

Does Individualizing Vocabulary Instruction Combined with Fluency Instruction Increase Reading Comprehension to Students Scoring Below the First Quartile

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After pre assessing students in a third grade classroom, the researcher noted four students, scoring below the 25th Percentile on the reading portion of the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) in fall, 2008. As the researcher further assessed the students, it was noted that these students lacked proficient fluency and vocabulary skills. Research revealed that "Providing vocabulary instruction is one of the most significant ways in which teachers can improve students' reading and listening comprehension" (Curtis & Longo, 2008). "Reading fluency is the bridge from decoding skills to comprehension" (Penner-Wilger, 2008). The researcher used a combination of the Power Pak Reading program and coupled it with individual, vocabulary strategies to assist readers with fluency and comprehension. As their reading progressed, students were challenged to next levels. Data was analyzed using the NWEA assessment, Houghton Mifflin Leveled Reading Assessment and Kansas State Reading Assessments during the course of the school year to mark progress. The research examined the question "Does individualized reading vocabulary combined with fluency instruction increase reading comprehension in below quartile, third grade readers?"

1. Introduction (Describe your idea)

In the previous year when pre-assessing students at the start of the third grade year, the researcher noted several who struggled with reading comprehension and more specifically with reading fluency. These students scored in the bottom quartile of the NWEA, or Northwest Evaluation Assessment. As the year progressed, the researcher noted that decoding new vocabulary words was a constant struggle. These students' vocabulary was limited. Research shows that fluency is a probable indicator of student success in reading comprehension if it is focused on with other skills as well and used, ultimately to help students learn to think while they read. Since "Underachieving readers need to develop their own personal mental dictionaries for unknown words" (Juel&Deffres, 2004), the researcher examined the question "Does individualized vocabulary instruction combined with fluency instruction increase comprehension results with below quartile readers?" Torgesen, Shaywitz and Chhabra, (2004) state "...small group interventions can substantially reduce the proportion of students who struggle to read". So the researcher added explicit, *individualized* vocabulary and fluency instruction to the bottom quartile learners during this school year and the results were significant on all post assessments that were administered in the spring semester (2009). Students working with the teacher using these practices rose above the bottom quartile in May with the NWEA. These students also increased their leveled reading comprehension level by 1.5 to at least 3.0 grade levels. Finally, all students using the individualized vocabulary and fluency instruction scored within the top twelfth percentile on the Kansas State Assessments

During this school year (2009-1010) after pre-assessing students at the start of the third grade year, the researcher again noted students in particular who struggled with reading comprehension and more specifically with reading fluency and vocabulary. The past year's experience found the most gains were made after the teacher added individual, vocabulary instruction WITH fluency practice. Individualized vocabulary built mental dictionaries for students. Combining vocabulary with fluency aided students in better interpreting text as they read. Because the needs of the bottom quartile readers in the current year's class (2009-10), were similar to the needs of the bottom quartile readers of the past year, the researcher opted to examine whether or not the research in the past year would be effective during a *second* year with *twice* as many candidates. The researcher chose to examine the same question once again, forming a replicated study examining - "Does vocabulary instruction combined with fluency instruction increase comprehension results with below quartile readers, third grade readers?"

2. Experiment, Results, Discussion, and Significance

During the 2008-2009 year, the researcher developed an individualized reading program to stress individualized vocabulary combined with fluency to examine its effects with reading comprehension. The students qualifying scored below 25% on the NWEA. Students were given reading passages and met with a trained paraprofessional. During each of the students' first meeting time, the students' reading was timed and mispronounced words were highlighted. The teacher recorded the first reading time. The teacher and the student together developed a list words mispronounced and together formed sentences, pictures, symbols, etc. to aid the student in retaining the meaning of each word. The following four days the student met with the paraprofessional and together they discussed the mispronounced words and then the student read the passage aloud. On day five the student and paraprofessional, discussed mispronounced words, read aloud the passage while being timed and then completed a five point comprehension quiz. The teacher recorded the time it took the student to read the passage as well as the comprehension score. This process was completed with each participating student for a total of three months, using different passages. A variety of assessment scores were recorded at the beginning of the year and the end of the year to mark progress. Due to significant results, this research is being conducted currently with eight different students. The following tables show data from the 2008-2009 year.

Table 1:

Comprehension Results with Fluency Only Compared to Fluency Combined with Vocab. Instruction

Student	Fluency Only	Fluency Combined with Vocab. Instruction
A	80%	100%
B	60%	100%
C	80%	100%
D	40%	100%

Table 2:

Mispronounced Vocabulary in Reading Passages Before and After Instruction

Student	First Read	Second Read
A	8	0
B	10	1
C	6	0
D	8	0

Table 3:

Local, State and National Reading Scores/Percentiles

Student	Birth	NWEA (Sept. & May %)		Reading Level (Sept. & May)		Kansas Assessment
A	June '99	15%	69%	Early 2 nd 5 th Grade		93%
B	Mar. '00	19%	48%	Early 2 nd	Late 3 rd	88%
C	Apr., '00	9%	39%	Early 2 nd 5 th Grade		89%
D	Dec., '00	4%	20%	Early 1 st	Late 2 nd	93% (KAMM)

3. Conclusions

The results of combining vocabulary with explicit, fluency instruction were significant. As seen in Table 1, 2 and 3, students' comprehension of passages increased significantly with fluency and vocabulary instruction combined. The amount of mispronounced vocabulary words decreased significantly when students were given vocabulary instruction and repeated reading opportunities. With months of instruction, this aided students with their overall comprehension results.