population had more consistency in teachers from year-to-year than the students in 2015-16 Grade 5 population group.

Table 43 displays data that represents the percentage proportions of MAP scores of students who scored Advanced or Proficient for the 2014-15 school while in Grade 5. This data table does not include the next consecutive year since those students went on to middle school. These students are labeled as the class of 2029 to help readers to understand the population data set.

These students' one-year collection of MAP data regarding Proficient and Advanced indicated that 9 out of 21 students scored Proficient or Advanced on the state test with a *z*-test proportion of 43%. The Primary Investigator examined the number and determined that the students' achievement rates that had received the Four-Step GRR instruction were positive.

Table 43

Four-Step GRR Class of 2029

	2014-15 MAP			2015-16 MAP		
Grade	P/A	% Proportion	Population	P/A	% Proportion	Population
5	9	43%	21	5	23%	22
n/a						

Interpretation of Reading Level Growth

The Primary Investigator examined data from each group to study reading scores in relationship to student 'level jumps' as compared to years of growth using the Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment for two consecutive years. The Primary Investigator described the level jumps as the number of reading levels a student moves, as measured by a running record. It is important for educators to understand level jumps because a

Grade 3 student who moves up two levels is less significant than a Grade 5 student who moves up two levels, as well as the significance of movement for a Grade 4 student who moves two or more levels in one year. On-level, proficient readers are expected to move at least three to four levels per academic school year to be considered 'at grade level' by the end of the year. The following tables and explanations further discuss the difficulties that below level readers at ALL grade levels experience using this expectation chart.

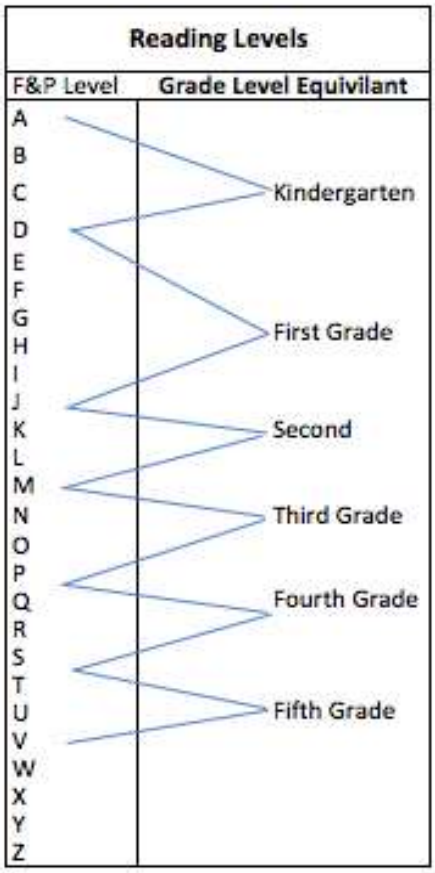
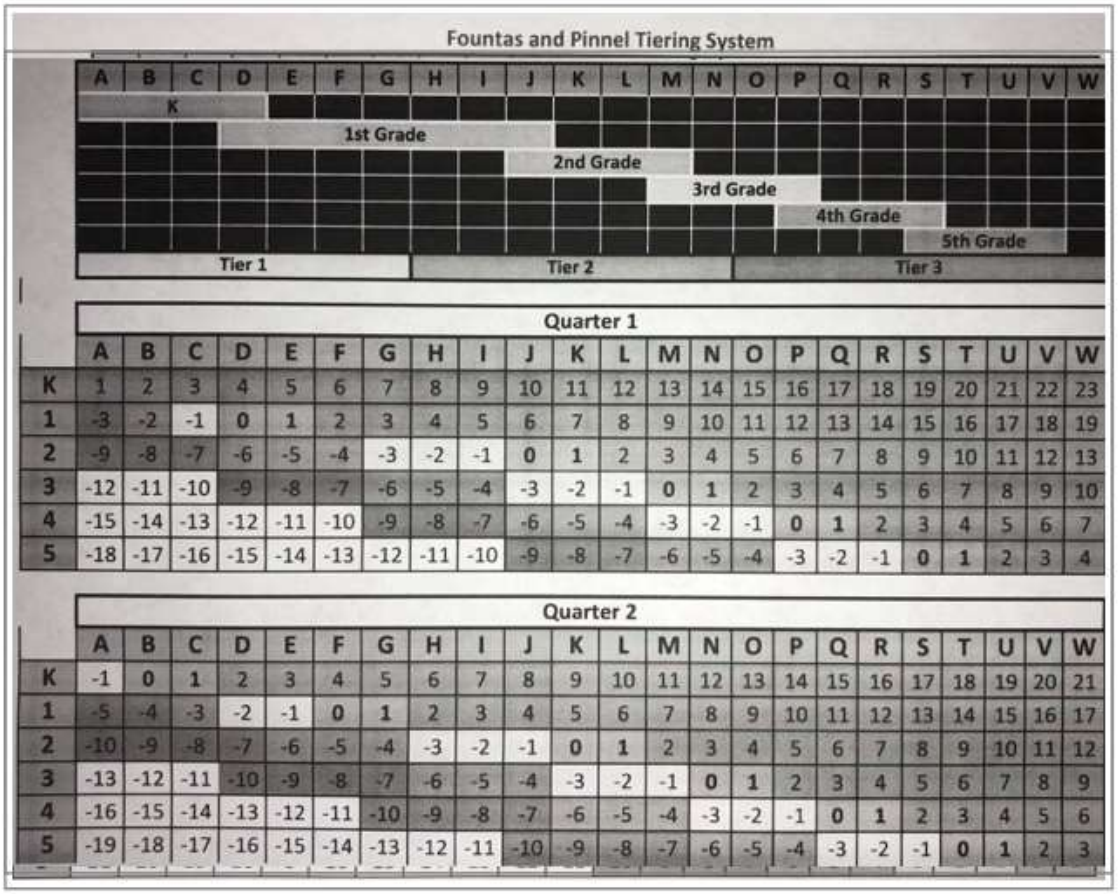


Figure 7. Level growth in reading proficiency (F&P). According to the Fountas and Pinnell Tiering System, provided by the Valley Breeze administration, an on-level reader is expected to grow three-four levels per school year. This chart is a recreation of the actual Tiering system that was used within the case study school (Valley Breeze, Elementary, 2013), which is an adapted version based upon Fountas and Pinnell's Leveling system from 2012.

The Primary Investigator believes it is important to understand that an on-level Grade 3 student should be reading on a Level M at the beginning the year and end the year on a Level P. Whereas, an on-level Grade 4 student should be reading on a Level P at the beginning the year and end the year on a Level S. While an on-level Grade 5 student should be reading on a Level S at beginning the year and end the year on a Level V, as indicated in Figure 7.



Quarter 1

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
1	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
2	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
3	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	-18	-17	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4

Quarter 2

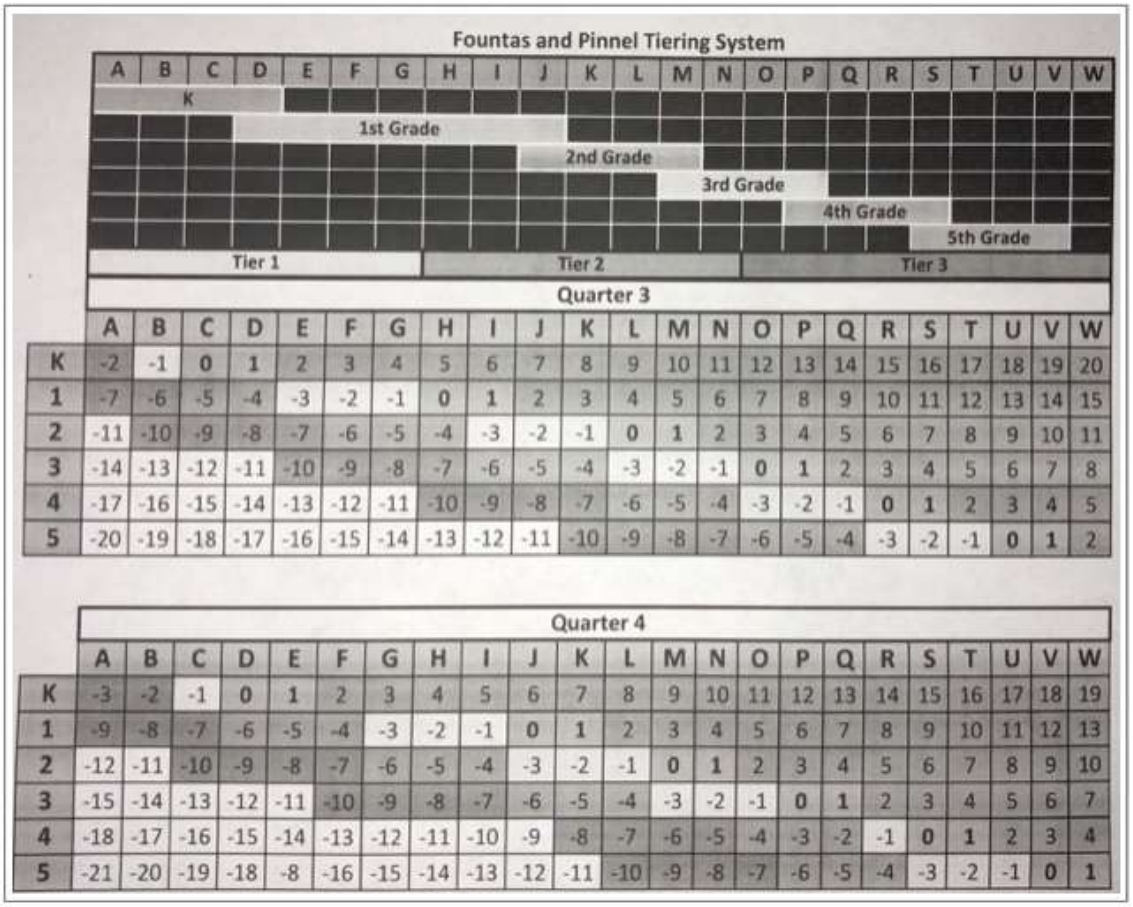
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
K	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
2	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
3	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	-19	-18	-17	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

Figure 8. Fountas and Pinnell tiering system: Quarter 1 – 2. Adapted from Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI) system that was used within the case study school (Valley Breeze, Elementary, 2013). This is an adapted version based upon the Missouri Reading Initiative, 2014.

Significant information for teachers and education leaders to note is the differences in the expected levels jumps. For example, Valley Breeze Elementary school

may have many readers in the third, fourth, and fifth grades who are reading below grade level.

Two level jumps in Grade 3 is less significant than two level jumps in Grade 5. Additionally, a student in Grade 5 who begins on a Level M, is 10 levels below grade level. If that student moves to a Level Q, he would then be six levels below grade level and have a four-level increase. However, there would still be six levels to go. The level changes do not have equal value in growth.



Fountas and Pinnel Tiering System

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
	K																						
				1st Grade																			
										2nd Grade													
													3rd Grade										
																4th Grade							
																				5th Grade			
	Tier 1								Tier 2								Tier 3						

Quarter 3

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
K	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
3	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4	-17	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
5	-20	-19	-18	-17	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2

Quarter 4

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W
K	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
2	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	-18	-17	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
5	-21	-20	-19	-18	-8	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1

Figure 9. Fountas and Pinnell tiering system: Quarter 3 – 4. Adapted from Missouri Reading Initiative (MRI) system that was used within the case study school (Valley Breeze, Elementary, 2013). This is an adapted version based upon the Missouri Reading Initiative, 2014.

Although the level jump totals seem to be a high number, the actual growth requirement for a student reading on a level M has a higher expected growth rate than what one is required at the Grade 5 level. In other words, the value between each level is not equal in growth as a student's ability increases. The higher levels in the F&P reading continuum have a lower level growth expectation as outlined in Figures 8 and 9.

To summarize, a student who grows four levels in Grade 5 does not represent the actual growth necessary to be considered on grade level by the end of the year. The end year requirement is Level V, which means this student is now six reading levels below grade level in May. The data appears to show little or no growth at all, when in fact, this student grew five reading levels.

Overall Interpretation of Results

When the Primary Investigator compared students' F&P growth percentage and MAP proficiency percentages from one year to the next, the data appeared to be correlated between some grade levels with a correlation between F& P and MAP, however, the data was not conclusive in any area, nor was it statistically tested. As indicated in Tables 43 and 44 the Primary Investigator was able to organize the percentages of F&P growth and MAP percentages of P/A for students who received each of the Three-Step and Four-Step GRR method for two consecutive years.

Table 44

Data Collection Table Three- Step & Four-Step

Three-Step GRR

YR	GR	F&P Growth	MAP % of P/A
2014-15	3	0.70	33%
	4	-0.34	48%
	5	0.45	35%
2015-16	3	-0.21	28%
	4	-0.52	42%
		-0.59	27%

Four-Step GRR

YR	GR	F&P Growth	MAP % of P/A
2014-15	3	0.37	33%
	4	0.45	37%
	5	-0.19	43%
2015-16	3	0.24	21%
	4	-0.59	23%
	5	1	23%

Note. A = Advanced; P = Proficient

Personal Reflections

This study has allowed me to view the positive actions of a good teacher. Educational leaders cannot just assume that every classroom teacher is following protocol, diligently assessing students, or using methods and strategies effectively. When educators are reflective practitioners, they become much more aware of what is working well and when or where they can do to be more effective. Even the most seasoned educator can so some things better. Having been an educator for many years, I can appreciate this. As classroom teachers, we must always be on the cutting edge, trying new things, and giving up the things that 'have always' worked.

The overall outcome surprised me. Prior to the study, I had the idea that one method would yield higher test scores and provide a positive difference in proportions of Proficient and Advanced scores on the MAP test. I expected the Four-Step method of instruction to yield higher reading levels and proficiency/advanced levels for the simple fact that students are working with a peer partner and getting peer feedback before performing the task on their own. I did not take into consideration whether the classroom teacher was giving positive and/or negative feedback to groups of students working together. The teachers' feedback would have been powerful, especially if students were practicing a skill or a strategy incorrectly. I did not take into consideration the several pertinent factors that could have had a negative effect on student performance and self-worth. For example, I did not take into account that having students grouped with students of the same ability and reading levels, who worked at the same level, had little exposure to a higher-level peer who utilized higher level thinking, or a different perspective. Research suggests the benefits of peer tutoring, within the Kagen Cooperative Learning structure, increase students' confidence in working in groups for a shared goal and develop skills and dispositions like team building, delegation, conflict resolution, and effective communication (Kagan, Johnson, & Johnson, 2012).

For all accounts, it appears from the data that the on-level and above-level readers fared well in spite of the teacher or method. However, I believe students could have been challenged more which would not only increased their reading level but also allow for experiences with other genres of books and reading.

Recommendations to the Program

Recommendations for continuing this program are simplistic. Having given thought to my personal reflections, I would have grouped the students in a different way.

One way that comes to mind is instead of giving each teacher one to two consecutive levels, give them levels with some space in between (i.e., Levels K/M/O). A model like this would lead to allowing students to work with a peer partner for tutoring purposes. Decision making about lesson planning together as a team of teachers may lead to a more aligned use of the Comprehension Scope and Sequence document. Common formative assessment may lead to more students scoring proficient and advanced on the MAP test. Reading scores can be validated with the used of another form of reading assessment as the F&P is considered to be very subjective. Lastly, I would have asked teachers for feedback along the way, asking them what was working and what was not working as to make the study and results more valid.

Recommendations for Future Research

The Primary Investigator's recommendations for future research studies include considering the use of more than one test to determine student growth. Results from the study may have been more reliable if each teacher involved would follow the same lesson plans. Teachers in the study were allowed to create their own lesson plans as long as they followed the Comprehension Scope and Sequence (Figure 6) and stayed true to the use of the correct gradual release method. Teachers were not held to any one accountability piece, nor were there any observations of instruction by the Primary Investigator. Tracking student mobility from year-to-year in each method would most definitely add to the validity of the data gathered during the two years of the study. Lastly, professional development for the use of Gradual Release of Responsibility along with the additional of the use of Cooperative Learning strategies and structures may have increased student performance.

Conclusion

The overall results of the study are considered to be inconclusive, as there were not any consistent results in reference to student F&P reading levels. From year-to-year in each of the Three-Step and Four-Step method, the average level jump was between two and three levels per year. However, the percentage of growth wavered between negative and positive results. These results can be attributed to the mobility of the students in the study, to the teachers, and to the actual test. The F&P test is administered orally and can be considered subjective when teachers are scoring the comprehension section of the test. Having another measure of assessment for actual reading levels would have spoken to the validity of actual student reading abilities.

While I reported no negative percentages for growth proportions in regard to student MAP scores, there were increases in most all grade levels, except the Grade 5, for both years and both methods. The result can be contributed to maintaining a consistent population in this grade, as this is when the mobility of families began.

I was unable to provide conclusive data to stating there is a difference between F&P reading levels and Proficient and Advanced MAP scores using the GRR method within the Reader's Workshop Model. I infer that an on-level or above-level reader is a student who will perform well on a state or any assessment.

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Appendix A: Permission to use Fisher and Frey Figure 2

12/30/17

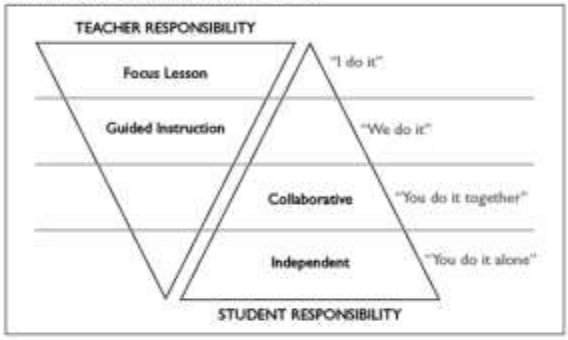
Maureen Green

Lindenwood, Doctoral Student

Dear Maureen Green,

GRANT OF PERMISSION TO USE the work of Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey, 2008

Figure 1.2. Gradual Release of Responsibility



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Permission is granted for the use of the material as described above:

Name: Katie Wogec

Title: Permissions Consultant for ASCD

School /Organization: Lindenwood University

Signature: Katy Wogec

Date: .....January 21, 2018.....

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Vitae

Maureen M. Green

EMPLOYMENT

Riverview Gardens School District
Koch Elementary
Reading Specialist
2014-present

Riverview Gardens School District
Danforth Elementary
Instructional Coach
2013-14

Riverview Gardens School District
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5th Grade Teacher--1990-1996, 2006-2007
Reading Specialist--1996-2006, 2007-2010
4th Grade Teacher—2010-2013

Hazelwood School District
Townsend Elementary, Summer School Teacher—3rd/4th grade
Twillman Elementary, Summer School Teacher—Reading Specialist
Arrowpoint Elementary, Summer School Teacher—Reading Specialist

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