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What Alternative Reading Curriculums Are Available For Students Who Have Not Made Adequate Progressing Using Tier 1 And Tier 2 Interventions?

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WHAT ALTERNATIVE READING CURRICULUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR

STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT MADE ADEQUATE PROGRESS

USING TIER 1 AND TIER 2 INTERVENTIONS?

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I have been an emotional/ behavioral special education teacher for thirteen years.

The past nine have been in the same elementary school. Each year I have been asked

to teach more and more academic classes and less social skills classes. Knowing most

of the students I work with struggle with emotional and behavioral regulation and

academics, I gladly accepted the 'academic teaching' role. Over the years I have

noticed many students (both regular and special education) just didn't 'get' reading and

continued to get further and further behind their peers widening the achievement gap as

they got older. My school has a few different alternate reading interventions or curriculums to

use but what I really wanted to know and research was: What alternative reading curriculums

are available for students who have not made adequate progress using Tier 1 and Tier 2

interventions. This chapter will explain the researcher's background and experiences that has

led to the research question: What alternative reading curriculums are available for students

who have not made adequate progress using Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. You will read

about several students and learning experiences that have helped shape who I am as a

teacher. You will also read about a population of students who needed alternate programs to

succeed. Keeping in mind that each learner is unique, this chapter will provide the rationale of

why is it important to

understand and use evidence based interventions that are specific to each

individual students need.

Researcher's Background

The First Years

My first three years of teaching were in a brand-new school on the outskirts of a prosperous little town. Looking back, although not really knowing what to do, that was by far my easiest position and group of children to teach. Being trained in emotional and behavior disorders, there were very few courses on planning and teaching reading, writing, or math to students. Instead my coursework focused on how to write behavior intervention plans, warning signs of mental illness, special education law for restrictive procedures, etc. I knew very little about report cards, standards, or parent/teacher conferences, I was just beginning to learn all the special education laws. At this school, I mainly taught social skills with very few academics classes. Despite my naivety, the low caseload numbers, and limited acting out behaviors, those first three years were by far my easiest teaching position. The seclusion room inside of my classroom was never used for seclusion purposes, but instead a fun reward spot to play with a bouncy ball.

During this time period I had the opportunity to meet some children who had some bizarre/odd behaviors. A few of these odd behaviors included a little guy who was obsessed with electrical cords; drew them and talked about them obsessively; a little girl who did extremely inappropriate actions in her kindergarten class throughout

the day, and another little guy who kept repeating the same phrases over and over again. As the only Emotional and Behavior Disorder teacher in the school, many teachers and parents looked toward me for advice with these unique behaviors that I had never seen in any children, ever. Knowing I was in way over my head and needed some help, I consulted the district autism specialist for her advice. After several 'please help calls,' she suggested I join an autism cohort that was starting soon. I do not know if she suggested I join the cohort so I would stop bugging her with my myriad of questions or because she was teaching some of the courses. Either way, I joined and received my Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) teaching certificate. Taking these courses increased my understanding of autism and I began to look at behaviors from a different perspective. I learned and practiced how to increase positive behaviors and in turn decrease unwanted behaviors by modifying environments and putting supports in place. That knowledge was exactly what I needed to be an effective teacher who worked with the most severe emotionally, dysregulated students. I had great instructors who took the time to discuss real life situations and dilemmas that occur with students on the autism spectrum. I absorbed all I could and made changes or modifications to students programming as I learned new information or teaching strategies.

A great lesson

The following year I taught in a tiny, self-contained classroom with five boys ranging from 2nd-4th grade all with a diagnosis of emotional/ behavioral disorder. Although having a pretty good foundational knowledge of emotions and behavior

disorders and new experience with students with autistic behaviors, I still knew very little

about teaching academics. In hindsight, I should not have assumed my students could

successfully handle grade level materials (most all of the students in the past setting

were at grade level or slightly behind). That was a big mistake on my part, never

assume! After many, many melt downs and restrictive procedures, I finally had an 'aha'

moment and found instructional materials using my gut instincts of what I thought might

be the appropriate level. This helped lower the number meltdowns, by in no way

eliminate all of them. I stayed in this position for only one year as I soon realized, it was

not a good fit for me. The seclusion room in this setting was used daily multiple times

for seclusion purposes. No bouncy balls in this seclusion room. During this year I

gained a lot of experience with students who have severe emotional and behavioral

disorders.

My Current Journey

The following year I joined an elementary school as the second Emotional and

Behavioral Disorder (EBD) teacher in the building and the first to have formal

ASD training. I have been in my current position for the past eight years and currently

teach only academic subjects. Since social skills are a huge component of educational

success I cannot help but imbed social skill lessons into my academic teachings.

Students I teach have been given the educational label of EBD, ASD, SLD (specific

learning disabilities), or OHD (other health disabilities, such as ADHD). I strongly feel

that the more I know, the more purposeful my teaching is, which enhances student learning

and success. For the most part, although a very needy school and position, my school is a

great place to work. The purpose of my capstone questions stems from a lack of cohesion of

reading curriculum, interventions and philosophies. Reading interventions, content, and

curriculum used to teach struggling and low achieving students are not aligned to match

reading deficits to specific interventions. Differing teaching philosophies impact how and what

skills are taught to students. My hopes are to provide a list of evidence based reading

curriculums or interventions to target specific reading needs. This resource may help guide

educators when making decisions for

students who struggle with reading.

Capstone Questions

What alternative reading curriculums are available for students who have not made

adequate progress using Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions?

The Rationale

In this chapter, I shared my experiences working in a school system with a high

population of special education students in a poor neighborhood with endless struggles. With

many needs and limited resources, the word 'individual' is too often forgotten and students are

clumped together to meet IEP (Individual Education Plan) service minutes. I often wonder if my

school has the resources to meet our great needs or if resources can be better utilized to meet the needs? Since my school's reading scores needs to improve, and I am teaching reading to students who are at least two grade levels behind their peers, I have chosen to research evidence based practices for students who struggle with reading. My hope is that this guide may help curriculum and intervention decision making.

A Great Need

My current school is near the downtown of a small city with a high population of poverty stricken families. There are many trailer parks and apartment complexes nearby. There are nice neighborhood parks but it is not advised to be there after dark. My school has a fenced in playground as it sits nestled between a busy highway and the Mississippi River. Because the fear of vandalism or potentially dangerous debris being left on the playground, it is locked up after school. Besides educating a student population where over 60% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch, we also have the largest population of special education students. About 1:4 students in my school are receiving some sort of special education services ranging from a daily check-in lasting 2-5 minutes, to an all-day setting in a specialized classroom. Even though my school has the greatest special education student population and the largest overall population in the district, we seem to have less special education teachers and educational supports compared to other schools in the district. This struggle and

conversation occurred before I joined the team and still continues to this day. Thankfully more

supports have been added and our special education team, but the struggles are still

numerous..

My school is a busy place with a lot of traditions and great staff that work hard

every day to make a difference in the lives of our students. Our school building and staff

are the best part of many students' day. It is a great place to work and many give their

heart and soul, but it is a very stressful place, and at times have thought of leaving. There are

other much easier, less stressful places to work, even ones that are closer to my home. Yet as

each year goes by, I feel more connected and tell myself, "Next year will be better". After a

summer of 'recharging', I enter the school year with a positive

attitude and share ideas of how to organize systems, hopefully to help alleviate stressful

situations and make better use of the most precious resource...time.

What I noticed

When I first began teaching at my current school, there were only four special

education teachers and each teacher took care of their own caseload of students with

some teaming to support academic needs. Transition times, such as getting kids to

buses were a frantic mess each afternoon with adults going back and forth to classrooms

multiple times to get a student for a particular bus. It was chaos, (in my opinion) every

afternoon, especially at the beginning of the school year. I knew there was a more efficient way

to gather children and get them down the hall. I made a chart of students and their location in the building and suggested adults work together to get the students to the bus instead of going back and forth. That idea went over well with my colleagues and soon a smooth end of the day procedure was in place.

Looking back, I have created and maintained several organizational tools, checklists and other such systems to help my school. I organized the RTI (Response to Intervention) calendar for our school, created an assessment schedule for all special education students, and maintained master daily schedules of regular education, special education teachers, and educational assistants for multiple grade levels. I did this with the hope of effectively scheduling student IEP minutes we are obligated to provide with the time and resources we have. All of the organizational tools I created and shared offered an organized system to lessen teacher stress and to help unify resources. To work together 'smarter' rather than working harder alone.

My school currently has over 100 special education students that need some sort of academic and/or social skills class. These students are in 26 different general education classrooms. Each with different schedules. The resources available to teach these academic and social skills classes include ten special education teachers and 30 educational assistants. As mentioned earlier, the 'individual' in IEP is often not individualized and students are clumped into groups to meet service minutes. Many special education teachers in my building have expressed concerns of group sizes

being too big or not being able to meet needs. Continued advocating has paid off and

an additional special education teacher position was added to our building, but at the

expense of losing three educational assistant positions. Chapter 2 explores the most recent

literature to answer the capstone question: What evidence based interventions are available

for students who struggle with reading and have not made adequate progress with Tier 1 or 2

interventions.

Summary

My first and foremost hope is to increase students' achievements in reading. If

teachers have access and use researched based interventions that are individualized to

meet a specific reading need, student achievement should increase in conjunction with

positive support plans. My hope is this document will be a useful and easy tool to help

team members make educational decisions and to advocate for evidence based

resources to use with students who continue to struggle with reading.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to assist in answering the questions: What alternative reading curriculums are available for students who have not made adequate progress using Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions? My goal is to help guide decisions that directly impact student learning and seek opportunities to share with my colleagues what the current research indicates will help struggling readers. In this chapter, I explore current evidence based researched teaching and learning strategies for elementary students who are not making adequate progress with Tier I or Tier 2 interventions. Students that I hope will benefit from this literary review are those who struggle with reading and writing and may have a comorbid educational Diagnosis. This may include ASD (autism spectrum disorder), EBD (emotional or behavioral disorder), SLD (specific learning disability), OHD (other health disabilities) such as ADD (attention deficit disorder), ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). The intent is to assist students confronted with multiple challenges, along with reading and writing.

Neuro-typical students who learn quickly, have an age appropriate maturity level, and who thrive in most educational settings were not researched. Nor were those with extreme behaviors and/or those with very low IQ's. My quest is to better understand a way to

provide a more purposeful, intense instruction to the majority of the special education

population, with the understanding that each student faces a unique set of challenges. My goal

is to create a menu of interventions for each specific reading need a student may exhibit.

Using the most recent evidence based strategies, this guide would hopefully assist regular and

special education teachers in determining what a best practice intervention would include for

each student's reading deficit.

Struggling Readers

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, Special Education Policy

Division, 2015, the term 'struggling reader' or 'reading below grade level' is

characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor

spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties are often from a deficit in the

phonological component and/ or an auditory process of language that is often

unexpected in the relation to other near typical cognitive abilities. A variety of terms are used in

different fields (research, medical, psychology, and educational) to describe reading

behaviors/abilities, this causes some confusion for parents and teachers. The term and

diagnosis of dyslexia comes from clinical psychologist and health care professionals who

diagnose using the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition.*. In the educational field

and in this paper, the term struggling reader, reading disorder, or Specific Learning Disability

(SLD) are all synonymous with the medical term dyslexia.

Adequate Progress

The term 'adequate progress' used in my capstone question is described by the federal government as the amount of progress that is adequate to enable a low-achieving child to meet high performance standards expected of all children. If a student is already below grade level expectations in reading, in theory, that student will have to make more reading growth or gains to 'catch-up' and be successful with grade appropriate materials. From my experiences, many students who are below grade level in reading do make gains, but not at an accelerated rate. Their growth trend is much slower, so as they advance in years the learning gap widens between the low- and typical achieving student. This typically causes the low-achieving student to fall further and further behind. The term 'adequate progress' for the purposes of this paper is at least one year's reading growth but of course with the goal of more than a year's growth.

Reading Debate

The topic of reading is one that has been discussed and debated for well over 50 years. Some educators strongly believe in and use the 'whole language' approach to teach students, while others believe direct instruction and getting 'back to the basics' is the best method. Some teachers feel bound to curriculums and teaching to fidelity, while others use adaptations or modifications as needed to increase student participation and

productivity. Reading and writing requirements continue to increase in complexity on

state standards and report cards, often because of this teachers feel bound to teach these

higher level reading and writing skills before a student has mastered the basic foundational

skills. This only frustrates students and teachers. Since this division of ideological theories

exists, there continues to be controversy when making decisions for our neediest and most

complex learners. Should we and teach our neediest students what a district has delegated as

core (needed) curriculum or teach students the skills they are lacking regardless of grade or

age level?

Essential Elements of Reading

Reading is a complex process that requires a student to understand how to

decode the written text, process the information, then produce the sounds of each word

in a fluent manner with expression and self-correction; all for the main goal of

comprehension, but also for the enjoyment of reading. Neuro-typical students can make

this amazingly difficult process seem effortless, while students who struggle with

reading, will continue to experience reading problems unless he/she is provided with a

scientific based intervention program. Griffiths and Stuart concluded these five main

ingredients as the essential elements to teach struggling readers, (1) phonological

awareness, (2) phonics, (3) text reading/fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) comprehension

strategies. Cook & Cook agree and has cautioned that "research is never absolute but

is strengthen as findings from multiple studies converge" (p.47). Meaning, we as educators must continually assess to instruct, while always using current research available. Assessing and measuring student knowledge should be used to identify and guide evidence based interventions to address each reading deficit individually in order to converge skills into a fluent and comprehending reader.

The Minnesota Department of Education developed a frequently asked questions manual titled, *Navigating the School System When a Child is Struggling with Reading or Dyslexia* in 2015. In this publication, researchers conclude that dyslexia is a learning disability that is neurologically based and is characterized by deficits in accurate and/or fluent word recognition. Most often the difficulties in reading stem from the most basic foundational skill of phonological awareness (hearing of sounds) deficits and/or a delay in processing of auditory information. Research from the National Center on Learning Disabilities (NCLD,2015) suggest that 1 in 5 students is affected by dyslexia and go undiagnosed.

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) in conjunction with the National Reading Panel (NRP) reviewed over 100,000 reading research studies. This was in response to the 2000 Congressional mandate in order to address the reading failures of our country. The NRP first examined the research to ensure it met several of the following important criteria. The research needed to address achievement of one or more skills in reading.

The research had to be generalized to the larger population of students. Experimental research approach determined the effectiveness of both study groups. For example, a researcher could study the effectiveness of repeated reading compared to a sample group not using repeated readings. Finally, the research needed to be regarded as high quality, meaning it had been reviewed by scholars from relevant fields and judged to be worthy of publication.

The NRP concluded and supports Griffiths and Stuart's findings, stating **phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension** are the five essential areas of reading. The NRP created a guide, *Put Reading First,* summarized what researchers discovered about how to successfully teach children to read. This guide was designed to help teachers and administrators guide instruction with proven strategies in the classroom. It addresses the challenge of helping all children become better readers. Each of the five essential elements of reading are described and defined below.

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is a broad term that includes phonemic awareness which describes the ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. Phonemic awareness skills provide oral instruction teaching children

to notice, think, and manipulate spoken sounds. These interventions are described as those that increase a student's awareness of sounds at the word level (eg. dig, dug, dog). Interventions that target phonological awareness should include decomposing text (eg. "cat "as /k/ /a/ /t/), according to Sebasions & Suggates: *Meta-Analysis of the Long Term Effects of Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, and Reading Comprehension Interventions* (2014). A study in this journal concluded that phonemic awareness drills *help all readers. In his book, School Success for Kids with Dyslexia & Other Reading Difficulties* (2013), Dunson writes in order for students to become independent readers, they must have the ability to identify and visually imagine the number, order, and identity of sounds and letters within a word (p.47). For example, in order to read or write the word 'fast', a reader must know there are four sounds, the order of the four sounds, and have letter to sound correspondence. He concludes that phonological awareness instruction should include these five key skills:

● Phoneme replication: the ability to repeat a sound heard;

● Blending: the ability to join a string of phonemes together to create a word;

● Segmenting: the ability to break a word into its individual phonemes;

● Substitution/Deletion: the ability to replace a phoneme with a new phoneme or

   remove a phoneme altogether to create a new word

● Rhyming: the ability to create and hear words with the same rhyme.

The 2009 journal in the *Institute of Education Science* supports Dunson's more recent findings that states "Tier 3 instruction should often focus on phonological awareness skills, decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary building (p.27).

The Put Reading First publication shared these key findings from the scientific research on phonemic awareness instruction. They conclude phonemic awareness instruction should teach a variety of activities that include:

● Phoneme isolation - ability to recognize individual sounds in a word

● Phoneme identity - ability to recognize the same sound in different words

● Phoneme categorization - ability to recognize the word in a set of three or four
   words that has an 'odd' sound.

● Phoneme blending - ability to sequence spoken phonemes in a sequential order
   to form a word

● Phoneme segmentation - ability to break a word into its separate sounds, tapped
   or counted out when reading or writing a word

● Phoneme deletion - ability to recognize a new word remains when deleting
   phonemes (sounds) from original word

● Phoneme addition - ability to add phonemes to create a new word

● Phoneme substitution - ability to replace one phoneme for another to create a

new word. These activities are scientific researched based and have been proven to help

children read. Phonemic awareness strategies help students become better spellers and increases comprehension, according to the *Put Reading First* campaign. Comprehension is proven to be correlated to reading words rapidly. Since phonemic awareness skills increase students' ability to read and write words, comprehension is also positively impacted, (Armbruster et. al, 2001).

Phonemic awareness skills are taught beginning in preschool and continue into the kindergarten year. Some students seem to acquire these skills, blending and segmenting two and three letter words with ease. Other students need each individual skill taught in a systematic fashion to master these skills. Researchers involved in *Put Reading First* studies advise phonemic awareness skills in conjunction with a comprehensive reading program are more effective when taught before 2nd grade.

Examples of non-systematic program of phonics instruction, according to the *Put Reading First* foundation, are literature based programs that focus on reading and writing activities. Phonics are usually imbedded into literature based programs but are taught incidentally. Basal reading programs focus on whole word activities and pay very little attention to letter-sound relationships.

According to the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), there are only three curriculums or interventions proven to positively increase students' phonological awareness abilities. They include *Phonological Awareness Training, Phonological Awareness Training and Letter Knowledge Training,* and *Literacy Express.* All are pre-kindergarten curriculums. Ready, Set,

Leap is also a pre-kindergarten curriculum that received a 'potentially positive' review for increasing phonemic awareness from the WWC. As of November 2017, there are no interventions or curriculums listed on WWC that have been positively proven to increase phonological awareness skills in elementary students, however there are several independent studies that have positive results.

Phonics

After students master phonemic awareness skills, phonics instruction should begin. Phonics teaches students the relationship between written language and the spoken sounds of a language. Phonics instruction teaches a student how to decode written words by sounding them out or 'blending'. Phonics instruction should work in conjunction with phonological awareness skills previously taught. According to the *Journal of Research in Reading* (2013), Griffiths and Stuart suggest there is now a wealth of evidence that concludes programs for children identified as 'at-risk', or students receiving Tier 2 intervention, should receive a more intensive instruction in a phonics based program before grade 2. Phonics programs should include explicit teaching that is structured and systematic.

Key findings from research on phonics concludes "systematic and explicit instruction is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction", (Armbruster et. al). Effective systematic phonics instruction teaches students the relationship between letters and sounds, how to break apart spoken words into sounds, and how to blend sounds together. Instruction should teach the student why the letter/sound relationship is

important and help them apply what they have learned in their own writing. Phonics instruction can be adapted to meet the individual needs of students and can be taught in a small or large group settings (2001).

Non-systematic programs of phonics instruction include literature based programs (whole language approach). Although phonics may be embedded into the reading instruction, the letter/word correspondence taught in the phonics lesson only occurs a few times in story books. Systematic reading programs focus on letter combinations or spelling patterns within the reading passage to practice reading and writing of targeted letter combinations or spelling patterns. Basal reading programs that focus on word or meaning based activities and sight word programs that teach students sight words before mastering the alphabetic principle are examples of non-systematic phonics programs.

According to the What Works Clearinghouse there are several curriculums and/or interventions that have met WWC rigorous research standards and have proven to have a positive effect on increasing students' knowledge and use of phonics skills in reading and writing. They include Success for All, Daisy Quest, Earobics, Reading Recovery, Sound Partners, and Stepping Stones to Literacy. These curriculums or interventions are geared toward elementary students ranging from kindergarten to 5th grade. Two of the interventions are totally computer based programs. These include Daisy Quest and Earobics. Reading Recovery, Sound Partners, and Stepping Stones are taught in a 1:1 setting.

Only one curriculum/intervention, Success for All, can be delivered in small group and

has a computer aided component.

Fluency

Fluency is described as the ability to read text quickly and accurately. Text

reading and fluency have been well researched to have a positive effect on comprehension.

When a student can read a passage fluently he/she is more apt to

spend more time comprehending the text than decoding the words. A student's ability

to phrase and read with expression is all related to the student's ability to read fluently.

Fluent readers focus more of their attention on making connections about the text

and their background knowledge. Less fluent readers use more of their attention

decoding the text leaving little attention available for comprehending the passage.

A recent large-scale study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP) discovered 44% of all fourth-grade students scored low on fluency measures.

However, Lee and Yoon's most current findings have found that repeated reading of

passages does increase speed and ultimately comprehension of the passage. It is

estimated that 85% of students who have been diagnosed with a Learning Disability

have low fluency scores, (2017).

A research study conducted at both the University of Oregon, Eugene and the

University of Texas at Austin studied the effects of additional instruction time for the most at-risk students during a student's 1st grade year. This study concluded along with phonics, word recognition, and passage comprehension, repeated reading did indeed have a positive correlation to a student's overall increased reading abilities. Currently there is no research evidence available to support silent or independent reading to improve reading fluency or overall reading achievement for students who have been diagnosed with a reading learning disability. Direct fluency instruction is especially important for students who struggle with reading.

According to the What Works Clearinghouse only two curriculums/interventions meet their rigorous standards and was ranked as having a positive effect on increasing fluency in struggling readers. Sound Partners is an individually administered intervention that also had positive results in increasing phonics in students who struggle with reading. The Read Naturally program has been proven to increase fluency with its repeated reading activities of passages. Read Naturally can be delivered individual, in a small group, and has a computer component that models fluent reading, tracks data, and is motivating to elementary students.

Fluency interventions may include student and adult reading shared reading activities with adult modeling fluent reading. Choral reading allows students to read together as a group with a teacher or other fluent reader leading the reading. Pattern sentences, nursery rhymes, or predictable books are particularly useful. Tape or computer

aided reading programs that allow students to follow and read along with are useful tools to for modeling and practicing of fluency. Partner reading and reader's theater are fun and engaging ways to motivate students to read and re-read texts, thus increasing fluency. Glasgow and Farrell suggest teachers provide scripts, plays, poems, or songs as an effective fluency intervention.

Vocabulary and Oral Language Skills

Vocabulary and oral language skills increase comprehension of both oral and written text. Research tells us that most vocabulary is learned indirectly but in some instances vocabulary must be explicitly taught. Children learn vocabulary or oral

language in three ways: Adults engaging students in dialog, listening to adults read, and extensive reading themselves all assist in increasing vocabulary words. Vocabulary skills can be explicitly taught by using conversations through the use of picture cards to discuss, predict or wonder; and questioning strategies that ask who, what, when, where, and why. Read-alouds in small group settings allow for greater exchanges between teacher and student. Teacher to student dialogue utilizes a student's prior knowledge and life experiences. This also builds upon and strengthens a student's understanding of a word and/or concept (Dunson, 2013). This back and forth dialog can also diminish misunderstood meanings of words or concepts.

Vocabulary strategies can also be used as individual student work. This may include using target words in a sentence, match meanings to words, fill in the blanks, visual drawings of vocabulary words, or technology to name a few classroom interventions, through any of

these activities, classroom teachers can purposefully target vocabulary skill deficits in struggling learners. Teachers should closely monitor students independent work to ensure that they are not practicing wrong or inaccurate information.

Teachers should directly teach students word learning strategies such as how to use dictionaries and other reference materials, how to use information from word parts, and how to use context clues to determine word meaning.

Currently there are no curriculums or interventions listed on the What Works Clearinghouse website that positively increases and target vocabulary words and concepts for elementary students. However, there are two pre-kindergarten curriculums ranked as having a positive effect on increasing students' vocabulary and oral language deficits. These include *Dialogic Reading* and *Literacy Express. Dialogic Reading* can be delivered either in an individual intervention or in a small group setting. *Literacy Express* can be used group intervention or in a small group.

Comprehension

Comprehension strategies use 'whole language' approach to teach reading according to Suggate (2014). Whole language reading strategies teach students to infer both word and sentence meaning as well as using decoding strategies based on contextual clues. According to Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, (2012) when using

questioning strategies, students should ask themselves these questions as they read

when they come to a word they do not know.

● Does that sound right?

● Does that look right?

● Does that make sense?

These types of questions are used universally by many teachers who use the 'whole language'

philosophy. Comprehension instruction should teach readers that reading has a purpose. To

learn something, to gather information, or for enjoyment. Good readers are taught to monitor

their own reading. To be aware of what they do understand and what they do not.

Comprehension instruction teaches students strategies to fix-up what they did not understand,

as well as teaching metacognition: thinking about reading.

Although the goal of the reading process is to extract meaning, many factors can

impede a student's reading comprehension abilities, especially those with a reading

disability. Comprehension according to Berkeley, Scruggs, and Mastropeiri, 2010,

requires a student to strategically process information as he/she decodes it, use

background knowledge to gain understanding, have and utilize vocabulary knowledge,

understand different text structures, and read the text fluently. All these are necessary

to understand what is read. Although more research is needed to fully understand

comprehension deficits in children, Duff and Clarke, (2011), noted in the *Journal of Child*

Psychology and Psychiatry, vocabulary training is a promising approach to increase comprehension skills (p.9).

Comprehension instruction should teach readers that reading has a purpose: To learn something, to gather information, or for enjoyment. Good readers are taught to monitor their own reading: To be aware of what they do understand and what they do not. Comprehension instruction teaches students strategies to fix-up what they did not understand. Readers need to think about reading.

According to the What Works Clearinghouse, there is only one curriculum or intervention that specifically targets and has a positive impact on increasing comprehension strategies with elementary age children who struggle with reading. *Success for All* is the only curriculum/ intervention listed that spans from pre-k to 8th grade. This is a whole school reform model that integrates curriculum, school culture, family, and community supports into the literacy program. Success for All was also proven to have positive effects in the area of phonics and overall reading achievement.

A Similar but Different Viewpoint

The Institute of Educational Sciences, (2009), stresses only three essential reading elements. They include: phonemic awareness, decoding, and comprehension strategies as the essential elements of teaching reading to struggling readers. They conclude phonemic awareness skills should be explicitly taught in a systematic way that includes phoneme

replication, blending, segmenting, substitution/ deletion, and rhyming

exercises. Decoding skills described by Griffiths & Stuart as a process of transferring

text into speech by recognizing letters and letter combinations to make syllables and

words (2013). Lastly, comprehension strategies should stress oral language skills and

vocabulary building. *The Journal of Learning Disabilities* concluded in a recent study

that word analysis (phonics, letter sound, phonemic awareness, and sight word), fluency

training and passage comprehension that is taught explicitly, (Harn, B. et. al, 2008),

increases most students' scores to the average range. This study included students

who scored in the low ranges, according to a nationally norm referenced academic

achievement assessment, and students who were considered struggling readers.

Although researchers continue to have differing opinions and data supporting

their theory of the essential elements of reading, all researchers agree phonemic

awareness skills are the first and foremost skills on a list of skills needed to be a successful

reader. They also conclude phonemic awareness and phonics lessons

should be taught in conjunction with each other in a direct and systematic fashion.

Reading fluency should be modeled and the student should be provided with opportunities for

repeated practice. Lastly, comprehension strategies should be directly taught and monitored.

Orton-Gillingham Approach

Walter Dunson writes in his article, *School Success for Kids With Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties,* about the positive benefits of using the Orton-Gillingham approach when teaching students who struggle with reading. This language based system is a multi-sensory approach with a systematic reading and writing program that teaches students by using their best learning style. The Orton-Gillingham program is also considered an emotionally sound intervention as is provides a high volume of success and corrective feedback. Curriculums that utilize this approach are diagnostic (continually assessing for mastery), prescriptive, and infinitely adaptable to meet any learners need. Dunson also suggests in his article that students who navigate between regular classroom and/or between resource room setting should use a 'student notebook' that is a fully functional resource guide for the student, maintained by the student. He suggests students use ink to imprint the permanence of learning. This guide should be carried and used during academic classes to help transfer reading and writing rules between two or more academic settings.

Susan Barton is an internationally recognized expert in dyslexia and has a multitude of case studies proving student success. She created the Barton Systems that follow the Orton-Gillingham approach which is 10 leveled multisensory intervention. Barton's systems are direct, explicit, structured, and sequential. As of November 2017, no studies have not been published on the What Works Clearinghouse, (no control groups were not established to compare data, one of WWC stipulations). Instead of using a control group, Barton compared

previous years reading growth without her intervention to post intervention reading growth. Barton has published 15 independent studies from public and private schools that provided intense intervention, 2-3 hours a week for a low reading achieving students, including special education students on IEP's, that increased student reading abilities by 2 years in 6 months time, (2017).

Multi-tier Interventions

Response to Intervention (RTI) or more recently referred to as the Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) are organizational systems designed to respond to students' needs. It is a system model designed to distribute intervention time and resources according to students' needs. Most RTI models are represented as a triangle and divided into 3 tiers. The lowest tier, Tier 1, is the instructional program that all students receive. This instruction is often referred to as 'core instruction'. The Tier 1 or 'core' instructional model should be sufficient to appropriately address 80% of a student population when delivered by a classroom teacher in a large group setting.

Tier 2 Intervention

The middle tier is comprised of 15% of a student population. Tier 2 students generally need more time to learn and practice Tier I instruction. This is often referred to

as preteaching and reteaching. In the *Journal of Research in Reading*, Griffiths and

Stuart describe Tier 2 as instruction that supplements and enhances Tier I instruction

and is generally done within the classroom. Tier 2 interventions have clear entrance

and exit criteria and instruction is usually provided in groups of three to five students for

15-20 weeks, for a minimum of three sessions per week. However, Tier 2 interventions that

include explicit teaching of grapheme-to-phoneme (letter to sound) correspondence in a

structured and systematic approach are the most effective way to increasing overall reading

achievement according to recent government funded reports in the United States and the

United Kingdom. These skills were most beneficial if mastered before a student completes 2nd

grade, (2013).

Tier 3 Instruction

This instruction is for those who have failed to respond, or make adequate

progress to Tier I instruction and Tier 2 intervention. This top 5% of a student population

requires a more frequent and intensive program that consists of a multi-disciplinary

evaluation of a student's learning needs. Harn and Roberts, researchers from

University of Oregon and University of Texas, respectively, conclude there is compelling

research indicating that groups of 3-5 students were as effective as 1:1 instruction.

They suggest that groups of 3-5 students is sufficient to meet the needs of most

learners, even the most-at-risk students. Before allocating 1:1 resources, schools could

try a less intensive instruction or reduce the group size to 1-3 students and reserve 1:1

instruction for the neediest and most complex students.

The U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Educational Sciences

suggested in their 2009 article, *Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response*

to Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in Primary Grades, that educators not

be too concerned about the tier differences. The tiers are merely a way to vary

recourses to match the nature of the deficit and intensity of the instructional need. They

suggest that a student receiving Tier 3 instruction, for example in phonological

awareness and fluency training can also receive a Tier 2 intervention that focus on

vocabulary and comprehension strategies.

Summary

The purpose of this literary review was help answer the question: What alternative

reading curriculums are available for students who have not made adequate progress using

Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Current research continues to

reinforce the theory suggesting five essential reading elements are needed in order to

master the complexities of reading. These elements include, phonological awareness,

phonics, text reading/ fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. Each essential

element was discussed and curriculums/interventions that specifically target each element was provided from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). The WWC reviews recent research findings and ensure rigorous standards were met to assist educators in making educational decisions for struggling learners. Students struggling with reading should receive a comprehensive assessment to determine their individual reading deficit and then receive an evidenced based intervention to address the deficit. Although there is no curriculum or intervention that encompasses all five-essential skill independently and in a cohesive manner, there are several that target specific reading deficits and thus increasing overall reading achievement. Students need a rich balance of varying types of text, with direct instruction in deficit areas. Students in Tier 3 need explicit and systematic instruction, with 1:1 instruction reserved for those students who are the neediest and most complex.

Researches in this literary review had differing, yet similar definitions and describing the necessary reading components to increase overall reading abilities in the

students who struggle with reading and have not made adequate progress with Tier I

and 2 interventions. The Orton-Gillingham approach was discussed and described as a

language based, multisensory, and systematic method to teach struggling readers

reading and writing rules. This approach has been proven to be effective in increasing

students who struggle with reading.

Lastly, MTSS (Multi-Tier System of Supports) was defined and examples of Tier

I, 2, and 3 were discussed. Tier I or 'core' is the instruction all students

either receive in a classroom setting. Tier 2 interventions are usually provided in the students regular classroom and often referred to pre- and re-teaching of the 'core' instruction. Interventions that focus on phonological awareness and phonics skills and delivered before the student ends the 2nd grade are most beneficial. Tier 3 instruction should be directly taught, systematic, and uses a multi-sensory approach that continually monitors student's individual learning needs.

The following chapter provides a description of my project. The intended audience will be included as well as how this project may assist guiding audience member's decisions. Several examples of misaligned or mismanaged interventions will be shared to describe how interventions may have a negative effect on student learning.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

To help answer the question what alternative reading curriculums are available for students who have not made adequate progress using Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. I created a guide of evidence based curriculums and interventions to address specific reading deficits. Since comorbidity rates of learning disability and other disorders are as high as 41%, as reported in the 2012 J*ournal of Learning Disabilities,* students may also need emotional, structural, and/or motivational adaptations to increase participation and willingness to learn . In his book, *School Success for Kids With Dyslexia & Other Reading Difficulties*, Dunson writes, educators must always keep in mind the most fundamental responsibility of school is to teach students how to read. My hope is to help educators look beyond philosophies and curriculums and instead look at each individual need to create an educational plan.

This chapter provides a description of the students whom this project was intended to benefit, and there may also those who use this information to help guide educational decisions, and determine why it is so important to align need with the intervention provided. Different frameworks and theories that support this project will be described along with evidence based curriculums and interventions for each of the five essential reading elements.

This project is intended to benefit any student who struggles with reading. According to Jenson,15% of all students have dyslexia and are undiagnosed, (2011). I am hoping any teacher (general education, special education, interventionist, etc.) may

utilize this project to help make educational decisions for struggling students. Students

may include those who have been diagnosed with a SLD, any processing disorder such

as Autism, ADHD, ADD, and those who are undiagnosed and continue to struggle with

reading. I believe having an agreed upon prioritized list of essential reading skills to master

and a menu of interventions that are evidence based could help guide decision making. Once

a hierarchy of skills is established, a team can create an individualized scope and sequence

for a struggling student to follow.

Why Is This Important?

I have attended too many meetings with teachers who have philosophical

differences about how and what to teach students when it comes to reading, without

taking into consideration a child's unique learning obstacles or deficits. Dunson writes, many

proponents of 'whole language' approach to reading believe since we speak a language by

immersion, the same should be true with reading printed words. They believe repeated

exposure to the printed language leads to the development of reading skills. However,

opponents

believe just as some children need to learn the rules of spoken language they also need

to learn the rules of written language, (2013).

Since differing opinions exist between educational circles, at times, teams are

unwilling to compromise or notice the benefit of both philosophies. From my

experiences, most struggling students are placed in a school wide, one size fits all intervention approach to reading. Any student who is not making adequate progress in reading receives more 'whole language' reading intervention, often using *Leveled Literacy Instruction* (LLI), *Reading Recovery,* or 'deeper reads'. More reading is always better than less reading, but more of the same type of reading will not help a student with a specific learning disability in reading or an undiagnosed student with dyslexia.

Too often, I have seen students enter into a 'whole language' reading intervention, such as *Reading Recovery* or *LLI,* only to return to the same whole language type intervention the following year. These students are given structure and support in a small group setting and may show limited or slow growth during the intervention. From my experiences, students with a reading disability or undiagnosed dyslexia have not made significant growth in whole language interventions and continue to struggle with reading and writing activities. Research suggest these students need to master the most basic fundamental reading skill of phonemic awareness and then move onto structured phonic lessons. Students provided whole language interventions do not retain reading skills taught. This often results in dropped reading levels over extended breaks such as, summer or Christmas break. This creates an even wider gap between student reading achievements. Students who are one or more years behind their peers in reading levels should be given an intervention that will *accelerate* their learning curve. I am hoping teachers, supported by administration, can begin to align interventions that match the student's specific need, rather than only using the 'whole language' approach interventions..

The reading philosophical wars that began in the 1980's (phonics and decoding

vs reading-for-meaning) has created such a divide in belief systems that it has

negatively impacted student learning in my school and district. Here are a few examples

of events that have taken place because instructors felt passionately about teaching students

to read using only one method and approach. In first grade, the lowest achieving students,

according to a district assessment, were provided *Reading Recovery.* This is a 1:1 tutoring

session that follows Marie Clay's Americanized version the infamous New Zealand *Reading*

Recovery (RR) program.

Misaligned and Mismanaged Interventions

One student who entered the *RR* program and also had an autism diagnosis had a

'calming' strategy of rocking his head from side to side. He bobbed his his head back and forth

from shoulder to shoulder. This student consistently bobbed his head. His

Reading Recovery teacher did not take into consideration the unique needs of this

learner with autism and instead followed the suggested guides to plan reading activities

according to the RR program. Since this student was not making adequate progress, this

teacher was sure his head bobbing behavior was impeding his reading abilities and proceeded

to try many different techniques to get this student to stop bobbing his head including holding

his head. This initially caused a huge meltdown, which continued during instruction with this

reading method, and thus made minimal reading growth was made. The following year this

student was placed in a phonics based program that focused on fluency. He made great

gains, even while bobbing his head.

Another young first grader had one of the lowest scores in the entire first grade population and was also placed in a RR intervention. This student had huge meltdowns which involved screaming, hitting, kicking, throwing and destroying things. This occurred 3-4 times per week during his intervention time. He would later share with me he didn't 'get' the reading. His RR teacher did not take into consideration he was not in an emotionally stable mindset to be able to understand, the work while controlling his emotions when frustrated. This student needed a reading program that would ensure a high rate of success . With careful scaffolding student's responsibility to minimize negative feelings occurring while he continues the learning process. This particular student's needs were not met by the one-size 'whole language' intervention option. The philosophy of this approach encourages students to 'figure out' what makes sense or is asked: "Does it 'look' or 'sound' right," when they came to an unknown word while reading. Because of his low vocabulary skills, this child did not have an accurate sense of what could be a logical correct response. Being wrong is sometimes very difficult to accept for a student diagnosed with an emotional/behavior disorder, and a reading disability. Guessing can lead to failing or perceived failing, which can easily cause an emotional meltdown. This student was not successful in this 'whole language' philosophy program.

These are extreme examples of mismatched student needs to the intervention provided, but plenty more exist. Some students, as mentioned earlier, continue to go in and out of *LLI* groups, depending on how they performed on the district assessments. They may be dismissed one testing round, only to be added again

the next testing session or year. Most of these re-occurring students have not been offered other interventions. Not surprisingly, they continue to struggle as they advance through grade school, thus widening the achievement gap. In my school, there are too many 3rd and 4th grade students reading at the kindergarten or 1st grade level.

Another example of a mismanaged intervention occurred my first year, when I noticed a 1st grade student, on my caseload, sitting in the hallway with an educational assistant flipping through flashcards and writing words on a white board. I had seen the same assistant with other students throughout the day. When I inquired about what was occurring, I learned this intervention was set up for students in each class who were struggling with reading. A special education teacher headed the intervention, so every special education student was scheduled to receive the intervention, along with others in classes who were struggling. Since the first 220 sight words make up 80% of children's literature before 2nd grade, a sight word intervention makes sense. However, this special education teacher used the one size fits all approach and just assumed all special education students need a sight word intervention. The 1st grade student receiving this intervention was reading at a 5th grade level. There was no need for her and five other students from my caseload to receive this intervention.

Mismanaged interventions frustrate students and is a waste of time and financial resources. By omitting my five students from that intervention, it would have allowed five other students that may have truly benefited from the opportunity. That was just the students on my caseload, I do not know how many other case managers had misaligned interventions. I now have a system in place to monitor and ensure the students I case manage have the interventions needed, and not one "one size fits all".

What Can We Do

Misaligned or mismanaged interventions, from what I have noticed, occur when

one of two things happen. The first: A team uses and believes in the "one size fits

all" approach to implement and schedule interventions to help increase student reading

achievement. The second: Communication, or a lack of a common planning

system between teachers. Aligning interventions to student needs takes careful and

deliberate planning. Progress monitoring should be continuous to determine if

growth is being made. If not, accommodations or alternative options should be made so

students can succeed. When educators have opposing philosophies on how to teach reading,

teaming to align interventions can be a daunting battle with only the students losing their

greatest school resource, time learning. When students are provided an intervention that

specifically targets their reading deficit and accommodations or modifications are made to

ensure emotional and behavioral success, students reading abilities will increase.

The Project

My project is a list of curriculums and interventions that directly and explicitly teach the

five essential reading elements. These include: Phonological awareness, Phonics instruction,

Fluency instruction, Vocabulary instruction, and Text comprehension interventions that use the

whole language approach. The phonemic awareness and phonics curriculums and

interventions listed use a multi-sensory, structured, direct instruction to increase reading

deficits. According to leading specialists from the *International Dyslexia Association, Academy of Neuroscience, Journal of Learning Disabilities,* and many other researchers this approach is what is needed to teach a struggling reader.

Each essential reading element lists if the instructional material can be used as a curriculum, an intervention, or if it is supplemental material. The intended grade levels are listed and the suggested delivery method. Delivery methods include large group, small group, or individual instruction. I also included the rating given by the What Works Clearinghouse and information about the research. Independent research data was also shared with a web address link to the data.

Accommodations and Modifications

Since there is a high comorbidity of reading struggles and other processing, emotional, or behavioral disorders educators should be conscious of each students needs for success. The sole purpose of an intervention is to increase student achievement. If an intervention is either having a negative affect or no positive affect, something needs to change. Cook & Cook write that no instructional intervention, even evidence based practices will work for everyone all the time. Education is a social science that needs to focus on problem solving rather than being an absolute manner, (2011). Sometimes a small change can make a big difference in a student willingness to engage in the learning process.

Summary

To answer the question what alternative reading curriculums are available for students who have not made adequate progress using Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. I created a curriculum and intervention guide. The stories and examples of mismanaged and misaligned interventions supported my decision to create this resource. Students who are one or more years below their peers in reading levels should receive a purposefully, aligned intervention, that addresses their reading deficit. Complex students may need ongoing accommodations modifications to continue their willingness to engage in the learning process.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflections

I chose to research what alternative reading curriculums are available for students who have not made adequate progress using Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. In other words, what other curriculums or interventions do students who continually struggle with reading and writing expectations have in my school building and district? I chose to research this topic because I have noticed too many students who continued to always be one or more years behind their peers in reading and writing year after year. Many of these students have typical or near typical IQ's and still continue to struggle with reading. With limited options of alternate reading curriculums and interventions available to use with students, I wanted know if what I am using is an evidence based curriculum/ intervention or if I should be advocating for these struggling learners.

As a special education teacher, I am very open and willing to use whatever may work when instructing students. Since the majority of my teaching career mainly involved teaching students social skills who had the educational label of Autism Spectrum Disorder or Emotional/ Behavioral Disorder along with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). I felt very confident in programming and teaming with colleagues regarding behaviors, work expectations, accommodation, or modifications to increase the like-hood of a student succeeding emotionally and behaviorally throughout the day. More recently, I have been asked to take on the role of teaching primarily academic classes and now have several

students who have the educational label of Specific Learning Disability and students who have some Other Health Disability.

My Mission and Current Task

This year my task is to 'move' special education students from being *significantly below* grade level (1 ½ or more years below peers in reading) to the *at-risk* category and 'move' the *at-risk* students (less than 1 ½ years below peers in reading) to the *meets expectations* in the area of reading according to district assessments. Along with researching evidence based interventions available for struggling readers, I also investigated and explored what options were available within my district.

What Curriculums and Interventions are Available?

For the past 10-15, my school district has provided two main reading interventions for students who are not making adequate progress as a Tier 2 and Tier 3 support. Reading Recovery is offered only as a first grade intervention to the lowest of learners. This is an individual intervention for 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Reading Recovery uses the whole language approach to teach reading and follows the learning of the student. Meaning, instruction is tailored to exactly what the student needs to know next. Research indicates that Reading Recovery students reach near grade level expectations and maintain their reading skills. Reading Recovery begins with a week long intensive assessment training continued with bi-weekly meetings with a licensed Reading Recovery teacher for an entire academic year. Because of the time and resources (licensed teachers) needed, Reading Recovery, while an effective intervention is very costly as an individual intervention.

The second Tier 2 intervention is Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). LLI is a fast paced, short-term, whole language intervention that uses leveled books to turn struggling readers into proficient readers. LLI's systematic lessons are designed to 'move' students one reading level every two weeks provided it is delivered for 30 minutes, 5 days per week. LLI is delivered in small groups by reading interventionist that have completed initially two full days of training and an additional seven days of training spread throughout an academic school year. On-going training (repeat the nine day training) is highly recommended by instructors. I was provided this training three times in the past ten years. Substitutes are provided by the district for the training. (To my knowledge there are no other systematic training sessions for other reading options offered by the district).

My district has a central location used to house or store alternative curriculums used in special educational settings. It is here that I found a surprisingly limited amount of resources available to use as alternative options. Here I found *Milestones* (a sight word curriculum mainly used with students who have a severe cognitive disability and not researched in this paper), *Reading Mastery,* and *Language for Learning. Reading Mastery* is direct instruction curriculum and/or intervention that specifically targets phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency. *Language for Learning* specifically target language deficits, yet both of these curriculums go unused in my district. Both of these curriculums have been well researched and proven to have positive effects to teach struggling readers to read, however, since there has been a pendulum swing to the 'whole language' teaching philosophy, district resources have been dedicated to support Leveled Literacy Intervention and Reading Recovery. Outdated versions of direct and explicit instruction curriculums seem to not be valued and are now sitting on

shelves, unused. In October of 2017, I sent a survey to all of the special education teachers in

all of the elementary school buildings, including a setting 4, (off-site) location, asking what

reading curriculums they used or had available in their buildings. Teachers across the district

responded that most of their students are instructed with *Leveled Literacy Intervention*, two of

the school exclusively use *LLI*, with very few students instructed using an alternative

curriculum. The following curriculums are used with limited students across the district, but are

not necessarily available to all of the teachers or students: *Edmark, Press, Gate/ Read

Naturally, Barton, or Reading Mastery.*

My Learning Journey

Along with teaching more academic classes I have also had the opportunity to teach

every grade level in my building, K-4. As I began teaching the 3rd and 4th graders, I noticed

students that I knew as kindergarten and 1st graders still had the same reading struggles and

have made very little reading progress as an older student. I was saddened to find out how

many 3rd and 4th grade students are reading at kindergarten or 1st grade level. Since I taught

some of these now older students using *LLI* two or more years ago, I knew I needed to use

something different to teach these now extremely low readers.

A fellow special education teacher who has been teaching 3rd and 4th grade reading to

students for over 20 years was more that willing to share what resource she uses. One of the

reading interventions she introduced to me was the *Read Naturally* program. *Read Naturally* is

a small group intervention that uses leveled passages with many opportunities to read and

re-read the passage to increase fluency. During my research process, I discovered 85% of

students who struggle with reading have low fluency scores and that when direct fluency

training is provided, fluency scores, comprehension, overall reading ability, and confidence all rise. Read Naturally provides direct fluency training.

I also received training in the *Barton* intervention system. Susan Barton created a teaching system that is a multi-sensory, direct and explicit, systematic way to teach phonological skills with subsequent lessons focusing on letter sounds, phonics and spelling rules. This system was originally created for a student given the medical diagnoses of dyslexia. Through my research, I learned students who have a learning disability or who continue to struggle with reading possess the same reading *need* and benefit from the same interventions as a student who has a medical diagnosis of dyslexia.

Through my research, I learned phonemic awareness skills are generally taught beginning in preschool. Direct phonemic awareness skills instruction is a small portion (less than twenty hours per year) of whole group, kindergarten reading curriculum and is generally adequate instruction for most students to master phonemic awareness skills needed to be a successful reader. Since phonemic awareness skills are considered 'pre-reading' skills a low reading student is generally not provided that specific, direct instruction, and miss this extremely important foundational skill that prevents low readers to advance into proficient readers.   Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and visually imagine the number, and the order, and the identity of sounds and letters within a word. This very basic 'pre-reading' skill seems to be part of the huge gap in students reading and spelling abilities.

My research also lead me to the Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching struggling reading. Samuel T. Orton and Anna Gillingham are a psychologist and educator duo that teamed during the 1930's that developed an approach to teach reading to students with

dyslexia. This multi-sensory approach incorporates the three learning pathways:, kinesthetic, auditory, and visual learning. This approach has been proven to benefit all students.

My district has only one, newly added in 2016, intervention, the *Barton* system, that meets this criteria. The *Barton* system was developed as an individual intervention as mentioned earlier, however, it can be used in a small group setting.. Small group instruction will require more time to achieve mastery of each skill and a skilled administrator of the *Barton* system. Since individual instruction is not an option as there are just too many students to serve and my students all have low or significantly low reading scores despite their typical or near typical IQ's, I chose to use this intervention in the small group setting to the best of my ability.

Since this year I was given a group of 2nd grade, low (some significantly low), reading students with a variety of special education labels. The first thing I did, was assess for phonemic awareness skills using the Barton's quick, individual assessment. This assessment verbally gives a nonsense word with either two or three sounds and asks a student to show with colored tiles the number of sounds they heard. They are also instructed to use different colored tiles for different sounds and same colored tiles for same sounds. My fifteen 'low reading', special education students scored between 0% and 66% correct with a median score of 53% correct on identifying two and three sound words. After only three weeks of direct instruction in a small group setting, twelve of the students scored 100% on the same post test and have moved onto phonic instructions along with a fluency training intervention. The November 2017, district wide reading assessment revealed eleven of the twelve increased one to two reading levels. One student's reading level stayed the same from the beginning of the

year, I am unsure of this reason. This may have been a 'bad' testing moment/ day for this student, as daily reading and work samples have increased since the beginning of the year. Four other 2nd grade students I instruct using the *Reading Mastery* program. Three of the four students increased one to two reading levels. As mentioned with earlier, non-growth student, I believe it was a 'bad' testing session, as I see an increase in abilities teaching and observing him daily, since the beginning of the school year.

The past two years I taught reading to 3rd and 4th grade special education students and noticed many of them were still unable to fluently read an end of kindergarten level or beginning 1st grade passage. This year, I have 2nd graders that are at the same reading level, end of kindergarten and beginning 1st grade. Since providing twelve of my fifteen students the Barton phonemic awareness and phonics intervention and Read Naturally fluency training for the past seven weeks, all of my students are growing as readers. Two of them have advanced to a mid-first grade level, four more are right on the cusp of moving to the mid-first grade level. Two more are progressing but not as rapidly due to absenteeism and lack of consistent medication. Out of the four students reading at a end of kindergarten level, one has (for the past week) read a kindergarten passage at an appropriate rate the first time he is provided the passage. The other three have increased their reading fluency at the kindergarten level from an average of ten words per minute correct to an average of 35-40 words correct.

My Hope for Future Research

Each week I create my teaching plans and some weeks feel disappointed that I did not get to teach all what I had wanted, didn't get as far as planned. But when I think of the big

picture, it has only been seven weeks and every student is making progress, which inspires

me to continue. I think this research journey has made me a more reflective, purposeful

planning teacher. Next year when these 2nd graders are instructed by my colleague teaching

reading to 3rd graders, I predict and hope she will not have to use end of kindergarten or 1st

grade level instructional materials.

I believe more researched based interventions should be available to teach students

depending on need. I believe schools or districts should come up with a menu of options for

not only reading but for math and social/ emotional needs as well. My original research project

included these other topics, but after many, suggestions to narrow my topic, I finally took the

advice of Susan Manikowski, my Hamline Capstone Advisor, and decided on reading. In

hindsight, I feel fortunate to have researched evidence based reading interventions as I spend

80% of my day teaching reading and am excited to see how these interventions transfer to

district reading and testing expectations during the 1st round testing cycle.

I am also hoping there can be a systematic way to make educational decisions for

students without feeling pressured to do what everybody else in the building or district is using.

To use student data and provide intervention to address a student's' need. Students who

continue to struggle with reading are not going to increase their reading skills if they are only

provided more of the same kind of intervention. I believe needs based interventions should be

available for students for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. Having very few curriculum or

intervention options available or *accepted* limits student growth. My goal and hope is that my

school and district will have a more accepting philosophy and not only endorse but also

provide evidence based interventions and trainings and equip teachers to support our

struggling readers.

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