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## The Impact of Reading Fluency Instruction on Reading Fluency

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# The Impact of Reading Fluency Instruction on Reading Fluency

By Abdul Wright

A Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree requirements of  
Masters in Arts in Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, MN

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Personal Experience

Educating scholars has brought me great joy over the past five years. When I walk into a classroom, I know that I walk in with the ability to empower, enable, and guide our youth on a path to superior moral, social, and academic development. Knowing this, I take great pride in my ability to instruct. Teaching is more than just standing in front of a classroom, talking and playing games or giving out worksheets, or reading novels. Teaching is the purposeful intent of mastering skills and helping young people become critical thinkers. In order for learning to *truly* take place, there must be purposeful unit planning with a clear end goal in sight, engaging lessons, effective assessments and great curriculum. For the past three years, I have worked as a seventh and eighth grade Language Arts teacher, constantly reflecting on my practices to ensure that I am putting my students and myself in the best position to succeed.

The journey to become a master teacher is an arduous one that comes with many challenges. Managing larger class sizes and professional development conferences that have proven for the most part to be ineffective have added to teachers feeling overwhelmed and overworked. The implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has added a dynamic to education practices around the country. These new standards were derived with the intent of ensuring that all children are receiving an education that prepares them for college and future career endeavors. The focus of state's has shifted from teaching students basic skills to

teaching them how to become critical thinkers with the ability to see things from multiple perspectives, justify claims, and explain their rationale. I believe that the authors of the standards understood the need to hold our education system accountable for the preparation of our young people in an ever changing global workplace. Since the implementation of the CCSS, districts and school leaders everywhere are scrambling to figure out the best educational practices that allow scholars to become proficient on the different state tests, which now reflect the new standards (46 states have adopted the CCSS). This adaptation to the new standards has shifted the types of questions are being asked on these assessments. Students can no longer bring a basic understanding of the text to the test item portion of the test. These assessments now require students to have a much deeper understanding of the text. As a result, schools across the country, including mine, have been placed in a position where they are simply guessing on what the curriculum design should entail. For example, a school that I taught at in 2012 decided that our best practices would include incorporating curriculum that was in the range of scholars a grade level above them. For instance, fifth graders would work out of the sixth grade text, sixth graders would work out of the seventh grade text, and so on. The rationale behind this was that if students worked on texts that were a grade level above the range they were supposed to read, then they would somehow acquire the knowledge needed for their grade level and the one above. With the hope that this “strategy” would allow them to ace the state test. That year, our school received our lowest state test scores since 2001. **DISCLAIMER:** I did not get into education to focus on state testing. I entered into education to make a difference in the lives of young people. I was once a student who lacked belief and purpose until I had a great teacher that changed the course of my life forever. I believe that we have a great power and responsibility; however, there

is no way to understate the fact that state tests play a vital role in how educators and schools are judged.

State tests have a great impact on funding resources for schools in low-income communities. Standardized testing in many cases dictates the instructional methods of teachers. I reflect on my first year, when dreams of what I envisioned educating to be, dissipated with my first professional development session. I learned that day that instead of assessing their ability to present and speak in front of the class, or writing skills, I was proctoring a sixteen question multiple-choice quiz. I went on to do this every week for the entire school year. With exceptions being holiday breaks, exam week, and other days students had time off on a quiz day. I was testing, but I did not know what I was looking for. After developing my data analysis skills, I was able to interpret the data and use those pieces of evidence to develop a roadmap for what I was teaching and the rate at which it was taught.

I truly believed in teaching curriculum that was a grade level above. At the time, I believed those teaching practices would increase my students chances of success on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA). The MCA is the state test for Minnesota schools. Minnesota Department of Education has aligned their state test with the CCSS. Resulting in a much more rigorous assessment. The quizzes, skill practices, and comprehensive exams were all a grade level above. Sixty-five percent of students scored eighty percent or above on most, if not all of the quizzes and comprehensive exams. The other students scored at sixty-nine percent or below. Ahead of Minnesota's State test, I predicted that seventy percent of my scholars would pass. As a school, we set a proficiency goal of sixty-seven percent in Reading. When the results came in, I was dumbfounded to find that the increased rigor of the curriculum did not result in an



increase in student proficiency. I sought the advice of other Language Arts and English teachers who told me that across the country, schools and students had struggled adjusting to the format of the CCSS tests, with few exceptions. My goal is to be that exception. My goal is to be the teacher that understands the role text complexity has on teachers' ability to teach, intervene and assess for student growth.

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### Research Question

All of my experiences in education in my brief career have brought me to a realization: Reading comprehension is complex. If we expect are students to meet the demands of this new age of Common Core, where the intent is that ALL students are making adequate progress towards being college-ready learners, we have to give them a true foundation to build on the foundation of reading comprehension begins and ends with the our students ability to read fluently. The focus of my study will be *how does reading fluency instruction impact reading fluency?*

### Purpose of This Study

There is a need for more research on the impact that reading fluency has on reading comprehension. Especially with states shifting to being more data drive with the implementation of the Common Core standards that have shifted how teachers instruct in the classroom. The impact of the Common Core standards and assessments has put an emphasis on critically thinking through complex texts. In order to critically think effectively, our students need to read a text fluently in order to get an understanding of the information being read. My research will bring the education community back to the importance of reading fluency and the impact that fluent reading has on scholar's ability to critically think.

### **Overview**

My concern is that if we as educators and school leaders do not understand the importance of reading fluency and fluency instruction, then we will continue to fail our young people. I will make sure that my research is knowledgeable and complete. There will be a thorough review of many different articles that range from curriculum design to student achievement. I will present a summation of those articles to the leadership team at my school and use those findings as evidence that conveys the importance of the research I plan on conducting. Upon completion of my action plan, I will analyze the data to determine whether or not my assumptions are substantiated. After analysis, I will publish my findings and share them with the education community. The body of the study is divided into five chapters: Chapter one, Introduction, Chapter two, the Literature Review, Chapter three, Methodology, includes an introduction, the research question, the research design, participants, instruments and data collection, research methods and procedure, and limitations. Chapter four, Results, begins with an introduction followed by the revealing of the results, and a summary. Chapter five, is where all of the results have been collected to provide my interpretation of the data as well as any conclusions drawn from the study.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Overview

The purpose of the research conducted in the literature review below was done with the sole purpose of answering the following question: *how does reading fluency instruction impact reading fluency?* The articles analyzed in some way helped shaped the direction of the research and also allowed for a narrower focus to study. Most of the research on this topic is relatively new, since the shift to the New Common Core Standards and their effects are just recently being felt across the nation. With a new set of standards, a new assessment, teachers have had to, in a lot of ways, change their approach to how Language Arts is taught on the middle school level. The information presented examines the impact on district leaders, building administrators, teachers, students, most importantly, the curriculum used to meet the needs of young people everywhere. The following review analyzes what makes a text complex and how text complexity has many results that impact children and the way they learn.

### Text Complexity

The primary focus of Drew (2012) believes that increasing the complexity of the text will allow students to read faster (p. 31). Although the author makes this assertion, there was no data used in the article to support this claim. The determination of what makes a text complex is subjective. That is why the research presented looks to explain the impact that complexity and rigor have on the classroom. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) uses a three-part model for determining text complexity. Using quantitative measures such as word length and/or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion and qualitative

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measures such as language and knowledge demands, reader/task factors such as motivation, knowledge, and purpose, are the criteria the CCSS-ELA uses to evaluate complexity of texts (Wixson & Valencia, 2009). However, Wixson and Valencia (2009) developed the argument that reader and task factors are first considerations in measuring text complexity. Conveying the idea that complexity without the reader and task in mind becomes something that is not an inherent property of the text. Emphasizing the notion that complexity is a function of the correlation between the reader, text, and tasks within a specific situation (Wixson & Valencia 2009). The National Assessment of Educational Programs (NAEP) takes a similar stance on the definition of complexity by saying that complexity is a transactional one in which complexity rises between reader, printed text, and situation during the reading act as opposed to being tied to the text itself (Williamson, Fitzgerald & Stenner, 2012). The CCSS and NAEP both take similar philosophical approaches on what text complexity is: complexity is rooted in the reader and task, and that is where what makes a text complex should be begin. Wixson and Valencia (2009) use the example text *The Little Prince*; which according to Lexile.com falls within the second grade complexity range as provided by CCSS-ELA (Nelson, Perfetti, Liben, & Liben, 2012). *The Little Prince*, which has several themes being conveyed that second grade scholars would identify. However, the text has several underlying themes that are more sophisticated, and take a much deeper understanding of the text. I was at a conference hosted by *Advancement via Individual Determination* (AVID) this summer, and we had to develop higher order thinking questions for the text *Cinderella*. Some of the questions that the educators developed took the text far beyond what an elementary student would have been able to analyze when reading, even with a deeper understanding of the text. Emphasizing the claim being made that text is tied specifically to the

reader and the task associated with the text. The question of what is text complexity seems to be answered the same by many respected in the education community; however, what we use to determine the text complexity is a bit different.

### **Curriculum Design**

Today, the definition of curriculum includes all the planned learning experiences of a school or educational institution (Prideaux, 2003). Prideaux (2003) then goes on to state how the final curriculum product needs to be developed in a way that it can be viewed by anyone in the learning institution, be open for critique and feedback, and readily transformed into practice.

Nelson Graff's (2011) research states:

The past decade or so has seen increasing emphasis in K-12 schools around the country on standards and standardized testing, particularly since the advent of the No Child Left Behind law in 2001. At the same time, our knowledge about student learning has become increasingly complex, creating a potential conflict for conscientious teachers-administrators push for the kinds of teaching that translate directly into better test results, yet teachers also work to engage diverse students in the kinds of learning and thinking required for our contemporary era. This situation calls for teachers to have a sophisticated knowledge both of their content and of how to guide students in learning that content, what Shulman (1986) calls "pedagogical content knowledge. (36)"

While Prideaux (2003) lists the characteristics of quality curriculum design, Graff (2011) discusses the importance of curriculum design for teachers, and the influence that effective curriculum design has on student learning. In researching the importance of curriculum design,

Graff found that many teachers feel ill-prepared and “lost at sea” when talking about curriculum design (Graff, 2011). Graff (2011) also discusses the components of curriculum design:

“In describing the relationship between “content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge,” Shulman (1986) describes “three categories of content knowledge: (a) subject matter content knowledge, (b) pedagogical content knowledge, and (c) curricular knowledge” (p. 9). As the credential program does not address subject matter content knowledge, I will focus on pedagogical content knowledge and curricular knowledge. (39)”

Both Graff and Shulman discuss the importance of having curriculum that is designed; horizontal, where the persons preparing the materials has an understanding of the materials needed, and vertical, which shows a depth of knowledge needed to cover the wide range of topics and issues that will be covered in the current year, and in the future (2011). There are many ways to design curriculum, but the one that has gained momentum in the past decade is backwards design curriculum.

The backwards design framework as described by Wiggins and McTighe (1995, 2005) provides a structure with which to help prospective teachers in a content methods course to begin to transform their content knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge and to develop sensitivity to both the horizontal and vertical curriculum as Shulman describes it (Graff, 2011). This framework uses essential questions that do not apply to a particular text, rather, these are questions that apply to in school and out of school situations; in turn, making the learning process and the questions derived more meaningful to the lives of the scholars. The backwards

design attempts to eliminate disjointed lesson planning that does not tie in old skills with newly learned skills by focusing on an essential question, that ties into a specific set of skills, that are woven together fluidly. The backwards design seeks to start with the end in mind, allowing teachers to develop their lessons to “target” specific skills and standards that break the learning down into manageable chunks. Making the learning process transparent for all involved: teacher, student, and school administrators. When analyzing the results of his (Graff, 2011) study, he found the following:

This sense of having a process by which to figure out what students needed and plan to meet those needs pervaded the comments of those teachers who felt prepared to plan. Paula, for instance, discussed adapting her instruction after discovering that her students did not know how to write an outline: "The first big writing thing was, OK, you're just going to write an outline for a paper. You're not writing the paper; you're just writing the outline. And giving them three theses to choose from, and giving them their sources and saying, OK, work with this stuff; this is a finite amount of material." Both she and Alex attributed this notion of planning to meet students' needs largely to the backwards design framework. Alex, for instance, said, "I knew the standards, but now that I know what they want, and what I want, and what the students need, I can bridge the gap." When Alex focuses on "what they [the standards] want, and what I want," he is addressing ends, the place Wiggins and McTighe suggest to begin planning. (38)

The above reflections convey the effectiveness of the backwards design and how the frame work allows for teachers to be more prepared when stepping into the classroom, and for students to understand what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how what they are learning will be measured. More importantly, because of the clear end in mind with every lesson,

scholars can for the first time, track their own learning areas of strength and deficiencies. Once the process of learning has been laid, the teacher can then focus on what it takes to be a successful scholar. In the English Language Arts classroom, the most important skill needed to be successful is having the ability to comprehend the material being read.

### **Reading Comprehension**

In order to understand the reading comprehension process for students, one has to understand the factors that influence comprehension. According to Stahl and Schweid (2013), “Reading comprehension is an unconstrained skill...develops across a lifespan, with variations in each individual’s competency influenced by reading context, reading purpose, the genre, and content of the text” (p. 122). The components of reading that influence comprehension are fluency, word recognition, prior knowledge, metacognition, and self-monitoring (Paris & Hamilton, 2004, p. 33). All of these components, which do not include inference making and application of comprehension strategies, greatly influence how a student understands a particular passage. In order to understand how these factors influence one another, it is important to explain each component further.

Children who are fluent readers understand that reading should be an automatic and effortless process. Fluent readers have the ability to read words quickly with few errors, and spend the majority of their reading time reading to comprehend, not for decoding. According to Robson, Blampied and Walker (2015), “A report from the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health, & Human Development, 2000) has highlighted the importance of reading fluency and the lack of understanding about effective fluency instruction by many teachers” (p. 46). Many schools do not offer fluency instruction interventions, which only



reiterates the National Reading Panel's claim. Paris and Hamilton (2009) claimed that a rate of 90–100 words per minute appears to be the fluency threshold needed to help struggling readers meet the demands of the rich texts placed in front of them. The lack of attention to fluency instruction for struggling readers decreases the quality of reading by children who are not fluent readers; consequently, widening the comprehension gap.

According to the website of the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD), word recognition is a reader's ability to recognize the relationship between letters and sounds, including the ability to recognize letter patterns to properly pronounce words. Asselin (2001) asserts that the ability recognize words automatically is predicated by the reader's phonemic and phonological awareness. Asselin (2001) cites the NICHD who defines phonemes as "the speech units that make a difference to meaning (e.g c-a-p means something different than cl-a-p)" (p. 58). Phonological awareness is defined as being the ability to "attend to sounds of language distinct from its meaning, including abilities to hear and create rhyming words and alliterations, segment speech into separate words (concept of word), hear syllables as chunks of spoken words, separate spoken words..." (Asselin, 2001, p. 57). Asselin (2001) goes on to cite research that discusses the critical need for word recognition programs in schools. Many educators and members of the education community understand the importance of word recognition and its correlation to reading comprehension; yet, many within this community differ on instructional methods. However, one thing is clear: automatic word recognition teaching practices need to become more prevalent in intervention programs around the country if the education community as a whole is serious about addressing the needs of struggling readers and closing the reading comprehension gap.

Prior knowledge is the background knowledge that can be derived from reading, learning, or having experience with or on a particular topic. For decades, educators have viewed prior knowledge as being a critical element to the reading comprehension process. However, recent research suggests that prior knowledge strategies need to be refined. Stahl, et. al (2013) state that “Instructionally, we do want to curtail the use of picture walks beyond the emergent reader stage, picture walks that take longer than the reading experience, unproductive or misleading KWL activities, and rambling prereading discussions. These activities can hinder comprehension” (p. 122). In many classrooms across the nation, prior knowledge activities are interfering with students ability to understand the text they are having an experience with. This is not to say that prior knowledge lessons serve no purpose in the classroom. In fact, quite the opposite. Stahl et. al acknowledge this in their article. The authors (2001), citing earlier research claim, “activating prior knowledge is essential for remembering what is read, learning new information from texts, and inference generation (Kintsch, 1998)” (p. 122).

### **Assessments**

Few would argue the importance of assessments in the classroom; yet, many challenge the role of assessments, specifically state standardized tests. Prior to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), there was a large disparity in regards to level of rigor in question design and text complexity on these state mandated tests. But more importantly, prior to the CCSS, these tests allowed districts and educators to teach to very specific skills that lessened the role of authentic learning, decreased the amount of critical thinking in the classroom, erased any notion of need for collaborative based learning and watered down the emphasis on college-readiness. Consequently, many high school graduates were entering college ill-prepared to handle the

academic rigor needed to be successful as a college student. Now, administrators and educators everywhere are adjusting to the level of expectation the new standards suggest are needed to prepare a nation of college ready high school graduates. Some terms needed to explore to truly engage in a discussion on assessments are summative, formative, and informal. The dialogue in this section seeks to explore the meaning of these terms and their role in the classroom.

Assessment is about making judgements on the quality of students' performance (Knight 2006). According to Garrison & Ehrlinghaus (2008), "Summative Assessments are given periodically at a particular time to determine what a student knows or does not know" (1). Garrison & Ehrlinghaus then go on to discuss how district and school leaders view summative assessments as being a vital tool. Examples of summative assessments include state standardized tests, benchmark tests, end of unit tests, end of term or semester test (Garrison & Ehrlinghaus, 2008). Maria Weurlander, Magnus Soderberg, Max Scheja, Hakan Hult, and Annika Wernerson state that assessments can be used both to summarise students' achievements in order to award some kind of certification (summative assessment) and to give feedback to students in order to support learning (formative assessment) (Falchikov 2005; Sadler 1989; Yorke 2003). In Minnesota, summative assessments have been used to rank students, place them in classes, a means for gaining acceptance into a particular school, and to determine the overall quality of academic institutions within the state. On the other hand, formative assessments are used to drive instruction in the classroom and guide the teachers in helping scholars develop the skills needed to meet the level of difficulty in an assessment. Weurlander et. al., cite a report from Sadler (1989), that states this new view of assessments is consistent with a view that has been gaining ground in recent years, the concept of assessment as learning, where the outcome of learning is

seen as complex and is defined in terms of quality of understanding or degree of expertise. This shift from exclusion to inclusion where every teacher is expected to meet the needs of all learners within the classroom has made the role of assessments more of an integral part of the authentic teaching and learning (Weurlander, et. al., 2012). The role of assessments in the English Language Arts classroom is integral in implementing a curriculum and instructional practices that allow for inclusion and differentiation. With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, and the addition of the Common Core State Standards, the state and the CCSS is seeking for schools to raise the level and depth of knowledge expected to master a particular standard. Before the CCSS, the Minnesota State test assessed a skill on an individual basis. Since the CCSS revisions to the Minnesota State test have been implemented, scholars are now being asked to integrate several skills at a high level in order to demonstrate proficiency on a particular standard. The authors of the CCSS state the importance of developing critical thinkers who are college-ready. The level of rigor in the assessment determines the burden of proof of skill mastery. As a result, teachers are asked to prepare assessments that are high in rigor, mirroring the summative assessment scholars will experience at the end of the year. Moral of the story: assessments that expect more of students, are also the assessments that require teachers to raise the level of instruction, which in turn, increases the effectiveness of learning for all scholars. High quality assessments, rather they be summative or formative, are the true indicators of quality instruction centered in rigor that are being implemented in classrooms across the nation.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the various areas of reading that impact the lens from which teachers view instruction and reading. From curriculum design, to the role of assessments. All of

the above information provides context into what teachers' value, why they may value particular aspects of Language Arts, and how a school's values may impact what dictates how a teacher uses their instructional time. In chapter three, I will discuss the research design used to conduct the research, the methods used, the participants of the study, the location of the study, and the rationale for why research in this area is important to the education community as a whole.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Methods**

##### Introduction

There is research that seeks to study the influence that reading fluency has on a student's ability to fluently read a text. However, the research embedded into this study seeks to measure the rate of growth of students reading fluency. The conversation around high stakes testing has reached an all-time high; the purpose of this research is to explore how fluency instruction allows us to effectively intervene and make a difference with learners who struggle with reading.

##### Question

How does reading fluency instruction impact reading fluency?

##### **Research Design**

The intent of this research is to investigate the impact of reading fluency instruction on reading comprehension. Two eighth grade students, one boy and one girl, will be the participants for this research. There will be a baseline reading fluency assessment conducted at the beginning of the six-week study, which will be proctored using Gail Adams and Sheron Brown's *The Six Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program*. The participants will be assessed for Correct Words per Minute (CWPM) three times per week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday). The participants will also take a separate comprehension quiz once every two weeks that ties into class instruction. The purpose of proctoring fluency assessments and comprehension assessments is to determine the correlation between fluency and comprehension. Reading fluency instruction will take place three times a week. The purpose behind fluency instruction is to build scholars

reading fluency skills at a more exponential rate by targeting specific skills that allow students to build their reading fluency skills, which allows their comprehension skills to grow as well. This will be a mixed methods study, since the sample size is small. I will collect field notes based on my observations, but there will be no student interviews. The data I analyze will be the fluency assessment data as well as the comprehension assessment data. Since I will use quantitative data, and I will be collecting field notes, this type of study would be best-suited for mixed methods. According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, “mixed methods is a study that involves mixing within a single study; a mixed method program would involve mixing within a program of research and the mixing might occur across a closely related set of studies” (p.123). The research design methods will include merging data sets, embedding data at the design level, and connecting the data analysis to data collection. Since this study would most benefit from blending methods, it makes the most sense to conduct a study that acknowledges the tools and methods needed for the research to be effective.

### **Participants/Setting**

A participant consent form will be given before the fluency assessment or the fluency instruction begins. There will be twenty female participants, all of African American descent, between the ages of thirteen and fourteen years of age. The participants are in eighth grade... The research will take place at a Title I school within the inner-city of Minneapolis that primarily serves low income students. The school is kindergarten through eighth grade. For the 2015-16 school year, there were 420 students enrolled in the various programs located inside the school. The demographics of the student body are 80% African American, 10% Somali American and

1% Caucasian American and 9% Hispanic. 90% of the students enrolled are eligible for free or reduced breakfast and lunch. There are single and dual-gendered classes in the school.

### **Instruments and Data Collection**

The reading fluency passages that will be used to proctor the fluency assessments will come from *The Six-Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program (Secondary Level)*. The fluency assessments will be eighth grade level. The data will be recorded using a fluency tracker (Appendix H).



**Research Methods/Procedures**

Using a model that was derived from Reading experts and researchers Roxanne Hudson, Holly Lane, and Paige Cullen (2005), I will use the following steps:

1. Record a baseline rate on a new passage by having the student read the passage without knowing that he or she is being timed. The number of words read correctly for that minute are recorded as the baseline.
2. Note the errors as the student reads. After the reading, discuss any errors and work on them by rereading the parts that were difficult or by doing word-study activities.
3. Set a goal for the next reading by asking the student to read five or six more words, or maybe another line. The goal should be a reasonable one that can be attained within the next few attempts. If the student made three or more errors in the first attempt, the goal may be to decrease the errors and keep the correct word per minute (CWPM) the same.
4. Record the goal on the fluency tracker.
5. Time the student again for one minute and record the CWPM and errors.
6. Discuss the errors; set another goal and repeat the process.
7. Time participants once per week
8. When the participant(s) levels off and is no longer increasing the CWPM, select a new passage.
9. Select a new passage and begin the process again by taking a baseline reading.
10. Proctor one summative reading comprehension assessment. Track data in comprehension tracker.

11. Analyze data and identify correlations that are revealed through data analysis. Draw conclusions based on the evidence.

### **Limitations**

With the research using such a small sample size (one student), there are no truths or generalizations that can be derived from the data. Also, with the research taking place over a six-week period, the true impact of reading fluency on reading comprehension cannot be uncovered.

### **Conclusion**

In Chapter four, I will list the results of the fluency assessments, as well as the key findings from the data analysis that centers on student motivation and making meaning of the data. Chapter four goes from week to week, and lists the results of the assessments, then transitions into the importance of differentiation in the classroom, the role of teachers in engaging struggling readers with content that appeals to them, and the impact of reading instructional strategies on reading fluency. The data was analyzed with the sole purpose of determining if there reading instruction influences reading fluency.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results**

#### Introduction

The information in this chapter represents the action research meant to answer the question, “how does reading instruction impact reading fluency?” As stated in chapter three, the design of the study was centered on a mixed methods approach, which focused primarily on the quantitative aspect of the design methods. The study took place over a six week time period, with the participants in the study, twenty two to be exact, each being assessed once per week. The data results included in this study are the results of the weekly fluency assessments that were conducted. The participants in this study were an all female group of eighth grade students from a Charter school in Minneapolis that primarily serves low-income families and is identified as a Title 1 school. Prior to conducting the study, a parental permission slip was sent home to all students, returned, and secured prior to any research being conducted.

Over the six week time period, all participants were assessed individually, with different passages at the same level to ensure that the data was not skewed and could bring about a correlation. Over the course of the six-week period, observations and data were recorded in the form of a tracker (Appendix A). This chapter focuses on the data that was collected from the fluency assessments, lists of different reading instructional strategies used each week, as well as an interpretation of the data. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that reading instruction strategies has on reading fluency.

### **Fluency Assessments**

The fluency assessments chose for the study came from The Six-Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program (Secondary edition). There were six fluency passages used during the study (appendix B-G), and all were level 8 reading passages. The rationale for using level 8 reading passages is that the level represents the grade, and all participants were eighth grade students. There was no other specific criterion for which passages were used, I just used them in the order that they were listed in the book.

### **Reading Instructional Strategies**

Over the course of the six weeks, I used a variety of reading instructional strategies with the intention of examining how or if implementing reading instruction strategies influenced reading fluency. Of the instructional strategies listed below, the one that was conducted on an everyday basis were silent reading. The other strategies were administered once a week. In some weeks, several different strategies were implemented within a given week. For example, in week one, I used the modeling, punctuation, and choral reading strategies. The fluency reading strategies that were utilized during the study were:

- **Modeling:** When utilizing modeling as an instructional strategy, I read to students aloud and gave them a model of excellence for what active, fluent reading should sound like. Reading with expression and effortlessly allows students make meaning of written text. At the conclusion of a modeled reading, students wrote down what they noticed that I did while reading aloud. They then shared their observations with a partner, then we discussed

them as a group. This strategy, along with silent reading, were the most used reading strategies over the six week period.

- Silent Reading: The rationale behind doing sustained independent reading is simple: practice makes “perfect”. There have been hundreds of studies that have examined the correlation between people who read more and how that connects to them being better readers than people who read less. There was twenty minutes of daily independent silent reading for participants. What they read was not a factor, as long as they were reading. I encouraged students to read material that they were interested in. My belief behind this was that students would have more interest and engagement in content that intrigued them. There were very few times throughout the implementation of this practice where students needed to be redirected.
- Choral Reading: This is when students and I read texts aloud as a class. The students needed to stay on track with my pace and my oral expressions when doing this. Choral reading helped me identify students who were struggling to keep up. This also continued to give students a model of excellence for what reading should sound like.
- Reading with punctuation: With this activity, I placed several sentences on a handout for students, with several punctuations at the end. Students had to read the sentence, making sure to change their oral expressions to match the punctuation. This helped students identify how punctuation dictates the active reading that is needed to bring meaning to the words in the text.

**Week 1 results:**

A reading fluency assessment was conducted on Friday of the first week of the study. The total amount of words correct that a student could have gotten was 257. Of the twenty-two students assessed, eight of them scored over 200. Of the remaining fourteen, six students scored between 160-199. The remaining eight students scored below 160, with three students scoring 130 or below.

**Week 2 results:**

Week two, the most words correct students could get was 213. Of the twenty-two students assessed in week two, ten participants read more than 190 words correctly. Six read 130 words or less correctly. The remaining students' scores ranged from 131-189.

**Week 3 results:**

In week three, the most words that could be read correctly was 273. While the number of words correct potentially read by students went up, only ten of the twenty two participants answered read over 200 words correct. Within that ten, six read over 230 words correct in the allotted time.

**Week 4 results:**

In week four, the most words that could be read correctly was 325. Nine students recorded a score of 70% or higher, with another five students recording at least 65% of words correct per minute.

**Week 5-6 Results:**

In weeks five and six, participants' growth fluctuated; as can be seen in the data tracker (appendix--), with less than forty percent of students recording a score of 70% words correct per minute.

**Motivation**

Very early into the assessments, I noticed the role motivation played on some participants. Some would complain about the length of certain passages, and at times, depending on the week, some were just disinterested in reading altogether. I noticed how students who had more of a sense of self-motivation were the ones who consistently did well. While others, who needed prompting and constant encouragement, struggled from week to week.

**Differentiation**

The first fluency assessment showed me how varied the reading ability of students was. While some students were able to fluently read the first passage with very few mistakes and with expression, other students struggled to recognize words. Reading fluency is something that varies from person to person, but the abilities in this eighth grade classroom ranged from first grade readers to students who could read at a college level. The primary task of reading teachers in classrooms across the country needs to be on becoming awareness with ways to motivate students through engaging content. If students lack the motivation to read, then the students with low reading abilities will be the ones who stay poor readers. Differentiation strategies in the classroom will help teachers meet students reading needs.

### **Inconsistent Data**

My greatest struggle with interpreting the data to determine the impact reading strategies has on fluency was the range of scores over the six week period. I believe that the entire six week time period could be used as baseline data, as students scores fluctuated from week to week. Very few students scored consistently high, or improved each week. In fact, there were several weeks in which students' percentage of words read correctly reverted. In order to truly examine the impact of fluency instruction on reading fluency, one would need to conduct this study over a much longer time period. Especially when the range of readers is as varied as the range of readers used in this study.

### **Making Meaning**

While no assertive position can be taken from the data in this study, I do believe that there was a positive impact on students' reading fluency. Over the course of six weeks, there were several participants whose scores went up each week. While there was no qualitative data recorded to gain additional insight into the participants for their growth or lack thereof, I do believe that the instructional strategies made a difference. Which is evident in the results. As the study continued, more students began to score over fifty percent. With the final week seeing fifteen of the participants exceed the fifty percent mark. This is encouraging for those in favor of reading interventions that center on reading fluency activities and strategies; and for classroom teachers who would like to utilize fluency strategies in collaboration with fluency assessments. However, to determine the degree to which reading instruction has on readers, a more intense study, taken place over a longer time span, would need to be conducted.



### **Conclusion**

In chapter four, I discussed the results of the data, the ability to interpret the data with such a small sample size in regards to time, the importance of differentiation in the classroom to meet the needs of all learners, as well as the ability to make meaning from the data. The most important takeaways from this chapter are: one, that there is a correlation between reading fluency instruction and its ability to promote reading fluency. Secondly, implementing reading strategies has a positive impact on readers of all grades, not just elementary readers. And lastly, finding engaging content for readers of all levels is as important as the reading strategies themselves. Readers, especially struggling readers, need to have a desire to read. This desire can be promoted through finding out the interests of the students in our schools and finding content that they enjoy. The best way to increase a reader's ability is through giving them the time and tools needed to practice the art of reading.

In chapter five, I will summarize the key findings in this study, and discuss the importance of emphasizing reading instruction at all grade levels. I will also discuss the importance of small group reading instruction and how I plan to utilize the reading strategies used in this study to help enhance the reading abilities of all readers in my classroom. There will also be a call to action to promote reading in the homes of our readers. As truly, the only way to grow as a reader is to read.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusions**

#### Introduction

In this study, I sought to answer the question, how does fluency instruction impact reading fluency? In this chapter, I will start with summarizing the study of reading fluency, and then transition into discussing the importance of reading fluency instruction in the classroom. Then I will discuss the role that knowing your students plays in reading fluency. Third, the factors that impacted the research conducted, and then what important research still needs to be done. Lastly, I will talk about how I plan to implement reading activities into my classroom as a means of promoting good readers. The final chapter will provide my interpretation of the research I conducted and how the education community as whole can reevaluate the emphasis on reading instructional strategies that promote fluent readers.

#### Overview

This research examined the impact of reading instruction on reading fluency. Initially, I thought the design would be a mixed methods design, with both designs weighted equally; however, as I embarked on the research, I began to see that this was a design that was weighted heavily on the quantitative attributes of the mixed methods design. The qualitative aspects of my design formed themselves in the form of field notes and observations. I took a group of twenty two young ladies from a charter school in Minneapolis. Over a six week time period, I implemented reading instructional activities in collaboration with reading fluency assessments. The instructional activities were implemented on a weekly basis, as well as the fluency

assessments. Participants of the study practiced the instructional activities primarily in a whole group manner. Students were assessed individually and in a private room to minimize embarrassment. The data collected from the fluency assessments was recorded in a fluency tracker.

#### Fluency Instruction

As evident by the data collected from the fluency assessments, there is a connection between reading instruction and reading fluency. With millions of struggling readers around the country entering the classroom everyday at all grade levels, the importance of developing this crucial skill cannot be understated. In order to promote good readers and their abilities, readers of all levels need to the necessary time to sit and read. There are many reading activities that can be done in the classroom, and used in intervention settings. I was able to use several in this study that were an effective use of instructional time and that I will continue to use going forward. One flaring realization that I had about reading fluency was how the range of readers in a classroom is widely varied; so, a lot of the whole group reading activities that were used may be more effective in small group and partner settings. This only emphasizes the importance of having reading interventions at all levels. Struggling readers are more likely to gain more from a small group, or one-to-one setting than they would with one size fits all instructional activities.

#### Importance of Content

An important aspect of promoting reading is having material that readers want to read. The demographics of a particular school and the interests of the students within that school should dictate the reading material in that building. Students will be more interested in material

that engages them. Over the six-week time period, I focused more on content that was meaningful to the lives and interests of my participants; as a result, I watched students who were reluctant to read aloud or participate in choral reading engaging in ways that they had not all year. Something that really stood out to me was how students were beginning to carry books with them outside of the mandated material we were using in the classroom. The benefit to having content that spans across genres and interests of young people are plentiful. Students will begin to develop domain specific vocabulary, understand the role of text features, connect to material to other texts they have read, and they will begin reading for fun. The more students are motivated to read on their own, the more likely they are to become proficient readers.

#### Mitigating Factors

When I first began this study, I failed to understand how different factors could impact the research. One huge aspect that really affected my readers was motivation. At the beginning of the study, the participants were eager, engaged in the activities, and excited for the fluency assessments. As the study progressed, their eagerness and their engagement decreased, and so did their results. While the word count from passage to passage changed, I based their progress on the percentage of words read correctly in the given time. There were several weeks in which students who scored over 80-90% words correct on several fluency assessments, reverted backwards-receiving scores of less than 70% on certain passages.

I believe that seeing a passage with more words than one they had did before influenced their performance. So many participants wanted to get through every single word, but when

faced with passages that were longer, they would give up before trying. This is evident in the fluctuating scores of the majority of participants.

Attendance also played a role in the progress of readers. If students missed days in which a reading activity was conducted, there was no way to make it up without compromising the data. I did not want to give a student one to one instruction, when the other participants were given the instruction in a different type of grouping. I wanted to be as consistent as possible with the instruction and fluency assessments. I believe I was successful in the implementation of my methods and research design, I just wish that I had given myself more time to conduct the research to be able to see the data norm itself, versus fluctuating from week to week. With more time, I would have also been able to measure the degree to which fluency was impacted by reading instruction.

#### Continued Research

This section of the chapter first looks at the significance of the research conducted as well as additional research that can be done to provide a holistic view of reading fluency instruction and its influence on reading fluency. It contains information about the limitations I faced, as well as key discoveries that provided context to several issues that reading teachers and educational institutions face as we try and develop college ready readers. Concluding with possible research that can be done to help the education community as whole develop best practices for increasing reading fluency and advancing our readers.

### Significance of The Study

While the time given for the action research was limited, there were key findings that I discovered as the research progressed. First, I discovered the role that motivation plays in developing struggling readers, and advancing proficient readers. If a student is not motivated to read, both in the classroom and at home, then it will be hard for that reader to make any type of reading growth. Secondly, I realized the crucial role that reading interventions built in to a school's program structure plays on developing readers. In my research, the majority of the instruction was conducted whole group. Looking back, I believe that the work could have been even more effective if I had worked with a smaller group of readers in a small group setting. I would have been able to find activities that fit the needs of the readers individually, which would have resulted in stronger results. Stronger in the sense of improvement. The fact that so many institutions do not have built in reading interventions at all levels is concerning. Especially with the Common Core standards and the complexity of the texts that our students are exposed to. Third, and most importantly, the research conducted showed me that reading fluency can be affected in a positive manner at the middle school level. While some students' scores reverted in certain weeks, the majority of the participants saw gains in at least 4 out of the 6 weeks the assessments were implemented.

### Limitations

The limitations I faced throughout the research were first, time. Had I given myself a bigger window to assess and instruct, I believe I would have began to see more consistency in the data collected. I also believe I would have gotten a greater degree of improvement if the

research had been conducted with small groups. The last glaring limitation to the research I saw was a greater need for more weight for qualitative data. I was so focused on the assessment pieces that I did not get into the heads of the participants the way I would have liked. I have questions that can only be answered by gaining more insight into the perspectives of the participants.

#### Recommendation for Future Studies

The takeaways I had from the study brought me to a realization that there needs to be more research done on the impact that reading fluency has on comprehension. Fluency is one of the foundational building blocks of comprehension, and without it, are students are not being put in a position to be college ready thinkers. I would also recommend that a study on small group reading interventions, and the role they play in increasing reading fluency. Lastly, there should be research around the intrinsic factors of student performance like belief, motivation, and effort. I believe all of these factors played a role in the outcomes of my research.

#### Classroom Implications

In this section, I will discuss how I plan to implement reading instructional practices in my classroom, the role that reading interventions will play in my school, and how I will diversify the library in my classroom and encourage other teachers of all grade levels and content areas to do the same.

Overall, I am very pleased with the results of this study. I believe that I now have a greater understanding for the need of reading instruction-more importantly, I know that as a school, our entire student body will see an increase in their reading ability. I plan to continue

using the reading activities that I implemented in this study in my classroom on a weekly basis. I will have at least one day a week where my students will be engaged in a reading activity. I believe that the art of reading daily is something that can benefit readers of all levels. Therefore, I will have sustained silent reading at the beginning/end of every class period.

As the content lead for Language Arts at my school, I have a role in what types of interventions are implemented in our school. After this study, I see a need for reading intervention, with intervention groups not being bigger than ten students to one tutor/instructor. I believe the gains our students will see in their reading fluency will transcend beyond fluency. I believe as a school, we will begin to see the influence that strong fluency ability has on a reader's ability to comprehend and analyze a text.

The increased emphasis on reading cannot be done without increasing the amount of books, magazines, and other reading mediums that students are exposed to. Increasing the amount of material students have at their fingertips, and diversifying the content that they are exposed to will allow students to have more choice. Consequently, students will have more reason than ever to pick up a text and read. This emphasis on reading will be done in conjunction with a student reward system. As a school, if we promote reading and the students who are reading, we will begin to start placing value on what matters most to us as a school.

#### Final Words

When I first began this project, I did not expect to uncover as much as I did. From the wide range of readers in my classroom, to the need for small group reading interventions. All of these discoveries and findings have only placed more of a sense of urgency on me in regards to



what readers need, especially struggling readers, in order to become college ready readers and thinkers. There are no shortcuts to developing readers, no one size fits all solutions. Only, best practices, a well thought out plan or vision by school leaders and teachers, and a value placed on reading like never before. This research has opened my eyes to the need for me to be better-as a teacher, as a school leader, and as a person who cares deeply for the success of our young people in the classroom.

Second set of reading fluency data - Excel

Abdul Wright

FILE HOME INSERT PAGE LAYOUT FORMULAS DATA REVIEW VIEW

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
2	Student 1	195	200	254	293	277	103									
3	Student 2	242	193	249	286	247	52									
4	Student 3	187	169	183	175	193	217									
5	Student 4	195	175	249	274	265	247									
6	Student 5	141	118	237	285	249	245									
7	Student 6	228	199	248	249	238	248									
8	Student 7	205	160	202	170	210	209									
9	Student 8	140	149	139	222	248	203									
10	Student 9	218	193	233	247	233	254									
11	Student 10	216	196	225	255	222	212									
12	Student 11	226	190	229	237	230	224									
13	Student 12	175	177	205	146	203	172									
14	Student 13	128	120	140	193	198	178									
15	Student 14	130	126	159	230	221	244									
16	Student 15	189	86	103	176	180	190									
17	Student 16	162	158	199	216	206	209									
18	Student 17	196	100	208	206	195	174									
19	Student 18	217	190	223	210	219	225									
20	Student 19	228	188	226	233	243	235									
21	Student 20	123	138	215	133	222	190									
22	Student 21	148	154	151	177	172	219									
23	Student 22	148	138	165	209	212	134									
24																

READY PAGE 1 OF 1

## Appendix B

PRACTICE PASSAGE 801

### Greek Columns: Capital Differences

0 Greek architecture is famous for its use of graceful and beautiful  
11 columns. During the classical Greek architecture period, there were three  
21 types of columns used in Greek temples. The columns differ because of  
33 their tops, which are called capitals. Each of the three Greek capital styles  
46 developed in a different part of Greece. The three types of columns are  
59 Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian.

63 The Doric column is the oldest and plainest. It is also the heaviest  
76 and the only one without a base. The Doric columns of ancient Greece  
89 were influenced by Egyptian architecture. These columns were somewhat  
98 squat when compared to the other, more elegant, types of columns. Doric  
110 architecture was widely used by the Spartans.

117 The second type of column is the Ionic. Ionic columns are lighter  
129 than the Doric and have two curly scrolls that border the ends at each  
143 side of the capital. Ionic columns are more slender than Doric  
154 columns and have large bases. They are simple, yet decorative.

164 The Corinthian columns are similar to the Ionian columns in  
174 shape. However, the Corinthian columns are elaborately decorated. They  
183 are decorated with carvings of leaf-like structures, which appear to be  
195 flowering. The Corinthian columns were not as widely used as the Doric  
207 and the Ionic. The Roman Coliseum was built with all three types of  
220 Greek columns. The ground floor of the Coliseum is Doric, the first floor  
233 is Ionic, and the second and third floors are Corinthian. The influence of  
246 Greek architecture can be found in many places all over the world.  
258

Total Words Read \_\_\_\_\_  
- Errors \_\_\_\_\_  
= CWPM \_\_\_\_\_

Practice Passages **175**

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## Appendix C

PRACTICE PASSAGE 802

**Where in the World Did They Get Their Names?**

0        Places all over the world have unusual names. The stories behind  
11        how they got their names are sometimes funny, descriptive, and strange.  
22        For example, centuries ago, the owner of Blarney Castle in Ireland talked  
34        an enemy out of attacking his castle by using clever words and flattery.  
47        People who are clever with words, know how to flatter others, and talk  
60        their way out of trouble are said to have kissed the Blarney Stone. Today,  
74        tourists come from all over the world to kiss the Blarney Stone and get  
88        the gift of gab!

92        The Amazon River is another example of an interesting name  
102        origin. The Amazon, in South America, is the world's second-longest  
113        river. Spanish explorers discovered the river. South American natives,  
122        wearing tall headdresses and grass skirts, attacked them. The natives  
132        reminded the Spanish of the Greek legend about tall women warriors.  
143        These women warriors were called Amazons, so the explorers named the  
154        river the Amazon.

157        The Pacific Ocean was named by a Spanish explorer named  
167        Magellan. Magellan found the ocean to be very peaceful. So he named  
179        it the Pacific Ocean after the Spanish word for "peaceful." It is ironic  
192        because the Pacific Ocean is probably the stormiest ocean. Magellan must  
203        have been lucky enough to sail when the ocean was calm.  
214

Total Words Read \_\_\_\_\_  
- Errors \_\_\_\_\_  
= CWPM \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix D

PRACTICE PASSAGE 803

### Ben Franklin: Scientist and Inventor

0 Ben Franklin was our country's first scientist and inventor. Ben  
10 was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 17, 1706. Ben's father  
21 immigrated to America from England. His father opened a shop where he  
33 made soap and candles. As a young boy, Ben always enjoyed science. He  
46 was interested in everything around him. One of Ben's most helpful and  
58 practical inventions was his Franklin stove. His stove improved heating in  
69 colonial homes. It helped to make the early American homes much more  
81 comfortable during the cold winter months. Ben's invention also helped  
91 create a huge stove-building industry in America.

99 Ben was also interested in electricity. He was fascinated by lightning  
110 and wondered how it worked. By flying a kite with a metal key attached  
125 to it during a thunderstorm, Ben proved that lightning was actually  
136 electricity. He also invented the lightning rod, which saved many homes  
149 from fire. The lightning rod sends the electrical charge away from the  
162 building so it doesn't cause it to catch on fire. When Ben published his  
175 book, *Observations in Electricity*, he became famous all over the world.

183 Ben was instrumental in starting the science of weather prediction.  
193 Ben Franklin also studied and invented many other common objects we  
205 still use today. Bifocal glasses, corn brooms, and the platform rocker are  
217 just some of the many inventions that sprang from Ben's brilliant mind.  
229 He helped farmers by showing them how to add lime to their fields to  
243 grow better crops. Ben Franklin also helped to write our Declaration of  
254 Independence, and served as America's first ambassador to England. He  
265 was a very talented man and a great American.  
273

Total Words Read \_\_\_\_\_  
- Errors \_\_\_\_\_  
= CWPM \_\_\_\_\_

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Practice Passages 177

## Appendix E

PRACTICE PASSAGE 804

### Anasazi Apartments

0 In 1888, an exciting discovery was made in southwestern Colorado.  
10 Two cowboys were crossing a mesa on horseback. They were searching  
21 for lost cattle. They came to the edge of a large canyon and gazed over it.  
37 The cowboys were amazed to see something that looked like a large city  
50 hanging off the cliffs! These two cowboys, Richard Wetherill and Charlie  
61 Mason, were the first to discover what appeared to be ancient apartment  
73 houses. The houses were made of adobe, clay, sand, and bits of straw.  
86 The cowboys called them "Cliff Palace." Scientists came to study Cliff  
97 Palace. The scientists discovered that these cliff-like apartment houses  
107 were probably built around A.D. 1200. The scientists determined that  
117 Cliff Palace had 151 rooms with 23 kivas. Kivas are special rooms built  
130 underground. The Anasazi tribes most likely built Cliff Palace. "Anasazi"  
140 is a Navajo Indian word that means "ancient ones."  
149 Special scientists called archeologists studied the tower-like  
157 structures, hoping for clues about the people who lived in them.  
168 Archeologists believe that the Anasazi built their cliff dwellings to protect  
179 themselves from their enemies. However, it seems that these tribes only  
190 lived in the apartment-like structures for 75 to 100 years. By A.D. 1300,  
204 the Anasazi had migrated to other places. Scientists have many theories  
215 as to why the tribes abandoned their homes. However, they may never  
227 know the real reason behind the move.  
234 Today the Cliff Palace is preserved in Mesa Verde National Park.  
245 Mesa Verde National Park is the only national park that protects and  
257 preserves manmade structures such as these ancient cliff dwellings.  
266 Visitors to the park can view over 4,000 historical ruins. These tours can  
279 be strenuous though. The cliff dwellings are located at about 7,000 feet  
291 in elevation. Tourists must hike 100 feet into a steep canyon. Once inside  
304 Cliff Palace, four tall ladders must be climbed. A trip into Cliff Palace is  
318 only recommended for people in good physical condition!  
326

Total Words Read \_\_\_\_\_  
- Errors \_\_\_\_\_  
= CWPM \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix F

PRACTICE PASSAGE 805

### Animals: How Do We Tell Them Apart?

0        There are over one million kinds or species of animals on our earth.  
13       With that many species of animals, it was important for scientists to find  
26       some way to group the species in order to tell them apart. After studying  
40       many different ways, scientists decided to use bones as the first big way  
53       to group animals.  
56       If an animal has its bones inside its body, including a backbone, it  
69       belongs in the group called vertebrates. If an animal has no bones inside  
82       its body and does not have a backbone, it belongs to the group called  
96       invertebrates. If you think about bones and whether or not a particular  
108      animal has them, you will always know whether an animal is a vertebrate  
121      or an invertebrate. For example, the bear, the cow, and the alligator are  
134      vertebrates because their bones are inside their bodies. They also have a  
146      backbone. On the other hand, the jellyfish, the fly, and the earthworm are  
159      all invertebrates because they have no bones inside their bodies and no  
171      backbones. There are many more invertebrates than vertebrates on our  
181      earth.  
182      After scientists decided on these two main groups for classifying  
192      animals, they then made other decisions. They looked at each group  
203      separately. They then further divided the two big groups into smaller  
214      groups by looking at other differences. For example, one group of  
225      vertebrates was called mammals because the mother feeds her babies  
235      with milk from her body. If vertebrates have feathers and have wings,  
247      they are a group called birds. If vertebrates have dry skin and scales, they  
261      belong to the reptile group. But because they all have bones inside their  
274      bodies, they all belong to the large group called vertebrates.  
284

Total Words Read \_\_\_\_\_  
- Errors \_\_\_\_\_  
= CWPM \_\_\_\_\_  
Practice Passage 805 179

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## Appendix G

PRACTICE PASSAGE 808

**Ancient Greeks: Ancestors of Today**

0        What does modern life in the 21st century have in common with the  
13        civilization of ancient Greece? You may be surprised to find out just how  
26        many similarities exist. The ancient Greek civilization existed between  
35        500 and 323 B.C. This time in history was known as the classical Greek  
49        period. Ancient Greek influence is prevalent in our modern times. The  
60        Greeks can be credited with the beginning of western civilization. For  
71        instance, the ancient Greeks were the founders of democracy as we know  
83        it today. In Athens, around 510 B.C., the citizens decided that the people  
96        would have a say in how they were governed. The word "democracy"  
108        comes from two Greek words that together mean "rule of the people."  
120        Many of the government buildings in the United States are modeled after  
132        Greek architecture. This probably reflects Greek influence in government  
141        as well as in design. Greek architects designed beautiful structures using  
152        columns to support the roof.

157        Greek influence can also be seen in the arts. High school students  
169        today read the epic poems The Odyssey and The Iliad, written by the  
182        Greek author Homer. Epic poems are very long poems that describe the  
194        brave deeds of heroes. Greek theater is still enjoyed today as well. The  
207        Greeks were famous for developing Greek tragedies and Greek comedies.  
217        The Greek tragedies are ageless because they deal with human behavior.  
228        The Greek comedy, particularly in the form of political satire, is still in  
241        vogue.

242        Greek philosophers were known as great thinkers. They did  
251        not accept the common explanation of the time that the Greek gods  
263        were responsible for all events. Instead, they searched for answers by  
274        questioning. The techniques developed by the famous Greek philosopher  
283        Socrates are still used in colleges today.

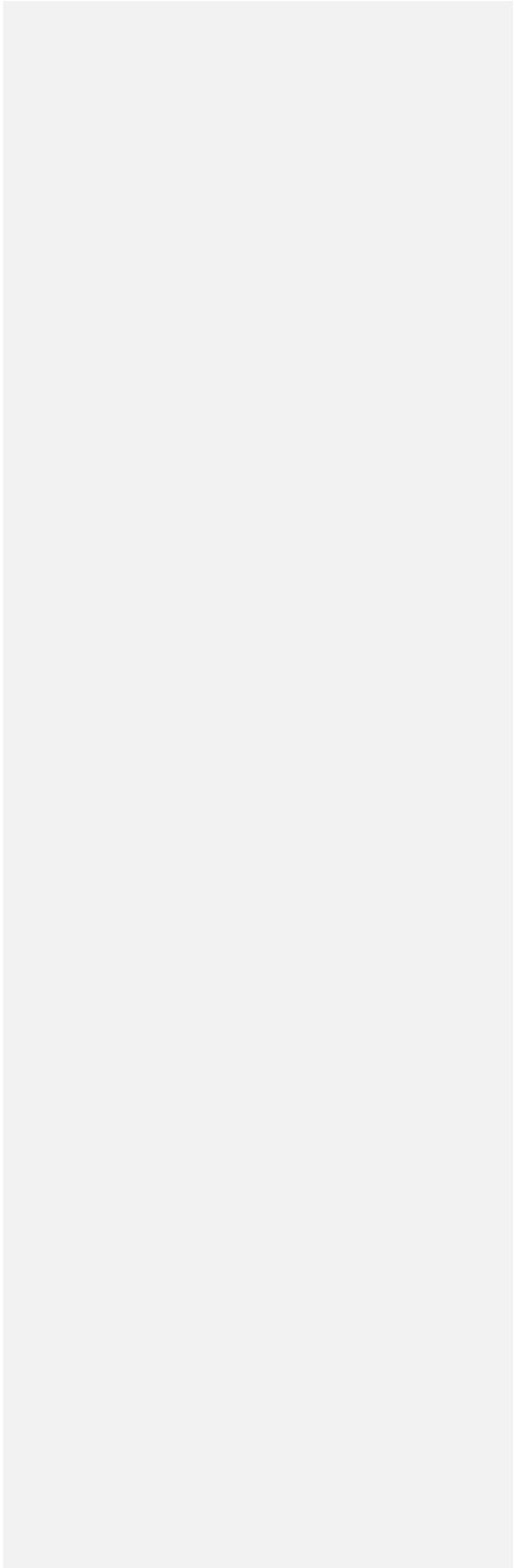
290

Total Words Read \_\_\_\_\_  
- Errors \_\_\_\_\_  
= CWPM \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix H

	Week		Week	week	Week	Week
Student Name	1	Week 2	3	4	5	6
Student 1						
Student 2						
Student 3						
Student 4						
Student 5						
Student 6						
Student 7						
Student 8						
Student 9						
Student 10						
Student 11						
Student 12						
Student 13						
Student 14						
Student 15						



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The sources cited in this literature review provide insight into the change in the common core standards in regards to language arts. That shift has gone from a skills based approach to learning, to more real world, critical thinking approach. The focus of the sources also covers text complexity and its role and impact on teachers and in the classroom. From these sources, one can gain insight into how text complexity plays a major role on how students learn, yet how teachers are being ill-prepared to deal with the components in their entirety, one must take into account to be an effective teacher.

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