

READING POETRY FOR IMPROVED ADOLESCENT ORAL FLUENCY,  
COMPREHENSION, AND SELF-PERCEPTION

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.

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## DEDICATION

To Chad and Rylan, your love and laughter give me strength

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore the effects of oral fluency instruction and strategies on struggling adolescent readers' prosody, comprehension and self-perception as readers. Additionally, this study sought to determine if relationships exist between performances in adolescent oral fluency and comprehension, prosody and comprehension, and oral fluency and reader self-perception.

Prior to and immediately after the intervention, assessments were administered. Oral fluency was assessed with Rasinski's (2004) oral reading multidimensional fluency scale. To determine students' reading comprehension levels, the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills reading comprehension subtest was used. Reader's self-perception was measured with Henck and Melnick's (1995) Reader Self Perception Survey.

The study included eight high school students who were identified as struggling readers. During fifteen class sessions, the students participated in an intervention which used poetry and five oral fluency strategies: model, guided, repeated, paired, and performance reading. The analysis of pre and post tests revealed statistically significant improvements in comprehension, fluency, and reader self-perception. However, only fluency and comprehension gains indicate a statistically significant relationship.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIBS	Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills
GP	General Perception
IRA	International Reading Association
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NIM	Neurological Impress Method
NRP	National Reading Panel
NICHD	National Institute for Child Health and Human Development
OC	Observational Comparison
PR	Progress
PS	Physiological State
RSPS	Reader Self Perception Survey
SF	Social Feedback
WCPM	Word Correct Per Minute
USDE	United States Department of Education

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Adolescent Literacy

“Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will read and write more than at any other time in human history” (More, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik, 1999, p. 3). However, despite increasing literacy demands, the number of struggling readers has not noticeably changed in the last few decades (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Eight million struggling readers urgently need more effective reading instruction. Thus, elementary, middle, and secondary educators must reevaluate and reform their reading programs to meet the demands of a knowledge-driven society because the “ability to read will be crucial” (More et al., 1999, p. 3). American adolescents need to graduate from school as literate citizens capable of competing in a global economy, and this can only be accomplished if they are able to pursue new skills and knowledge (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Fortunately, in the last few years there has been an increased focus on reading instruction (Biancarosa, Nair, Deshler, & Palincsar, 2007).

As a part of carrying out a Congressional charge, the National Reading Panel (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) identified and assessed various instructional strategies used to teach students to read. The National Reading Panel (NRP) report encouraged educators to use phoneme awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary instruction in reading programs. At the core of any program should be the goal for students to improve reading comprehension skills, but the Panel warns that a reading program should not rely on only one or even two instructional approaches. A variety of approaches should be incorporated to ensure a successful reading program. The NRP report preceded a push for

elementary reform, specifically, *Reading First* (United States Department of Education [USDE], 2008) which focuses on implementing scientifically-based instructional reading practices and assessment tools in early reading classrooms. Funds are provided to states and districts “to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade” (2008, p. 1) and to support professional development, so teachers have the needed skills to implement reading programs.

Even if students learn to read well by the third grade, instructional focus on reading should not end there because there are stages in reading and writing development (More et al., 1999). When evaluating and redesigning reading programs, educators and policy makers should consider that the needs of elementary and secondary students vary as the purpose of reading shifts from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn.’ Learning to read is only the first step toward full literacy, and as adolescents’ oral language, critical thinking ability, and knowledge increase, so does the need for guidance in reading and writing development (More et al., 1999).

As students grow older, differences in reading abilities and achievement begin to magnify (More et al., 1999). Students’ reading needs and abilities vary. In order to comprehend basic subjects, some teens require special instruction. Other students need more opportunities to practice with comfortable texts, so they can learn to read smoothly and easily. However, all students need guidance and support as they encounter new vocabulary and writing styles (More et al., 1999).

Unfortunately for struggling adolescent readers “most of the attention and resources have been focused on the reading needs of learners through grade 3” (Biancarosa et al, 2007, p. 2). Adolescent literacy programs are still lacking support in school curricula and governmental policy. According to the International Reading Association (More et al., 1999), “adolescents are being shortchanged. No one is giving adolescent literacy much press. It is certainly not a hot

topic in educational policy or a priority in schools. In the United States, most Title I budgets are allocated for early intervention—little is left over for the struggling adolescent reader” (p. 3). Funding for adolescent reading programs has decreased, and many middle and secondary schools are unable to hire reading specialists (More et al., 1999).

This lack of support for secondary reading programs is evidenced in national assessment reports. The 1998 Reading Report Card produced by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed approximately 60% of U.S. adolescents can comprehend specific factual information. However, few have reached beyond the basic reading skills to advanced reading (More et al., 1999). “Fewer than 5% of the adolescents NAEP assessed could extend or elaborate the meanings of the materials they read” (More et al., 1999, p.3).

We are experiencing an adolescent literacy crisis. According to Carnevale (2001) ninth grade students who rank in the lower 25 percent in their class are twenty times more likely to drop out of school than the higher achieving students. A commonly cited reason for this is that the high school curriculum increases in complexity, and students are unable to keep up (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Of those who graduate only 32 percent are ready for English composition at the college level (ACT, 2005). Additionally, “approximately 40 percent of high school graduates lack the literacy skills employers seek” (Achieve, Inc., 2005).

There are eight million struggling readers in grades 4–12 in schools across our nation (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003). According to Kirsch (2007), the high school graduation rate reached its highest point in 1969 at 77%, but the graduation rate has remained in the 70% range since 1995. American students ranked only 15<sup>th</sup> in reading achievement when compared to other countries. Additionally, based on ACT’s (2005) national reading readiness indicator, only 51% of ACT tested high school students are ready for college-

level reading, and their college-readiness is at its lowest in a decade. Results of the NAEP for the period of 1971–2004 show that average reading scores for fourth-grade students in 2004 were the highest they have ever been. Unfortunately, scores for 13-year-old students have increased only 3 points since 1975, and scores for 17-year-old students have dropped 5 points since 1992 (ACT, 2005). According to More et al., (1999) “attention long has been focused on the beginnings of literacy, planting seedlings and making sure that they take root. But without careful cultivation and nurturing, seedlings may wither and their growth become stunted” (p. 9).

### Reading Next

Meeting the needs of struggling adolescent readers “will require expanding the discussion of reading from *Reading First*—acquiring grade level reading skills by third grade—to *Reading Next*—acquiring the reading comprehension skills that can serve youth for a lifetime” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006, p. 9). In order to address this problem, a panel of five respected educational researchers met with representatives of Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Alliance for Excellent Education on April 22, 2004. The researchers were asked to consider the types of changes necessary to improve student achievement based on current knowledge of the field. At the same time, the researchers were asked to envision a way to drive the field toward a more thorough knowledge base (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Their recommendations were entitled *Reading Next*, and they believe that an effective adolescent reading program includes fifteen elements: direct and explicit comprehension instruction, effective instructional principles embedded in content, text-based collaborative learning, strategic tutoring, diverse texts, intensive writing, a technology component, ongoing formative assessment of students, extended time for literacy, ongoing summative assessment of

students and programs, teacher teams, leadership, and a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program.

According to Biancarosa and Snow (2006) “appropriate remediation of adolescent literacy difficulties does not involve simply reteaching elementary school-level material” (p. 29). Nor should remediation involve an aimless layering of all fifteen key elements. Choices should be made through a problem solving process which matches teachers’ and students’ needs (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Not only can educators positively affect today’s youth with these recommendations, but the report encourages educators to expand the knowledge base through participation in action research where they evaluate their reading programs (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). The panel (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) believes “that if the funding, research, policymaking, and education communities embrace these recommendations, the literacy field will make significant strides toward the goal of meeting the needs of all students in our society, while also strengthening our understanding of exactly *what works, when, and for whom*” (p.5).

#### Adolescent Oral Reading Fluency

According to the NRP review (NICHD, 2000), fluent readers orally read with ease and accuracy, and fluency is an important factor in reading comprehension. Across a range of grade levels, the NRP (2000) found significant positive effects when teachers gave feedback while students read aloud.

As a result of the NRP report, reading fluency became more acknowledged as a significant component in successful reading programs in the elementary grades (Ellery, 2005). Reading fluency instruction has been a focus in elementary schools, but rarely “taught directly or systematically in the middle or secondary grades” (Rasinski et al., 2005, p. 26). If a student

lacks fluency skills when leaving an elementary school, most likely that student will not receive adequate instructional support (2005). However, Rasinski et al. believes (2005) “it makes good sense that even older students who read with a lack of sufficient fluency will have difficulty comprehending what they read” (p. 26). Therefore, it is imperative for researchers and secondary educators to consider action research studies which focus on determining if oral fluency instruction can help older students construct meaning of text.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### History of Oral Reading in the American Classroom

Throughout the past two centuries, oral reading evolved from a source of entertainment in households and a dominant presence in classrooms to a questionable form of instruction, and more recently to a highly encouraged research-based instructional focus. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, oral reading was a primary source of entertainment for families. In many cases only one member of the family was able to read, so the literate family member was expected to relate all information to the family through oral reading of books and newspapers (Hyatt 1943; Smith, 1965). Oral reading also dominated American classrooms. According to Rasinski (2003), some schools were known as “blab schools.” Students were required to orally read a passage, reread it, and memorize it. Since students were often reading at various grade levels or studying different subjects, classrooms were a dissonance of oral reading.

Nineteenth century reading textbooks by W.H. McGuffey emphasized word decoding, recitation, and elocution (Rasinski, 2003). The following passages from textbooks by McGuffey demonstrate this emphasis.

*Suggestions to Teachers.*—Thorough and frequent drills on the elementary sounds are useful in correcting vicious habits of pronunciation and in strengthening the vocal chords. As a rule, only one or two sounds should be employed at one lesson. Care should be taken that the pupils observe and practice these sounds correctly in their reading (cited in Hyatt, 1942, p. 7).

Another McGuffey textbook stresses the practice of oral reading drills and teacher modeling.

Drills in articulation and emphasis should be given with every lesson. The essentials of good reading are not to be taught by one or two lessons. Constant drills on good exercises, with frequent exhibitions of the correct method from the teacher, will be found more effectual than any other form prescribed in type (cited in Hyatt, 1942, p. 7).

During the mid-nineteenth century, oral reading instruction began to focus on correct pronunciation (Hoffman 1987). Normally, a teacher would read a text aloud, and then students would practice the text on their own. When necessary, teachers also evaluated and assisted their readings. After a time of practice, the teacher assessed the quality of a student's oral reading of the text (1987).

At the close of the nineteenth century and after several scientific investigations into reading development, scholars saw the value of silent reading and began to question the effectiveness of oral reading instruction (Hyatt, 1943) because it emphasized elocution instead of comprehension of the text. This caused many educators to lessen the use of oral reading and increase silent reading as a dominant instructional strategy. Edmund B. Huey investigated word recognition, eye-movements, rate of reading, perception of reading units, and interpretation. After the investigations, Huey recommends a shift to silent reading in classrooms.

Reading as a school exercise has almost always been thought of as reading aloud, in spite of the obvious fact that reading in actual life is to be mainly silent reading. . . By silently reading meanings from the first day of reading, and by practice in getting meanings from the page at the naturally rapid rate at which meanings come from situations in actual life, the rate of reading and of thinking will grow with the pupil's growth and with his power to assimilate what is read (cited in Hyatt, 1943, p.16).

By 1925 reading instructional emphasis had shifted from oral reading to silent reading (Hyatt, 1943). Although 20<sup>th</sup> century reading instruction focused on strategies to be used during silent reading, one form of oral reading, round robin, maintained a foothold in American classrooms (Hoffman, 1987).

During round robin reading, one student reads aloud to the class, and the teacher can unexpectedly call on another student. This form of oral reading is particularly difficult for struggling readers because they are not given practice time and their lack of reading skills are publicly displayed to the other readers. According to Rasinski (2003) round robin reading was

never widely supported by reading researchers. So, why did teachers continue to use round robin reading? Hoffman (1987) believes the practice was simply what teachers were exposed to as students, and they possessed no alternative methods. However, by the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and after numerous oral reading and fluency studies, many reading scholars supported the use of oral fluency strategies. In fact, after the National Reading Panel published their report in 2000, elementary schools began to acknowledge oral fluency's positive role in reading instruction. Thus, many teachers began to implement research-based oral reading instruction in their classrooms.

### Reading Development and Oral Fluency

According to Chall (1996), there are six stages to reading. Within the first stage, children realize that print represents language, and the next stage introduces children to formal instruction (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Within the second stage, children begin to recognize basic sound-symbol relationships and establish their decoding abilities. Students then enter a stage where they strengthen what they already know and build fluency while reading (Chall, 1996). Students have already established their decoding abilities, so this stage is where they develop automaticity and fluency. The NRP report (NICHD, 2000) defines fluency as “the ability to read a text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression” (p. 11). Students spend less time decoding, and more focus is placed on reading with expression. This stage is critical to reading development because students are able to spend more cognitive energy on constructing meaning because they no longer struggle with word identification (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Because disfluent readers spend too much time decoding text and inadequate amount of effort to comprehension, they may not transition well to the next stage of reading and instructional focus (Chall, 1996) where students

begin to read to learn. If learners are to succeed at reading increasingly more complex text, then automaticity and fluency must be established (Chall, 1996). However, since the goal of reading is comprehension of the text, it is necessary to consider how fluency relates to comprehension.

Two theories of fluency address fluency's role in comprehension (Stahl & Kuhn 2000). The first stresses automaticity, and the second focuses on the role of prosody. Though an exact definition of fluency cannot be agreed upon, Stahl and Kuhn (2000) state "there does seem to be a consensus regarding its primary components: (a) accuracy in decoding. (b) automaticity in word recognition, and (c) the appropriate use of prosodic features such as stress, pitch, and juncture" (p. 5).

#### Automaticity and prosody

Fluent readers not only read accurately, but their word recognition is automatic (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Readers must simultaneously complete two tasks: recognize words and construct meaning. However, a reader only possesses a limited amount of focus for each cognitive task (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). According to Kuhn and Stahl (2000), "the greater amount of attention expended on decoding, the less there is available for comprehension" (p. 5). Therefore, decoding and word recognition must be instantaneous, so the reader can focus more attention on comprehension. To help readers develop this automatic decoding of words, readers must be repeatedly exposed to text through extensive practice (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000).

The theory of automaticity only addresses the first two fluency components: accuracy and rate. The prosodic element of fluency is not addressed. When fluently reading text, a student will not only read with speed and accuracy, but with expression (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). This fluent expression uses a language's prosodic features: stress, tempo, and rhythm (Allington, 1983;

Dowhower, 1991). Also, “prosodic reading includes appropriately chunking groups of words into phrases or meaningful units in accordance with the syntactic structure of the text” (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000, p.6).

So, what role does prosody play in reading fluency and ultimately of the comprehension of text? If students read in a word-by-word manner, then they have not achieved fluency (Allington, 1983; Chall 1996, Samuels 1988), and appropriate intonation, phrasing, and stress are considered indicative of fluent reading (Chomsky, 1978). Therefore, “a fluent reader is one that groups text into syntactically appropriate phrases, this parsing of text signifies that the reader has an understanding of what is being read” (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000, p.7).

Consequently, when assessing a student’s oral fluency, it is imperative for an instructor to consider the student’s interpretation of the text through a student’s prosody or expression when reading. Even though prosody is also thought to be an aspect of reading fluency, many teachers assess reading fluency by only identifying a student’s word accuracy and rate per minute, but this does not represent the interpretive skill of reading comprehension (Rasinski et al. 2005). Many readers go through a period where they are able to read individual words aloud, but it sounds choppy and expressionless (Bomer, 2006). Unfortunately, some readers have difficulty outgrowing this stage, and since their thought units are not whole, meaningful phrases, they are not effectively constructing meaning of the text (Dowhower, 1991). As a further complication, some elementary instructors send the message that the goal of oral fluency reading activities is for correct word identification, not reading in a manner which expresses meaning (Hoffman & Issacs, 1991).

### Relationship Between Fluency and Comprehension

Samuels (1979) tested his theory of automaticity when he asked severely disabled readers to read a passage several times. The students initially chose books of interest to them, and a 50-200 word passage was marked off as the text to practice with repeated readings. Initially, a student read a passage to the researcher's assistant who recorded rate and miscues. The student then repeatedly reread alone and then to the researcher's assistant until the student read the text with at least 85 words per minute (wpm). The whole process would then be repeated for a new text. With each reading of the passage, students' word accuracy, speed and recognition improved. Samuels also noticed another positive effect. When they read new passages of equal or greater difficulty, the first reading of the new passage was better than the initial reading of the previous passage. Thus, their improved fluency transferred to new passages. Other studies have supported Samuels' findings of repeated reading as an effective instructional strategy.

Dahl (1979) also tested the theory of automaticity in a study of 32 struggling second-grade readers. The study evaluated three reading strategies: repeated readings, isolated word recognition, and hypothesis testing (context clues). Students reread text until they reached a 100 wpm rate. Dahl reported that the repeated reading and hypothesis testing groups demonstrated significant gains in reading rate and a cloze test. The isolated word group showed no significant gains.

Dowhower (1987) evaluated the effects of repeated reading and a reading-while-listening procedure. She examined the interventions' effects on fluency rate, accuracy, comprehension and prosody for 17 second-grade students. She measured the effects of practiced and unpracticed texts. Overall, each method produced improvements in rate, accuracy, and comprehension, but the reading-while-listening strategy showed more positive effect on prosody. Rasinski (1990)

also compared these two strategies in a study with 20 third-grade students. His study resulted in equal gains for both strategies, and he argues that the reading-while-listening strategy may be a more effective use of a classroom teacher's instructional time because this strategy is less time consuming.

Another type of fluency instruction uses a partner to assist a struggling reader. The partner can be another student, teacher, or parent. Topping (1986) first developed a paired reading program, so parents could tutor their children. Students read with their parents for at least 15 minutes a day. The program consisted of two phases: *reading together* and *reading alone*. However, in the *reading alone* phase parents were present to assist students if they needed the help. Topping collected data on 1165 students. The average gain in word accuracy was 3.7 times the normal, and reading comprehension improved 4.8 times more than the norm. Topping (1989) later reported that students who worked as teacher/tutor for other students also made gains in reading.

A similar method to paired reading is the Neurological Impress Method (NIM) (Heckelman, 1969). A student reads orally with and to a partner who acts as a tutor. The more proficient reader directs his or her voice into the student's left ear, which purportedly leaves an imprint on the sound symbol in the student's mind (Rasinski, 2003). Heckelman (1969) studied 24 students in seventh through tenth grade. All students were reading at least three grade levels below their grade. During a summer remedial program, teachers used NIM for 15 minutes a day, five days a week, for a period of six weeks. Although not all students made significant gains, the average gain was 1.9 grade levels in comprehension as measured by the California Achievement Test.

The NIM is time-consuming and not always practical for a classroom, so Hollingsworth (1970) developed a system where the method could be used with up to eight students. The teacher monitored students as they listened to a tape recording of the text. He randomly selected 8 fourth grade students for the intervention and 8 for the control group. While listening to the tape recording with the use of headphones, students spoke into a microphone, so they were able to hear themselves read the text aloud. Students listened to thirty daily lessons of fifteen minutes each. Ten readings were one grade below the student's reading level, ten were at the student's reading level, and ten were one grade level above. With Hollingsworth's initial study he did not find any significant differences between the control and intervention groups, but he felt that this could be attributed to the readers' reading levels. None of the students were struggling readers.

Hollingsworth (1978) later repeated the study with 20 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade struggling readers. Students were again randomly assigned to the control or intervention group. After a semester of intervention of sixty-two daily lessons, the treatment group gained one year in growth on a standardized comprehension test, and the control group improved by only .04 year's growth. This demonstrates that disfluent readers may profit most from fluency instruction.

Chomsky (1978) also used a form of assisted reading with recorded texts. Chomsky studied 5 eight-year old struggling readers. Over a 10 month period, the students listened repeatedly to a text while reading aloud until they were able to read it fluently. She also monitored their growth when she met with students in weekly sessions. After the fourth or fifth book, the students were achieving fluency for a text within a week. Although the average gain was only 6 months in fluency and 7.5 months for comprehension over a ten month period, the parents reported that students were willingly reading independently. This is significant because these students previously disliked reading. Even though the gain was short of the expected

growth of the average student for one year, this growth may have been more than previous years for these students. One difficulty with Chomsky's approach was that students frequently lost their place while reading.

Carbo (1978) modified the intervention. Over a three month period, students were instructed to slide their fingers along the text as they listened to the text. Also, each page was cued to prevent students from losing their place. Her study included 8 learning-disabled children who demonstrated an average gain of 8 months in word recognition.

Another type of repeated reading is reader's theater, a form of script reading, but with no props or costumes involved. Therefore, students must rely on their voices to give the text meaning for the audience. This requires practice with repeated readings of the script. Martinez, Roser, and Strecker (1999) implemented a reader's theatre curriculum for 2 second grade classes with a total of 28 students. The study lasted for 10 weeks. Included in the study were two more second grade classes who did not use reader's theater. After the 10 week period, the researcher measured fluency gains with unrehearsed text, and the reader's theater group gained 17 words a minute, but the control group gained only 7 words per minute. In regards to improved comprehension, the researchers used informal reading inventories to test for overall reading growth. The reader's theater group improved by 1.1 years on average for the 10 week period, and the control group showed less improvement with an average gain of less than half.

Over the course of a school year, Griffith (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004) used reader's theater to transform her curriculum. She introduced scripts on Monday and assigned reading practice for 10 minutes a night for Tuesday through Thursday. Students then practiced for 15 minutes on Fridays before they performed. Her Title I students increased their silent reading

comprehension by 2.5 years, a doubled increase over previous years, and their word-list recognition also improved by 1.25 years, which was an increase over other years.

Keehn (2003) also found that purposeful rereading of reader's theater scripts positively affected fluency and comprehension of low-achieving, average-achieving, and high-achieving second graders. Four second-grade classes were used in the study, and all four classrooms used readers' theatre with repeated reading. However, two classrooms also implemented explicit instruction. No significant difference was found between the two treatments, but all four classrooms showed gains in reading ability and fluency. All children, regardless of reading ability, showed gains in fluency and comprehension. Of particular interest are the gains made by low-achieving readers. In comparison to high and average-achieving students, they made a more significant gain in story retell, expressiveness, and rate. Keehn states, "The reading practice provided by Reader's Theatre served to narrow the gap between the low-performing students and high-performing students" (p. 53).

Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Goodman, and Oranje (2005) reported that students who scored poorly on fluency assessments also tend to have low comprehension scores. These findings (2005) reveal a relationship between fluency and comprehension and support those by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1995), which also showed that the students who had higher fluency ratings scored higher in comprehension. The NCES (1995, para 11) report does "not rule out the possibility that as students are asked to pay attention to elements of fluency such as phrasing, syntax, and expressiveness (and not merely to read aloud), they will become more attentive to the meaning of the passage." With the belief that good fluency is the result of good comprehension, Hoffman and Isaacs (1991) advise that oral reading instruction should stress conveying meaning rather than just accurate reading.

Based on a review of these research studies, oral fluency strategies improve students' reading achievement. Comprehension of text can increase because students spend less time decoding words and more energy towards constructing meaning of the text (Samuels & LaBerge, 1974). Also, repeated reading produces a more fluent reading of the text. As students become more comfortable with the text, they are able to express an interpretation of its meaning with a prosodic reading (Dowhower, 1987). Not only do students profit from repeated reading, but listening to model reading of text promotes increased fluency. Additionally, struggling readers appear to benefit most from reading gains when oral fluency interventions are used.

#### Relationship Between Fluency and Reader Self-perception

Ellery (2005) believes fluency is more complex than just correct word recognition skills. The ability to read proficiently brings self-confidence to a reader, and confident readers are often fluent readers. Also, if students attend to word recognition skills and at the same time construct meaning of the text, they are fluent readers (Rasinski et al., 2005). However, readers who use considerable energy toward word recognition lose the meaning of the text (2005). Thus, their self-perception as readers diminishes as they struggle with comprehension.

Rasinski (2003) also believes "oral fluency builds confidence" (p. 23). While supervising teachers working with readers in a clinic for struggling readers, he noticed that when students were asked to read aloud, their lack of confidence was demonstrated in body language and voice with hunched bodies, bowed heads, and barely audible voices. However, after Alber-Morgan, Ramp, Anderson, and Martin (2007) administered an intervention of repeated reading for four middle school students with behavior problems, one student stated, "It's pretty cool because I am reading a lot better!" (p 25). Additionally, Martinez, Roser, and Strecker's (1999) reader's

theater study resulted in a student stating “I never thought I could be a star!” (p. 333). Students enjoy seeing personal improvements in reading, and the outcome is improved confidence or self-efficacy.

According to Quirk (2008), motivation to read and its relationship to fluency are affected by three areas: reading self-efficacy, value for reading, and goals for reading. Regardless of ability level, readers’ self-perception of their reading abilities influences their motivation to read and their oral fluency. Self-efficacy is defined as “people’s judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Thus, if struggling readers assess their reading fluency abilities and believe they cannot successfully complete fluency tasks, their motivation to attempt the activity decreases. Therefore, reluctant readers spend less time with practice reading. Unfortunately, fluency improvement depends upon students’ time spent reading. According to Schunk (1991), people with low self-efficacy exert less energy on activities. However, those with high self-efficacy not only actively participate in the activities, but they will challenge themselves with more difficult tasks. Quirk (2008) asserts “self-efficacy can significantly impact its (fluency’s) development” (p. 77).

According to Stanovich (1986), when readers struggle with word identification and decoding, they are unable to attain automaticity with the text. Thus, fluency attainment is affected. After combining these deficient skills with lack of practice and difficult text, the result is “an unrewarding early reading experience” (1986, p. 381). Unfortunately, as poor readers move through the elementary grades, middle school, and ultimately secondary classes, the reading ability gap between them and their peers progressively grows. Students’ continual failure

leads to what Stanovich (1986) called the *Matthew Effect* where poor readers read less and fall increasingly behind their peers. Stanovich asserts

The very children who are reading well and who have good vocabularies will read more, learn more word meanings, and hence read even better. Children with inadequate vocabularies – who read slowly and without enjoyment – read less, and as a result have slower development of vocabulary knowledge, which further inhibits growth in reading ability (p. 381).

Stanovich (1986) believes achievement levels and the amount of exposure to text causes an achievement gap where the better readers get better and poor readers get poorer. Not only does motivation to read affect fluency development, but Quirk (2008) believes fluency development can influence motivation.

Unfortunately, many struggling high school readers “carry deeply entrenched negative beliefs about the reading process and, consequently, construct barriers to protect themselves against feelings of failure” (Paterson & Elliot, 2006, p. 378). Not only must teachers deliver effective reading instruction, but they must repair negative attitudes. Paterson and Elliot (2006) developed and studied a cross-age reading program which was designed to overcome reader’s negative attitudes and self-perception. This was accomplished by placing 29 ninth-grade struggling readers and 1 tenth-grade struggling reader in a role of leadership as tutors for 32 second and third grade struggling readers. Before the older students began tutoring, they practiced expressive reading, were instructed in basics of tutoring reading, and were given lesson plans to follow at the beginning of the program. Teachers also demonstrated model mini-lessons. “The program reinforced effective reading strategies for both the older and younger students, with instruction involving units on phonics, context cues, expressive reading, paired and echo reading, sight words (Dolch word lists), prediction, questioning, summarizing for comprehension, rereading, and journal writing” (p. 38).

Before the program began, all students showed concern about their abilities to take on the responsibility to tutor others and whether they would be effective. According to Paterson and Elliot (2008), during and after the program the high school students began to perceive themselves differently. One student stated, “[This program] meant that I could be a role model for somebody and help somebody out” (p. 383). Another student acknowledged, “I learned that reading is important to everyone in the world. I am glad we went to the elementary school to help little kids that have trouble reading like we do. We can make a difference by helping others with their reading” (p. 382). A third student expressed, “It helps me because I’m helping somebody else. It makes me feel good to help somebody else. It makes me do better” (p.383).

A key element in the students’ “perspective shift” was that the students saw themselves as “powerful change agents instead of objects of intervention” (2006, p. 387). When they saw their own academic improvements, they viewed themselves as better readers. Negative attitudes and self-perceptions can be reversed. Paterson and Elliot (2006) further assert that “thoughtfully planned, socially based reading experiences build self-esteem and increase motivation to read as well as develop an improved attitude toward school” (p. 388).

However, little research has been conducted to prove or disprove the ability of fluency improvements to positively affect a reader’s self-perception and motivation to read. Quirk (2008) suggests that a person’s ability to improve a skill causes a desire to practice that skill more. For example, if a struggling reader noticed personal improvements in fluency, the reader is more apt to practice reading in order to gain further praise or support for this developing skill. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to instruct students in oral fluency strategies because not only can comprehension of text improve, but so can a student’s self-efficacy and motivation to read. Fortunately, teachers can easily include oral fluency strategies into regular classroom instruction.

## Oral Fluency Strategies

### Model Reading

Teachers can use model reading as a means to improve student oral fluency. According to Ivey and Broaddus (2001) in a study of middle school students, over 60 percent of students preferred read aloud activities. Reading aloud to students not only increases student interest, but also introduces them to text which they would not have read on their own. By reading aloud, a teacher models a fluent performance of the text through phrasing, pauses, pace, and volume; and with a teacher's effective use of prosody, students listen and share the teacher's interpretation of the text's meaning (Rasinski, 2003). The teacher can discuss and share how he/she decided on the interpretation of the text and on which words to emphasize.

### Guided Reading

Rasinski (2003) states, "oral reading can be used as scaffolding tool to ease the transition from modeling to independence" (p. 57). Shared reading, choral reading, paired reading, echo reading, and tape recorded reading strategies can provide this supported reading. Rasinski calls these strategies *oral support reading* because a more proficient reader supports a struggling reader until the struggling reader can read the text independently. These strategies also allow for the proficient reader to provide feedback to the struggling reader.

With choral reading, groups of students read aloud the same text together. Paired reading is completed by two readers, one more proficient than the other. In echo reading the more proficient reader reads a sentence or phrase, and the developing reader repeats the phrase. If a teacher, tutor, or other volunteer is unable to provide the reading support as the proficient reader,

then recorded text can be used, but teachers should remind the student to follow along with the text.

### Repeated Reading

Another popular and frequently recognized strategy is repeated oral reading which develops rapid, fluent oral reading (NICHD, 2000). When students repeat their reading, word recognition errors decrease, their reading speed increases, and their oral reading expression improves (Samuels, 1979). Also, repeated oral reading of texts with feedback and guidance is a powerful instructional strategy because students increase fluency and comprehension of the practiced text and more importantly on other passages not previously read (Dowhower, 1994; Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; NICHD, 2000; Samuels, 1979). Consequently, repeated reading generalizes to improvements in all content area reading.

### Performance Reading

According to Bomer (2006) repeated or practiced reading is best used in performance activities because students are inclined to practice not only accuracy and rate, but meaningful expression and phrasing. Reading with the purpose to perform is a great motivator for improved oral fluency. Poetry and plays are excellent sources for text to be performed.

### Research Questions

Clearly, repeated reading, paired reading, and model reading positively affect fluency and comprehension at elementary and middle school levels. However, there are three areas which demand further attention from reading instructors and researchers. First, although fluency, in

general, is obviously connected to comprehension, what role does prosodic reading play in comprehension of text? According to Dowhower (1991), “little attention has been paid to it [prosody], either in research or in practice” (p. 173). Dowhower (1987) did find that as literal comprehension increased, prosodic reading also improved.

Secondly, if fluency instruction is in fact necessary for a balanced reading program, why does it remain largely unused in secondary levels of reading instruction and assessment, especially when high schools increasingly see a need to remediate and assist below grade level readers? In fact, Rasinski et al. (2005) admitted “fluency is generally thought of as an elementary grade issue” (p. 23), and no fluency assessments have been norm-referenced for readers above the eighth grade. After conducting a study of ninth grade readers, Rasinski et al. (2005) suggests “some attention to fluency for those students who are not fluent readers offers promise of significant improvements in reading comprehension and overall academic performance across the content areas” (p. 26).

Thirdly, since no published studies were found concerning the relationship between improved fluency and readers’ self-perceptions, this is also an area of research inquiry. Can improved fluency positively affect an adolescent’s self-perception as a reader? If instructors could in fact help struggling readers to perceive themselves more positively, then decreasing the gap between the low-achieving readers and the high-achieving readers could likely be accomplished.

Specifically, the research questions addressed included: (1) What is the relation between prosodic reading and reading comprehension? (2) How does instruction and practice in oral reading fluency impact reading comprehension?, and (3) What is the relation between fluency and student self-perception as a reader?

Since text selection is important when targeting fluency, text should be at the students' independent reading level and shorter in length. Given that, poetry was the dominant text for this study. Not only does poetry reading provide a motivating element of reading performance, but poetry is a powerful source of phrased text and demands expressive interpretation. It was hypothesized that if identified high school struggling readers were provided with consistent instruction in oral fluency reading strategies for poetry, then students' oral fluency and comprehension scores with poetry would improve and that there would be transfer effects to novel reading passages (i.e., non-poetry text). It was further hypothesized that if a student's oral fluency improved then self-perception as a reader would also improve.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

This study included eight voluntary 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students who were identified as struggling readers and who attended a reading enhancement class designed for students reading at 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading levels. The classroom demographics included four females and four males. The students ranged from 14 to 17 years in age. Three students received special education services, and two of these students were identified with a reading disability, one with dyslexia. Lastly, one student, not identified for special education services, was on a 504 plan.

#### Measures

##### Fluency

Oral fluency was assessed with Rasinski's (2004) oral reading multidimensional fluency scale (see Appendix A) with categories for expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. Rasinski (2004) states, "Although fluency rubrics may not be as precise as assessments of decoding accuracy and reading rate, they do provide valid measurements of the third component of reading fluency – prosodic reading" (p. 18). The scores on the scale can range from 4 to 16. Scores below 8 signify that fluency may be a concern, and scores of 8 or above indicate a student's adequate progress in fluency (Rasinski, 2004). When using the scale, Rasinski (2004) recommends choosing 250 word passages at or below students' instructional level. Additionally, passages should be changed for each administration. Rasinski (2004) advises selecting passages

from the same book in order to keep consistency with reading level and author style. Therefore, on the pre and post fluency assessments, students read two passages from each novel at their instructional or independent levels (see Appendices B - I). Additionally, miscues were recorded, and students' words correct per minute (WCPM) and word accuracy were determined. Six students read text from novels at the 4.9 and 5.4 grade levels, and two students read from novels at the 3.5 grade level.

### Comprehension

In order to assess reading comprehension, students took the Brigance *Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills (CIBS)*; Brigance, 1983) reading comprehension subtest. The reading comprehension subtest is used to measure student comprehension as demonstrated by accurate responses on multiple choice questions for the leveled stories. Each selection from lower second grade stories through upper sixth grade consists of 67 words and five multiple choice questions. The stories for grade levels seven through nine, use articles of approximately 100 words. Since two forms were available for each grade level, students read Form A for the pre test and Form B for the post test.

Additionally, since part of the intervention used a researcher-created poetry comprehension worksheet (See Appendix J), the students were given pre and post worksheets to measure their comprehension of poems (See Appendices K, L, M, and N). The students' responses were assessed with the use of a researcher-created comprehension assessment rubric (See Appendix O).

### Reader Self-perception

Reader's self-efficacy was measured with Henck and Melnick's (1995) *Reader Self Perception Survey (RSPS)*; See Appendix P). Henck and Melnick (1995) suggest "the scale yields a general indication of a child's self-perceptions of reading ability" (p. 305). The *RSPS* provides data across five dimensions: general perception, progress, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological states. Progress statements relate to the reader's perception of their progress as readers. For example, "When I read, I need less help than I used to." Observational comparison statements relate to a student's self-perception in comparison to other readers. For example, "I understand what I read as well as other kids do." Social feedback statements expressed a student's perception of how their peers, teachers, and family feel about the student's reading abilities or about their level of enjoyment while listening to the student read. The physiological states category refers to a student's feelings about the task of reading. Students rate each of the 30 statements using a 5-point Likert system (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4= agree, and 5= strongly disagree).

## Procedures

### Pre Tests

Prior to the intervention, students' fluency was tested individually in a small room away from classroom distractions. Each student silently read an instructional or independent level text (see Appendices B and D) for three minutes. Afterwards, the researcher recorded and timed the student reading the text aloud. While the student read, the researcher marked any miscues in the student's reading. The same procedure was repeated for another text from a different novel of the same level (see Appendices C and E). The researcher later listened to the recordings, determined word count and accuracy per minute, and assigned a score on the multidimensional fluency scale.

During the next pre test session, the students completed the Brigance *Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills (CIBS)* reading comprehension subtest. Students began with a five question 3<sup>rd</sup> grade leveled text with comprehension questions. If a student achieved at least 80% accuracy, then the student completed the next level of text and questions. This process was repeated until a student achieved 60% or less accuracy. The students' comprehension grade levels were determined by the level of the last text in which a student achieved 80% or more accuracy.

On the following pre test day, students were given the poetry comprehension worksheet (See Appendix J) and a poem (See Appendix K). Students were given 20 minutes to read the poem and complete the worksheet. The same procedure was repeated again for another poem (See Appendix L). The students' responses were then assessed with the use of the poetry comprehension assessment rubric (See Appendix O).

On the final pre test day, the *RSPS* (See Appendix P) was given to students in a classroom setting with no dialogue between students. After each survey statement was read aloud to the students, they marked the appropriate response. Scores were computed by summing the raw scores for each of the categories and then by totaling the sums of scores for all categories.

### Intervention

The intervention (see Appendix S) was then conducted for a period of 12-15 class sessions in the reading classroom. Three students attended 15 fifty minute sessions with a total of 750 minutes for the intervention period, and the remaining five students attended during a modified block schedule with 12 sessions which totaled 720 minutes. The intervention included

the use of poetry reading with five different oral fluency strategies: model reading, repeated reading, paired reading, guided reading and reading performance.

On the first day, the researcher introduced a model reading. The researcher read a poem using poor, acceptable and exemplary readings. Students identified the differences between each reading by discussing words, phrases and pauses which were emphasized during the model reading. The researcher then introduced questions and activities (see Appendix J) to be used before students began to practice reading poems aloud. The researcher used these questions to illustrate how and why particular words and phrases were emphasized in the exemplary reading of the poem. The researcher again demonstrated a prosodic reading of a poem by stressing words and phrases through pace, volume, and tone. Lastly, the researcher introduced three more oral fluency strategies, repeated, paired, and performance reading. During the intervention period, students used these strategies on a daily basis.

Every five class sessions beginning with the first day of the intervention, students searched poetry books, identified four poems of interest and made two copies of each. Students chose poems of at least ten lines, and they did not select more than two poems by a single author. Additionally, at the beginning of each class session, the researcher modeled the reading of a poem. After the model reading and the initial poetry search, students read a poem silently and completed the poetry comprehension worksheet. Students were not required to write down their answers to the questions, but they were instructed to prepare for a verbal answer to these questions before reading aloud to the researcher. However, students were required to underline words within the poem which they believed should be emphasized during fluency practice.

Students then practiced fluency strategies by individually reading aloud to themselves ten times and then with a partner five times. The researcher monitored behavior and progress with

the oral reading practice. Students documented poem titles and time spent with each strategy (See Appendix R). Initially, students needed more guidance on paired reading. The researcher observed students reading as pairs and noticed that students only listened and did not assist each other in practice. Therefore, the researcher worked with pairs by offering words of guidance or by participating in the practice with the students. Guidance for paired reading was only needed for the first two days of reading practice. Students were then able to work independently without the researcher's involvement.

By the end of each class session, students gave the researcher a copy of a poem with underlined words which the student planned to emphasize through pace, volume and tone. Next, the students answered questions about the poem (See Appendix J). The student then gave a reading performance of the poem to the researcher only. The researcher chose not to have whole class performances because of the students' low perceptions as readers. Although students did not perform the poetry reading for the entire class, the researcher emphasized that the reading should be at a level for actual performance. After the performance, the researcher guided students through words of encouragement and advice for future readings. Students then documented comments to help with future poetry performance. These procedures continued until students had performed at least 12 poems for the researcher.

### Post Tests

At the end of the intervention time, all post tests were implemented with the same procedures as the pre tests. However, with the oral reading fluency assessments the researcher chose a different text (see Appendices F, G, H, and I) from each of the original books for the pretests, and the researcher administered Form B of the Brigance *CIBS* reading comprehension

subtest. Additionally, students read new poems for the poetry comprehension post test (Appendices M and N).

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics were computed and are reported in Table 1. Additionally, initial data were examined for violations of normality. The Shapiro Wilks test of normality was conducted. The majority of the variables did not violate assumptions of normality. Given that the analyses used are robust to some violations (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), parametric statistics were used. For the comprehension data, there were a total of nine grade levels possible. The multi-dimensional fluency assessment rubric allowed for a maximum of 16 points, and the poetry comprehension rubric allowed for a maximum of 23 points. The *RSPS* allowed for a maximum of 165 points.

TABLE 1  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
Comprehension pre	5.75	1.39	3-7
Comprehension post	8.25	1.75	4-9
Fluency pre	9.97	3.47	4-13
Fluency post	14.22	3.05	8-16.75
Word accuracy pre	99.24	1.32	96.6-100
Word accuracy post	99.59	.59	98.5-100
Rate pre	153.81	57.82	48.42-206.3
Rate post	169.54	56.97	80.21-236.8
Poetry Q&A pre	17.85	5.90	11-29
Poetry Q&A post	34.38	4.81	29-40
Survey pre	103.63	14.84	75-126
Survey post	121.75	21.66	80-149

Note. N=8.

Additionally, the *RSPS* provided data across five dimensions: general perception (GP), progress (PR), observational comparison (OC), social feedback (SF), and physiological state (PS). Because the number of survey items differs for each *RSPS* dimension, the maximum possible scores differ for each dimension (GP = 5, PR = 45, OC = 30, SF = 45, PS = 40).

Descriptive data for the survey are found in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
*RSPS* DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Dimension	Mean	SD	Range
GP pre	4.00	.53	3-5
GP post	4.13	.99	2-5
Progress pre	34.25	4.62	28-44
Progress post	39.00	4.11	35-45
OC pre	17.00	4.93	6-22
OC post	19.63	5.48	8-26
SF pre	30.75	4.86	21-37
SF post	35.38	6.82	25-45
PS pre	17.63	5.26	10-27
PS post	23.63	7.76	8-34

Note. N=8.

### Primary Analyses

To address the first research question (i.e., What is the relation between prosodic reading and reading comprehension?), bivariate correlations were computed. This statistically illustrates the relations between students' scores on the fluency measure and the reading comprehension measure. Correlations were computed for both the pre and the post test measures to investigate whether the pattern of the relations change after intervention. The correlation coefficient between fluency and comprehension was not statistically significant at pretest ( $r=.50$ ) or post ( $r=.60$ ). This indicates that changes in fluency were not statistically related to changes in reading comprehension.

To address the second research question, (i.e., How does instruction and practice in oral reading fluency impact reading comprehension?), pre and post test scores were statistically compared using the paired sample *t* test. The analyses determined if the intervention had a statistically significant effect on students' post test scores (i.e., it determined if the differences between pre and post test scores were statistically significant). Results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between pre and post test fluency scores,  $t(7) = 6.19, p < .000$  as well as on the comprehension test,  $t(7) = 7.64, p < .000$ . These results indicate that statistically, differences between pre and post test scores were significant.

To address the final research question, (i.e., What is the relation between fluency and student self-perception as a reader?), bivariate correlations were computed. For this analysis, the *RSPS* data were aggregated, creating an overall survey score. This statistically illustrates the relations between students' scores on the fluency measure and the self-perception measure. Correlations were computed for both the pre and the post test measures to investigate whether the pattern of the relations change after intervention. The correlation coefficient between fluency and self-perception was not statistically significant at pretest ( $r = .57$ ) or post ( $r = .65$ ). This indicates that changes in fluency were not statistically related to changes in self-perception.

Finally, to determine the effects of the intervention on all skills targeted, paired sample *t* tests were conducted among all pre and post test data. There were statistically significant differences between pre and post test scores among nine of the twelve pairs of variables (see Table 3).

TABLE 3  
MEAN DIFFERENCES IN PRE AND POST TEST SCORES

Pair of variables (pre/post)	<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i> value
Comprehension	7.64 (7)	.00*
GP	.36 (7)	.73
PR	2.37 (7)	.05*
OC	3.72 (7)	.01*
SF	2.25 (7)	.06
PS	3.60 (7)	.01*
Overall <i>RSPS</i>	3.43 (7)	.01*
Fluency	6.19 (7)	.00*
Prosody	7.22 (7)	.00*
Word Accuracy	1.26 (7)	.25
Rate	2.85 (7)	.03*
Poetry Q & A	10.57 (7)	.00*

Note. N=8, \*=statistically significant

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Despite evidence supporting oral fluency reading instruction, high schools rarely provide fluency practice. As a result, limited fluency research has been conducted beyond elementary grades. Therefore, this study's research questions focus on oral reading fluency instruction and strategies for struggling adolescent readers. It was hypothesized that if adolescent struggling readers were given consistent instruction in oral fluency reading strategies for poetry, then students' oral fluency and comprehension scores with poetry would improve and that there would be transfer effects to novel reading passages (i.e., non-poetry text). Additionally, it was predicted that if a student's oral fluency improved then a student's self-perception as a reader would also improve. After only 15 class sessions, the oral reading strategies intervention resulted in statistically significant improvements for post test data for nine out of 12 variables.

#### Prosody and Comprehension

The first question addressed in this study asked, what is the relation between prosodic reading and reading comprehension? The results indicate that changes in fluency were not statistically related to changes in reading comprehension. These findings are in contrast to results in Dowhower's (1987) study which suggests that prosody is related to comprehension. However, Dowhower's intervention period lasted five weeks. Thus, this study may have demonstrated a stronger relationship if the intervention had been conducted for 25 sessions instead of the 15 sessions. Additionally, Dowhower (1991) states, "the relationship between prosody and comprehension is much like the chicken-or-the-egg dilemma. We are not sure which comes first

or if one is necessarily an indicator of the other” (p. 170). Dowhower (1991) also states, “comprehension and prosody are linked, but ‘how’ is unclear” (p. 170).

Despite the lack of evidence in this study to show a relationship between prosody and comprehension, fluency results do indicate a statistically significant improvement in prosodic elements: expression, phrasing, and smoothness. This can be accounted for by the integration of comprehension practice with fluency practice. When the researcher modeled her thought process out loud while answering the comprehension questions, students were given concrete examples of the process for selecting specific words to be emphasized during a prosodic reading. Then, while working individually, students could more effectively construct meaning from their chosen poems. Later, during the fluency practice, students no longer spent valuable cognitive energy on decoding words. Thus, prosody improved because they focused on expression of an interpretive reading as opposed to word by word reading.

After performance reading of their poems, the researcher praised students’ improvements and provided essential guidance for future improvements. One cycle of integrated comprehension and fluency practice then ended. After 12 repetitions of this cycle, students transferred prosodic reading to unrehearsed novel passages on the post test because they had become more proficient at thinking about how words were used to convey a specific message.

### Fluency and Comprehension

The second question addressed in this study asked, how does instruction and practice in oral reading fluency impact reading comprehension? The results indicate that statistically, differences between pre and post test scores were significant. Thus, oral reading fluency instruction does positively impact comprehension. Additionally, improved fluency and

comprehension also transferred to non-poetry text. These conclusions are not unusual or surprising. Numerous studies (Samuels, 1979; Dahl, 1979; Dowhower, 1987; Rasinski, 1991; Heckelman, 1969; Topping, 1986, Chomsky, 1978; Carbo, 1978) suggest repeated reading, paired reading, performance reading and/or model reading are effective instructional strategies, and the studies indicate a link between fluency and comprehension. Furthermore, the finding of transfer effects supports research by Samuels (1979), Dowhower (1987), and Martinez, Roser, and Strecker (1999) where gains in repeated reading practice texts transferred to unpracticed texts as well.

However, the age demographics of this study are unique because most published fluency research was conducted at the elementary levels. This study indicates that older struggling readers can benefit as well. Rasinski et al. (2005) suggests that the lack of fluency instruction at secondary levels may be one important cause in reading comprehension difficulties experienced by struggling readers beyond the elementary grades.

### Fluency and Reader Self-perception

The final question addressed in this study asked, what is the relation between fluency and student self-perception as a reader? The results indicate that changes in fluency were not statistically related to changes in self-perception. This may be accounted for by the brevity of the intervention period of 15 class sessions. Paterson and Eliot (2006) suggest that deeply ingrained perceptions about reading are difficult to counteract. Statistically significant results may have occurred if the intervention period had lasted longer than three school weeks. Martinez, Roser, and Strecker's (1999) reader's theater study lasted ten weeks, and though they did not measure student attitudes and self-perception, they noticed a remarkable increase in student's confidence

as noted in student journal comments. For example, one student stated, “I was the BEST reader today!” (p. 333).

Even though the results do not show a significant relationship between fluency and reader self-perception, the individual self-perception variables resulted in statistically significant improvements in three of the five *RSPS* categories: progress, observational comparison and physiological states. Students’ self-perception as readers improved because they could hear their progress and receive daily encouragement from at least two different people.

It is important to note that the *RSPS* data for the general perception category did not demonstrate a statistically significant improvement, but this category of the survey is only one statement. This leaves little room for students to demonstrate improved self-perception. Additionally, the social feedback scores did not demonstrate statistically significant gains, but they approached statistical significance with a *p* value of .06. This result was surprising because it was believed that this category would demonstrate the most gains because during the intervention period, students experienced considerably more opportunities to be praised by their peers and the researcher. However, Henk and Melnick (1995), the creators of the *RSPS*, state,

In making self-perceptions, individual children may value one or more sources over the others. Much of this valuing process will be related to the social context in which the literacy learning occurs. Of course, observational comparison and social feedback are, by nature, socially situated. Even aspects of the physiological states category possess social dimensions, especially in the case of internal feelings experienced during learning (p. 472).

Therefore, students’ perceptions about social feedback may have positively affected other perception categories, like observational comparison and physiological states where students demonstrate their perceptions of their reading in comparison to other students and their comfort toward the reading tasks. Both of these categories demonstrated statistically significant gains.

The complexity of social feedback can be seen in observations and data for one quiet male student who showed the most dramatic improvements in progress and social feedback categories. His progress rating improved from a 28 to a 45, and his social feedback rating increased from a 29 to a 45. His scores were unexpected because he appeared to be uninterested in the researcher's feedback and praise. However, during paired reading the student received feedback from a peer whom he valued as a judge. Additionally, he interacted more with students than in previous weeks of class. This social interaction provided him with positive feedback from the very people whom he respected. Thus, his responses on the *RSPS* are accounted for by this increased positive communication with peers.

During the intervention period, students became more confident. This was evidenced by the increasing willingness of students to read to each other and share their poems with students who were not their reading partners. At first, students reluctantly read aloud to others, but by the last session, the researcher noticed an increase in the volume of paired fluency practice and in the spontaneous read alouds with other students. For example, one student initially read to her partner in a whisper, but by the end of the intervention period, her partner no longer strained to hear the reading of poems. This also transferred to the regular classroom setting after the intervention period. During the first three quarters of the year, the student refused to read beyond a whisper. However, after the intervention the student read other texts at an audible volume.

### Limitations

Since this study was conducted in a small rural high school and since it was designed specifically for struggling readers, the sample size was small. Additionally, a control group could not be obtained. A further limitation is the brevity of the intervention period of only 15 class

sessions. However, despite this limitation, students showed statistically significant gains in 9 out of 12 variables. Thus, more time spent using the intervention may actually increase the benefits, especially in the students' self-perception as readers.

### Future Research

Future research might include the same research questions, but with a larger sample size which includes a control group. Additionally, a future study could incorporate all levels of adolescent readers, not just struggling readers. This study might investigate if struggling readers benefit more from fluency instruction than on-level or high achieving readers. Future studies could also explore differences in the effects on prosody when one group uses the comprehension worksheet and the second group does not.

### Instructional Implications

Although many secondary schools do not place a focus on fluency instruction, fluency strategies can be easily implemented. The design of this intervention presents opportunities for students to practice fluency with the motivating factor of performance. Furthermore, the teacher can praise students' success rather than just assisting students as they struggle through the text. A teacher can daily interact with individual students, unlike many secondary classrooms where individual conferencing with students is limited.

This specific intervention works well with a small class size, but adjustments to the intervention design would be necessary for larger class sizes because feedback and guidance is a key element to student gains in fluency. With a larger class size, a teacher would not be able to listen to each student and to provide constructive feedback. Thus, a teacher would need to

examine how often poetry performances would be given. A teacher could present an introduction of the intervention for 10-15 class sessions and then facilitate weekly poetry performances. This would allow for the intervention to be extended without too much focus on one genre.

According to Stanovich (1986) the gap between low achieving readers and high achieving readers widens with each grade, so teachers should pay special attention to the self-perceptions of struggling readers and provide opportunities for students to experience success. This intervention gives students a sense of accomplishment because they hear their improved prosody as they practice fluency by themselves and with partners.

## Conclusion

Considerable evidence supports oral fluency reading instruction at the elementary levels, but fluency instruction dwindles after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This study suggests that fluency instruction can provide benefits beyond elementary levels. However, if focused fluency instruction and strategies can provide a bridge to improved adolescent comprehension of text, oral reading fluency and reader self-perception, then more educators need to conduct formal research studies which supply additional evidence to confirm these conclusions.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MULTIDIMENSIONAL FLUENCY SCALE

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A. Expression and Volume</b>	Reads with little expression or enthusiasm in voice. Reads words as if simply to get them out. Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice.	Some expression. Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language in some areas of the text, but not others. Focus remains largely on saying the words. Still reads in a quiet voice.	Sounds like natural language throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.	Reads with good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text. Sounds like natural language. The reader is able to vary expression and volume to match his/her interpretation of the passage.
<b>B. Phrasing</b>	Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries, frequent word-by-word reading.	Frequent two- and three-word phrases giving the impression of choppy reading; improper stress and intonation that fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.	Mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and possibly some choppiness; reasonable stress/intonation.	Generally well phrased, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.
<b>C. Smoothness</b>	Frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.	Several “rough spots” in text where extended pauses, hesitations, etc., are more frequent and disruptive.	Occasional breaks in smoothness caused by difficulties with specific words and/or structures.	Generally smooth reading with some breaks, but word and structure difficulties are resolved quickly, usually through self-correction.
<b>D. Pace (during sections of minimal disruption)</b>	Slow and laborious.	Moderately slow.	Uneven mixture of fast and slow reading.	Consistently conversational.

## APPENDIX B

### FLUENCY PRETEST ONE

*Soldier Boys* (Hughes, 2003)  
Pages 178-179

Spence had no time to think, only to run, but he already knew what was about to happen, and somewhere in his consciousness was an obvious truth. Some officer, somewhere, had made an absolutely stupid decision to send him into such a mess.

For about ten steps, Spence tried to run all out. But he knew immediately that his body wouldn't hold out. He couldn't last a hundred yards running that hard, and he had 400 to go, maybe more. And so he slowed to a reasonable pace, slogged hard, jerked his feet from the snow, reached as long as he could, stepped again, and made what wobbling progress he could. And every second, he expected a bullet in his back. The machine guns had already begun to chatter.

The first of the 88s' shells hit to Spence's right. He heard the familiar *whomp* as it thumped into the snow, and he saw the dark earth spatter over the white, up the hill ahead of him. He heard men screaming, too. What he didn't do was look around. He concentrated on the snow in front of him, trying to step where he – or someone else – had stepped before, on the way down. But it didn't help, and when two more shells struck, almost at the same time, the concussion knocked him off his feet. One shell had hit close, and he had seen a steel helmet fly past him, had heard the grunt of a man who must have died too quickly to feel the pain.

Word Count – 257

## APPENDIX C

### FLUENCY PRETEST TWO

*Don't You Dare Read This Mrs. Dunphrey* (Haddix, 2004)

Pages 7-8

Do you know what a drag school is? Maybe you really don't – maybe you liked it when you were a kid. Maybe you think it is fun now. You looked like you were having fun today, or trying to, talking about commas at the board. I mean, commas! Who cares? Don't you have anything more important to worry about?

I do, let me tell you. And I would tell you, but I haven't handed this in yet to see if you pass my test.

School, though. That's what I was talking about. You've got us doing this stupid journal, Mr. Tremont wants another stupid history notebook from us every six weeks, Mrs. Rachead (oops, sorry – Mrs. Racheau) is going to make us dissect frogs soon, Mr. Steinway gives us three pages of geometry homework every night. . . Who cares? I've got to work at Burger Boy most nights and almost every weekend. If I don't—hey, no clothes, no food, no nothing for Ms. Tish Bonner. Or probably not Matt Bonner (that's my brother), either. You don't think my mom gives us money, do you?

If it weren't for getting to see my friends at school, I'd probably drop out. Hey—that's another test for you, isn't it? You teachers are programmed to freak whenever someone talks about dropping out. If you really are reading this, I'd be slapped into the dropout prevention program so fast my head would spin. You know what everybody calls the dropout prevention program? Drip prevention. Smart, huh? It gets the drips out of school without them dropping out.

Really, I can't drop out, though. Then what would I do? No laying around the house watching TV for Ms. Tish Bonner. My mother's already doing that herself. (Ha, ha.) I'd probably have to go to full-time at the Burger Boy. I'd probably be doing that the rest of my life.

And you know what? I really hate the Burger Boy. A lifetime of dishing out burgers and curly fries—no thanks.

Word Count – 337

## APPENDIX D

### FLUENCY PRETEST THREE

*Run Fast, Fly Hard* (Terrill, 2005)

Pages 2-4

Kenu and his friend Miko were running on the beach when they saw a tiny bird sitting all alone in the sand. It had no feathers yet. Its skin was pink and it was moving little wings.

“That’s the funniest-looking bird I’ve ever seen,” said Miko.

“Oh, I think it’s cute. I bet it’s just a baby,” guessed Kenu, looking around. “I don’t see its mother anywhere.”

At that moment, two gulls swooped down toward the little bird. So, Kenu gently picked up the bird and put it in his hat.

He could argue with his coach later, but for now track practice would have to wait.

Kenu was happy to have his very own pet bird. He named the bird Jesse, in honor of his favorite track star, Jesse Owens.

They walked to First Avenue and took Jesse to the community pet store. He looked hungry! So, they wanted to buy him some bird food.

Inside the pet shop, they saw beautiful green parrots and yellow canaries. None of the birds looked like their Jesse.

“Do you have any food for baby birds?” Kenu asked the shopkeeper. Jesse squealed from Kenu’s hat, so Kenu took him out.

The shopkeeper replied, “You could use cat food mixed with water, but if I were you I’d take that bird to Elaine’s Farm. She runs a nursery for little wild birds.”

Kenu thought about what the shopkeeper said. Because he wanted to take care of Jesse himself, Kenu took Jesse home.

Word count—249 words

APPENDIX E

FLUENCY PRETEST FOUR

*The Zoom Lens Mystery* (Brightfield, 2001)

Pages 7- 8

Charlie went up the beach and climbed to the top of a small sand dune to get a better view.

He put the camera up to his eye and searched for a likely subject. Several young children were building a sand castle at the water's edge. He took their picture. Nearby, some kids were running up and down the beach flying kites. He shot a picture of them, too.

Charlie decided to climb halfway up a rocky cliff to get some pictures of people out in the ocean. He aimed the camera at some swimmers and pressed the zoom lever. The swimmers magically appeared to draw closer and closer until they filled the viewfinder. One of them was happily clinging to a large inner tube.

Charlie moved the camera—and then he saw something awful—the unmistakable fin of a shark cutting through the water! A short distance in front of the fin, someone was swimming for his life.

Charlie quickly snapped a picture, then scrambled down the cliff to tell his parents.

Charlie's parents were leaning back in their beach chairs and dozing, but they sat up when Charlie arrived out of breath.

"What's the matter?" his mother asked.

"There's a shark out there—" Charlie cried out, "and it's after somebody! I saw it with the zoom lens!"

"We'd better tell the lifeguard right away," his father said.

Word count – 230

APPENDIX F  
FLUENCY POSTTEST ONE

*Soldier Boys* (Hughes, 2003)  
Pages 188-189

When the first crash of artillery struck, Dieter heard the sound behind him, the shell bursting in the trees. “Fall back,” he heard his sergeant shout, but his instinct was not to do that, not to run into the very trees where the shell had just hit. Besides there were still Americans on the hill, maybe half of them still alive and moving. Dieter wanted to keep shooting.

But the next crash was much closer, and Dieter heard a scream, saw mud spatter. And again he heard his sergeant. “Drop back in the woods and keep going.”

This time Dieter didn’t hesitate. He ran hard, fought through the snow, reached the trees, and kept moving. He knew where the hole was that he and Schaefer had slept in the night before—or thought he did—and wanted to get to it. But the trees were confusing, the trail trampled, and he wasn’t sure where he was going. He ran, kept plunging downward through the wooded area, and now the artillery shells were striking in the trees. A few minutes before, he had felt the thrill of seeing the Americans on the run, trying so hard to fight their way up that long hill. Now all that was forgotten. He heard the shrapnel spinning through the trees, and he expected any second to be hit.

Word Count-- 224

## APPENDIX G

### FLUENCY POSTTEST TWO

*Don't You Dare Read This Mrs. Dunphrey* (Haddix, 2004)

Pages 26-27

I can't believe I thought things were going to be all right. I came home from school today and Mom was sitting in the rocking chair in the living room, not even watching TV, just rocking back and forth, back and forth. I asked her if she was okay, and she said, "He's back in town."

Of course I knew she meant my dad. "So?" I said. "Who cares?"

That made Mom mad. "Who cares? Who cares? I do. You should—he's your father, for God's sake."

I told Matt to go to his room and do his homework. Matt got all whiny—"I don't want to . . . Can't I go see my daddy?" Matt's so young, he doesn't even remember what having Dad was like. He just has this idea it's like on TV—those "Cosby Show" reruns maybe—where the father's all nice and kind and helpful. Matt should know our mom's not like TV mothers—why should Dad be like TV dads? In the end, I got Matt to leave.

"So what are you going to do?" I asked Mom. I put it just the way I'd put it with my friends when they're worrying about their boyfriends.

"I don't know. . . What should I do?" Mom said. Same old wimpy mom as ever. "I've got to see him. Maybe he'll move back in . . ."

I just snorted and went to my room. I wished Granma was still alive. She could tell mom how dumb she was being about Dad. Of course, Mom didn't listen to her either.

Word Count—266

## APPENDIX H

### FLUENCY POST TEST THREE

*Run Fast, Fly Far* (Terrill, 2005)

Pages 5-8

Elaine ran out to meet Kenu and Miko. “That’s an Arctic tern!” she cried, when she saw Jesse. “These birds fly farther than any bird on Earth.”

“At the end of August, when it starts to get cold here in Canada, she’ll migrate almost 10,000 miles to the South Pole. Then, when it gets to be winter in the South Pole, she’ll come back here in June, just in time for our summer.”

“Hey, wait a minute. Jesse’s a girl?”

But, boy or girl, Kenu didn’t like the idea of turning Jesse loose so soon.

Elaine placed Jesse in a small box with a blanket and a heater. “I don’t want to worry you,” said Elaine, “but Jesse seems really weak. She may not be ready to go in four weeks with the other terns.”

Four weeks wasn’t long. In four weeks, Kenu and Miko would be running six miles in the town race. That was nothing compared to a commute of 10,000 miles.

Kenu was glad that Jesse would be around for a while. He continued to visit her at Elaine’s every day. At each visit Jesse looked a little different.

Now, Jesse was in a bigger cage. She was covered in fluffy, white feathers. She was also starting to walk. She’d take a few wobbly steps, then fall over.

“She doesn’t look like she could fly 10,000 miles,” said Miko.

Kenu just smiled and watched Jesse’s movements. He had seen how much and how fast Jesse had improved already.

Word count - 251

APPENDIX I

FLUENCY POST TEST FOUR

*The Zoom Lens Mystery* (Brightfield, 2001)

Page 10-12

Charlie and his father ran up the beach to the lifeguard.

“Can I help you?” the lifeguard asked. “Has there been an injury?”

“I saw a shark in the water! It was chasing somebody!” Charlie exclaimed.

“A shark! Where?” the lifeguard asked, alarmed.

Charlie pointed toward where he had seen the shark. The lifeguard scanned the area with his binoculars.

“I don’t see anything,” the lifeguard said. “And I’ve never heard of a shark attack near this beach. But I guess sharks are always a possible threat.”

“Are you going to get everyone out of the water?” Charlie’s father asked.

“Not just yet,” the lifeguard said.

Charlie and his father gave the lifeguard a surprised look.

“Let me explain,” said the lifeguard. “There are a lot of fish out there that can be mistaken for sharks. It could be that you saw a dolphin.”

“But I’m sure it was a shark!” Charlie insisted. “I even took a photograph of it.”

“May I see the photo?” the lifeguard asked.

“It’s still in the camera,” Charlie’s father said.

“Well, just to be sure, I’ll call the other lifeguards right away and we’ll keep a careful watch,” the lifeguard promised.

Word count – 197

## APPENDIX J

### POETRY COMPREHENSION WORKSHEET

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?
2. Summarize the details of the poem.
3. What is the main idea or theme of the poem?
4. What is the speaker's attitude toward the main idea?
5. Identify and underline words which support the theme, attitude, or emotion?
6. When reading this poem during practice and performance, emphasize these words through pace, volume, and tone.

## APPENDIX K

### POETRY COMPREHENSION PRE TEST ONE

*Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic, Sung in the Year 1888*  
By Ernest Lawrence Thayer (cited in Habinger, 2008a)

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;  
The score stood four to two with but one inning more to play.  
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,  
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest  
Clung to that hope which springs eternal in the human breast;  
They thought if only Casey could but get a whack at that—  
We'd put up even money now with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,  
And the former was a lulu and the latter was a cake;  
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,  
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,  
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;  
And when the dust had lifted, and the men saw what had occurred,  
There was Johnnie safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell;  
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;  
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,  
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;  
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on Casey's face.  
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,  
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;  
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt.  
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,  
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

APPENDIX K (Continued)

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,  
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.  
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—  
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore.  
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted some one on the stand;  
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;  
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;  
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;  
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered fraud;  
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.  
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,  
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate;  
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate.  
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,  
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;  
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,  
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout;  
But there is no joy in Mudville —mighty Casey has struck out.

APPENDIX L

POETRY COMPREHENSION PRE TEST TWO

*The Panther* (Gardner, 1977)

Lock your doors when the Panther roars,  
Especially after dark,  
For you can't hear his feet as he moves down the street  
Or lopes across the park.

He's black as the night, but his eyes are bright—  
His eyes, which are all you can see:  
They burn like coals as the Panther strolls  
In the dark of the shrubbery.

The Panther has got a stone for a heart:  
He would eat his own mother or niece;  
So lock your doors when the Panther roars,  
And telephone the police!

## APPENDIX M

### POETRY COMPREHENSION POST TEST ONE

*The Great Titanic* (cited in Habing, 2008b)

It was on one Monday morning just about one o'clock  
When that great Titanic began to reel and rock;  
People began to scream and cry,  
Saying, "Lord, am I going to die?"

*Chorus*

It was sad when that great ship went down,  
It was sad when that great ship went down,  
Husbands and wives and little children lost their lives,  
It was sad when that great ship went down.

When that ship left England it was making for the shore,  
The rich had declared that they would not ride with the poor,  
So they put the poor below,  
They were the first to go.

While they were building they said what they would do,  
We will build a ship that water can't go through;  
But God with power in hand  
Showed the world that it could not stand.

Those people on that ship were a long ways from home,  
With friends all around they didn't know that the time had come;  
Death came riding by,  
Sixteen hundred had to die.

While Paul was sailing his men around,  
God told him that not a man should drown;  
If you trust and obey,  
I will save you all to-day.

You know it must have been awful with those people on the sea,  
They say that they were singing, "Nearer My God to Thee."  
While some were homeward bound,  
Sixteen hundred had to drown.

APPENDIX N

POETRY COMPREHENSION POST TEST 2

The Buzzard (Gardner, 1977)

When people see the Buzzard in the sky  
They commonly shudder and wonder why  
He's there, and they shudder again and say,  
"Go away!"

Every time they see the Buzzard  
They shudder  
And every time his name comes up in conversation,  
In whatever connection,  
They shudder.

Now a Buzzard's like anyone else in that  
He doesn't like being shuddered at.  
And therefore, when he isn't searching  
For a meal, he spends long hours perching,  
Sunk in gloom,  
Like an Angel of Doom,  
On a lonely rock-cliff high in the night,  
Out of sight.

APPENDIX O

POETRY COMPREHENSION RUBRIC

	1	2	3	4	5
Speaker of Poem	Student is unable to identify the speaker of the poem.		Student identifies the speaker of the poem with cues.		Student clearly identifies the speaker of the poem.
Details of the Poem	Student is able to identify only a few details of the poem.		Student is able to list some of the specific details of the poem, but with little explanation.		Student is able to list and explain most of the specific details of the poem.
Theme	Student is not able to identify the theme or main idea of the poem.		Student is able to generalize what the theme or main idea of the poem is.		Student is able to articulate and clearly explain the theme and main ideas of the poem.
Speaker's Attitude	The student is unable to identify the speaker's attitude or connect it to the theme or main idea.		The student is able to identify the speaker's attitude with limited explanation in relation to the theme or main idea.		The student is able to explain the speaker's attitude toward the theme or main idea.
Key Words	The student is able to identify only a few key words but is unable to connect them to the theme, attitude or emotion.		The student is able to identify some key words within the poem, but is limited in connecting them to the theme, attitude or emotion.		The student is able to identify key words within the poem that exemplify the theme, attitude, or emotion.

## APPENDIX P

### **R** EADER SELF-PERCEPTION SCALE



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Listed below are statements about reading. Please read each statement carefully. Then circle the letters that show how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the following scale.

SA = Strongly Agree      D = Disagree  
 A = Agree                      SD = Strongly Disagree  
 U = Undecided

Example: I think pizza with pepperoni is best.                      SA    A    U    D    SD

If you are *really positive* that pepperoni pizza is best, circle SA (Strongly Agree).

If you *think* that it is good but maybe not great, circle A (Agree).

If you *can't decide* whether or not it is best, circle U (Undecided).

If you *think* that pepperoni pizza is not all that good, circle D (Disagree).

If you are *really positive* that pepperoni pizza is not very good, circle SD (Strongly Disagree).

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. I think I am a good reader.                                 | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 2. I can tell that my teacher likes to listen to me read.      | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 3. My teacher thinks that my reading is fine.                  | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 4. I read faster than other kids.                              | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 5. I like to read aloud.                                       | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 6. When I read, I can figure out words better than other kids. | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 7. My classmates like to listen to me read.                    | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 8. I feel good inside when I read.                             | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 9. My classmates think that I read pretty well.                | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 10. When I read, I don't have to try as hard as I used to.     | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 11. I seem to know more words than other kids when I read.     | SA    A    U    D    SD |
| 12. People in my family think I am a good reader.              | SA    A    U    D    SD |

APPENDIX P (Continued)

READER SELF -PERCEPTION SCALE (continued)

13. I am getting better at reading.	SA	A	U	D	SD
14. I understand what I read as well as other kids do.	SA	A	U	D	SD
15. When I read, I need less help than I used to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
16. Reading makes me feel happy inside.	SA	A	U	D	SD
17. My teacher thinks I am a good reader.	SA	A	U	D	SD
18. Reading is easier for me than it used to be.	SA	A	U	D	SD
19. I read faster than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
20. I read better than other kids in my class.	SA	A	U	D	SD
21. I feel calm when I read.	SA	A	U	D	SD
22. I read more than other kids.	SA	A	U	D	SD
23. I understand what I read better than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
24. I can figure out words better than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
25. I feel comfortable when I read.	SA	A	U	D	SD
26. I think reading is relaxing.	SA	A	U	D	SD
27. I read better now than I could before.	SA	A	U	D	SD
28. When I read, I recognize more words than I used to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
29. Reading makes me feel good.	SA	A	U	D	SD
30. Other kids think I'm a good reader.	SA	A	U	D	SD
31. People in my family think I read pretty well.	SA	A	U	D	SD
32. I enjoy reading.	SA	A	U	D	SD
33. People in my family like to listen to me read.	SA	A	U	D	SD

## APPENDIX Q

### INTERVENTION LESSON PLAN

Grade Level/Content Area: Reading Enhancement: Secondary students

Topic: Reading Poetry for Improved Adolescent Oral Fluency, Comprehension, and Reader Self-perception

Learning Goals aligned with Kansas State Standards:

1. KS 1:2:1 The student adjusts reading rate to support comprehension when reading *narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive texts*.
2. KS 1:4:10 to identify the topic, main idea, and supporting details in text across the content areas and from a variety of sources in appropriate –level texts.

Lesson Initiation Strategies: Central Question –What does it mean to “read with expression?”

Unit Introduction and Lesson Procedures:

1. Model reading
  - a. Teacher reads sections of *The Highwayman* with poor, acceptable, and exemplary expression.
  - b. Students will identify differences between each reading.
2. Think Aloud
  - a. The teacher will then read *O Captain, My Captain* with the purpose of modeling pre-oral reading comprehension questions/activities which students will use to help them in reading with expression.
  - b. Questions:
    - 1.) Who is the speaker of the poem?
    - 2.) Summarize the details of the poem.
    - 3.) What is the main idea or theme of the poem?
    - 4.) What is the speaker’s attitude toward the main idea?
    - 5.) Identify and underline words which support the theme, attitude, or emotion?
    - 6.) When reading this poem aloud during practice and performance, emphasize these words through pace, volume, and tone.
3. Students practice these questions with poems, *Casey at the Bat* and *The Cremation of Sam McGee*.
4. The teacher checks students’ answers to these questions through individual conferencing.
5. While the teacher conferences with individuals, other students search poetry books and poetry websites for poems which they will use the comprehension questions before practicing oral reading.
6. Repeated reading, paired reading, and performance reading:

## APPENDIX Q (Continued)

Students follow these procedures for 12 poems.

- a.) Students read a poem silently one to two times, and then answer the comprehension questions.
  - b.) Repeated reading: Students then read the poem out loud 10 times to themselves.
  - c.) Paired repeated reading: Students read to a partner 5 times, and partners take turns reading to each other. Partners also offer encouragement and advice.
  - d.) Performance reading: Students will read the poem aloud to the teacher by the end of class each day.
  - e.) Students will document date, title of book, title of poem, time practiced by themselves and with a partner, and teacher comments.
7. The teacher will continue model reading at the beginning of each class session for the first ten days of the 15 class sessions in the intervention period.
8. Students can also choose poems to be read by the teacher at the beginning of each session.

### Culminating Activities:

1. Students read aloud at least 12 poems with a goal of close to one poem a day.
2. The instructor will offer words of encouragement and advice for future readings.

### Assessment:

1. Participation points
2. The teacher will use a multidimensional fluency scale to score fluency with emphasis on expression.

APPENDIX R

POETRY AND ORAL FLUENCY PRACTICE CHART

Date	Book title, poem title, and page.	Number of times read by myself	Number of times read with a partner	Comments from teacher to help my future oral reading fluency.