

Effective Reading Strategies to Engage Reluctant Readers

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Abstract

Reluctant readers are readers who lack motivational skills and drive to read. This study tracked a group of students that was handpicked by their teachers for a small group interaction reading time with vocabulary and comprehension skills including a reading journal to assess the effect of interventions on motivation to read. Participants were able to develop motivation to read and use their skills to gain further success and positive attitudes in reading. The participants were followed and researched during two consecutive school years to create a clear picture of increased motivation levels for reluctant readers. Reading attitude inventories were the start of assessing and understanding the level of reluctance of reading. The students, as well as their parents, filled out the attitude inventory which gave a clear picture of how the participant viewed reading, as well as, how their parents felt the participant approached reading. When all attitude inventories and reading assessments were completed at the beginning and the end of the research there was a clear change in scores. As reading motivation increased, so did the increase in reading assessment scores.

Effective Reading Strategies to Engage Reluctant Readers

As a special education teacher in a small district with an over 40% poverty level it seems as though there are many ways students can benefit from teaching strategies that focus on instilling stronger motivation in students to succeed. Motivating reluctant readers can help to bring students into our classrooms ready to learn and strive for the next level. I moved into teaching special education at the start of our new school year. In prior years, I taught preschool and Title One in this same district. What is interesting to me is that in all my positions in my district I have seen reluctant readers. Regardless of the age of the student or at what level a student is reading, teachers can find reluctant readers. Teachers always can tell which readers are reluctant by the way they react to “get your book” or “time for us to read.” All teachers want their

students to be avid readers, to independently seek out a good book, enjoy it, and have the desire to share their love of literature with others. Unfortunately, teachers find each year students in their classrooms who would say they hate reading and would prefer not to ever have to pick up a book. Given this phenomenon, the research questions that guided this study were:

How would reading strategies impact student motivation and success in reading?

What impact do individualized reading strategies have on a reluctant readers attitude toward reading?

Do choral reading, partner, and group reading increase student success with reading?

Reluctant Readers

Reluctant readers are not necessarily lower leveled readers, but actually could be some of the top readers of the class. Reluctant readers show up in all ages, all experience levels, and in all leveled reading areas. Struggling readers are different from reluctant readers, because of their attitude about reading. Struggling readers may have positive attitudes, but are developmentally behind with their reading skills.

Small Group Reading

My second grade students were part of a small reading group. They met multiple times a week in a classroom developed for small group work. Not all the students were meeting at once, so the interaction, journaling, and reading could be done in a warm and inviting environment. Reading attitude inventories from home, filled out by parents, were completed, baseline assessments were given, and reading began. We read independently and in the group as a whole. What we always accomplished was to talk about the story, where it was taking place, what they were thinking about, and what they found new in the story. Together we tried to find new vocabulary words,

new places or settings the story revealed, and kept a journal about all of what we were discussing. The most important piece to all of this was to enhance the want and will of students to pick up a book and read, not just for reading practice, but to enjoy their reading and change those reluctant readers into avid, well-read, lifetime readers. Opening the minds of the participants to the wonder of reading can be a positive outcome to small group reading.

Research Modification

Due to the increase of positive reading attitudes and increased reading achievement with students in regular education and Title One readers, I modified my own original ideas and added a new target group for my fall semester research. I began using SRA Reading Mastery direct instruction reading curriculum, with a reading review (a self-created three ring binder of review words from the SRA curriculum), and the same small group reading with journaling to help improve the reading attitudes of a group of third grade students with individual education plans, hoping to bring the excitement for reading across the populations of students. The modified research and working with students in small groups with specific motivational strategies was initiated as an attempt to interact significantly with reluctant readers and motivate them to read.

Review of the Literature

Factors that may be related to students' reading reluctance can be lack of motivation, adequate knowledge with vocabulary, and lack of prior knowledge of what they are reading (Ambe, 2007). Successful teachers and students realize that motivation and performance are predicated more on freedom and autonomy than on coercion and constraint. When effective strategies are offered, for instance, small group, read-alouds, or Readers Theater, for learning enjoyment, students will be self-motivated and encouraged to be learners without having to be given a prize or promise

for their accomplishments (Sanacore, 2008). Tapping into what interests each student can be the sole knowledge that teachers need to motivate their students and have them become eager-to-learn students. Readers must come to know that their job is not just to answer questions, but also to ask them (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003). It can take time for students to mature in reading and find the qualities that motivate them. It takes time and creativity to reach reluctant readers. Home/school connections can be forged as parents can be involved by monitoring the amount of daily reading time and, in some cases, by listening and reading aloud, much like at school (Colvin 1992). This is a great example of connecting home and school to promote a passion for reading. Reluctant readers are set apart from struggling readers solely due to motivation and their approach to reading activities, so engaging in activities that offer appealing opportunities is extremely important (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003). Disengaged readers need scaffolding and some guidance when choosing books for silent reading so that students are reading books that are the most appropriate for their reading levels and interest (Hilden & Jones, 2012). This makes a big statement that says with the right book at the right time, even the most reluctant readers will persevere (David, 2011).

The use of reading journals with reluctant readers is an effective strategy to start giving individual ownership to what students are reading. During reading activities a reading journal opens up a window for expression of the words students are reading and/or listening to. It is an interaction with literature with a record of where students have been and where they predict they will go in the book they are reading. Using a reading journal is, in essence, an example of how students can bring their reading to life. When students use a reading journal, it allows them to focus not only on what is happening in the story, but on the vocabulary and places in the story

that they may have questions about, or parts of the literature that confuse them (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland 2003).

One way to identify the root causes of a reluctant reader is observation. This form of assessment is the key to knowing how a student reacts to reading requests. Watching students as they approach reading tasks can help to identify the issues (Reading Instruction Resources, 2012). Observation can help teachers to engage reluctant readers by developing a scaffolding or framework for silent reading and having a guidance plan in place for students to be reading books that are the most appropriate for their reading levels and interest. This can help them understand how to choose literature they will enjoy. Talking about literature and modeling reading strategies are also effective ways to spark an interest in students regarding their reading. Creating an environment which models strategies promotes and encourages students to choose appropriate books and thus be more engaged in their reading and can help develop positive attitudes about reading (Brinda, 2011). Through observation teachers can keep an eye out for avoidance and when or how a student abandons their reading tasks. Areas to identify through observation are the reading strategies used by the student, as well as particular areas in which the reader may struggle, like comprehension or vocabulary. In small group reading teachers can notice a great deal of reader success and increased perseverance with reading. During reading times, taking notes on the amount of volunteer reading can help teachers to realize who is and is not willing to read. Keeping a watchful eye and observing those students wanting to read and showing excitement to volunteer and to talk about what has been read can aid in discovering ideas to promote reading for those who are reluctant (Reading Instruction Resources, 2012).

Using modeling in reading is a way to interact with students and books to encourage a positive reading attitude and get the students talking about books. Modeling allows students to see how others interact with reading and paves the way for a student to see reading in a whole new light. Intertwining activities with reading can allow for further discussion in reading. Allowing children to read and share their creative ideas by discussing what they predict is going to happen in a story or how they would have written a chapter, can promote reading excitement. This may help to enlighten the readers who have lost their purpose and pleasure of reading (Brinda, 2011).

Using reading attitude inventories is a way to understand reluctant readers and what motivates them, their interests, and in turn, identify why they are reluctant readers (Hilden & Jones, 2012). The inventories should be administered from time to time to assess changes in attitudes and interests in reading; these could change in a couple of weeks' time frame (Lamberg, 1977). Reluctant readers may not show an interest in reading, but as teachers know that does not mean they do not have the means to become a skilled and enthusiastic reader (Reading Instruction Resources, 2012). A comparison of the attitude and interest surveys at the beginning and end of a study can provide some evidence to teachers so they can make important decisions about reading strategies (Lamberg, 1977).

One of the creative ways to connect students with literature is Readers' Theater. This process takes what the student is reading and transforms it into a writing and acting piece created by the students and teacher or is previously written by someone else and used in the classroom. What a presentation of literature through Readers' Theater brings to the table is a fun, motivational way for students to improve their reading, specifically fluency. Fluency is an important part of

reading that correlates with vocabulary development and comprehension (Clementi, 2010). Increased fluency will help readers to become more confident in their reading and challenge themselves to a more difficult piece of literature. Fluency builds reading confidence and can motivate a reluctant reader to be more excited about reading. It describes not so much the use of costumes as the use of expression from the reader. Readers' Theater shows how making reading interesting and exciting builds students' confidence and reading strengths through their performances (Clementi, 2010).

Content reading can foster a greater knowledge of information that students are learning about in the classroom. For instance if the class is learning about the Civil War, it would be helpful to interact with literature explaining the battles and even read about first hand experiences (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Content literacy can be used to foster the interest and enthusiasm in reading and literature discussion. Instead of shielding students from the hard work of academic literacy until they demonstrate the capability to comprehend texts on their own, there are ways to engage them in academic reading. There is need for expert teacher support and a collaborative learning environment. This is seen as the most important way to build young people's capability (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009).

Tokenism or the reward system side of teaching to motivate students is another way teachers have tried to engage and motivate their students. As effective as the reward system may appear, it primarily affects the short term. Classroom teachers monitor the way a reward system is carried out in their classrooms, so the students can receive the best benefit from a reward system.

It is a motivational tool and with moderation and a systematic approach it will help in fostering students to be more enthusiastic readers (Sanacore, 2008).

The importance of differentiating instruction for students is a huge piece of identifying and understanding how a child is performing and what teachers can do to help students (Hilden & Jones, 2012). Observing students for avoidance, when or how a student abandons their reading tasks, and identifying the reading strategies used by the reader are ways to find a particular area in which the reader may struggle, like comprehension. Working with reading specialists and offering reluctant readers specialized and individualized reading instruction is a great way to engage the students' learning (Reading Instruction Resources, 2012). Teachers can break the negative reading cycle by using intervention strategies that increase students' sight word recognition of frequently used vocabulary words. Context clues are one strategy that can be used to increase vocabulary skills. Some context clues that can be used to teach word meaning are synonyms, antonyms, comparison, contrast, description, and example, according to Ambe in 2007, who credited Vacca & Vacca from 2005.

The significance of attitude and its effect on reading development is widely recognized. This indicates the identifying element that reading can be interesting and it has an emotional response (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Using a reading attitude inventory to help monitor students' affective responses to instructional programs can have a great impact on the reading strategies teachers may choose to help reluctant readers (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Focusing on SSR (silent sustained reading) or DEAR (drop everything and read), or any other acronym that defines silent

independent reading, can be a first strategy to increase motivation to read, because everyone is reading and everyone has the opportunity to choose their reading material (Gutchewsky, 2001).

Using inventories as a way to best identify the reluctant reader and using them to motivate is the starting point to interventions with readers. Understanding the information in the inventories and how students prefer to read and learn can help us to differentiate instruction and gear it directly towards the current needs of students. When reading specialists offer reluctant readers specialized and individualized reading instruction that can enhance efforts to encourage and motivate readers, the increased interest in reading can be significant. Students learn much more during small group instruction; it is a critical literacy component (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland, 2003). Emerging and early readers need support of shared reading experiences with their teachers and peers in small groups to benefit from the same kinds of meaning centered literature based instruction (Worthy, 1996).

Read-alouds in a classroom can foster an interactive classroom discussion allowing for questions and answers as a book is being read. Imagination and variety are necessary in selecting the proper read-alouds and group literature interaction (Erickson, 1996). Ganske, Monroe, and Strickland described successful teachers as people who capitalize on read aloud experiences as a means for teaching comprehension (2003). Comprehension strategies ensure that students integrate both the process of reading and the content being read (Ambe, 2007). Using read-alouds, teachers can demonstrate the kind of self-questioning, reacting, and visualizing in which they engage the student by focusing on their interaction with literature (Ganske, Monroe, &

Strickland, 2003). It is important to promote students and their interest while reading in small groups and read-alouds.

Educators need to find the way to encourage students to go beyond comprehension and address the engagement in literacy in all of the subjects they have at school (Brinda, 2011). Finding enjoyable texts and helping readers to identify practical reasons for reading would be instrumental in building motivation. Role modeling is an important part of sparking reader's ambition for reading. This role modeling is important from both teachers as well as from the children's home environment. The importance of helping the reluctant readers, finding ways to interact with them, and aiding them in furthering their reading habits can make a huge difference in their attitude about reading. Brinda states that comprehension is important, but on her "ladder to literacy" comprehension comes after motivation (2011). Regardless of whether the causes of reading problems are cognitive, emotional, or otherwise, teachers must continue to use creative instructional strategies to help students become more proficient readers (Ambe, 2007).

It is important to design instruction that acknowledges young people and that helps the student to acknowledge themselves as a reader and someone who interacts with their reading and what they have learned (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Matching the instruction to the students is based on understanding of vocabulary, their background knowledge, and organization of their thoughts when talking about what they have read, and how it can or cannot relate to their own lives. This certainly can have an impact on their motivation and how they approach reading as a whole. Words carry meaning and understanding the meaning of words and how they connect ideas and other concepts is a necessary sub skill for comprehension (Ambe, 2007). Reluctant, unmotivated

readers can flourish under the right guidance and direction of a committed teacher. Bringing together challenges, support, and an inquiry based learning environment are keys to successful students. Identifying the reasons students are reluctant to learn is vitally important to engage reluctant learners by using their own interests to support their successes (Sanacore, 2008). Challenging students while making the subject matter interesting, allowing for choices and some student responsibility with their education without always using rewards, is a tall order in reading instruction. The students' education will become reward enough and their self-esteem will show it (Sanacore, 2008).

The Lessons I Learned (David, 2011) is about a person taking on an activity to help others, realizing all she learned in the process. David was focusing on a foreign school, but all of the scenarios and instances are relevant to U.S. education. The author is a writer and a mother of a student in the school, and was looking at her experience checking out her daughter's school. Testing quickly came up in this article. David references that, based on standardized testing for reading, the school's students hover around 50% (David, 2011). This, the author says, is neither bad nor good. An interesting point that made this article feel close to home was the makeup of the student body. Most were students from homes without books, homes where parents do not necessarily support their child's education, and lower to middle family incomes. The volunteers in this process had some training, but not for a very long period of time. David was expecting to see lower level students, behavioral problems, and some bad attitudes that are generally associated with reluctant readers. To her surprise this was not what she got. She had a few different students to work with, and it seems as though the common thread is knowing the students and figuring out what makes them tick and excited about stories (David, 2011).

Reading aloud is a particularly difficult skill, and schools need to promote more reading enjoyment for students to gain competence (David, 2011).

Having students use choral reading and reading together orally from their book can seem nonproductive at times due to the different reading levels involved in reluctant reading. Not all identified reluctant readers are the same reading level, so identifying and choosing literature must be done in a manner so that all of the readers in a group are comfortable with the text at hand and are not too challenged or too bored with it (Ganske, Monroe, & Strickland 2003). Group, choral, or partner reading can be very worthwhile, but may cause some issues if the students are not on the same level of performance. Reluctant readers can show motivation working in groups and using choral reading, and they could feel confident helping those reading at lower levels to blast through the words without feeling like less competent readers than others (Brinda, 2011).

An opportunity to interact students with their peers could be used through cooperative learning in small groups in the classroom and can include asking questions, active listening, compromising, and providing encouragement (Colvin, 1992). Although success can be found in choral reading, more motivation and interest could show when all the readers were at the same level, eliminating a scenario for students to feel they had to help each other to get to the goal of finishing a book. At the same time, the advantages are seen to enhance the quality of interaction amongst students by having them help each other. A good example for this would be on the flip side when lower level readers helped stronger readers with vocabulary meanings. Even if their knowledge of words came strictly from background knowledge instead of the actual story, they had success in

helping others (Ambe, 2007). While working with a group of students, teachers can gain a new vision of partner reading and small group reading, because they can see the excitement in the students while they are sharing what they are reading. An interesting twist to this would be to interact with them using readers' theater and watch them help each other and use their imagination to create the scenes from their story. Small group strategies are successful with addressing positive experiences literature while sharing and reading with others (Brinda, 2011). Group, choral, and partnered reading can be amazing to watch and see the level of interaction and conversation taking place as students discuss what they read, relate to it, and find the emotion in the characters. Large group reading could also place the same type of influence on student learning and motivation. While reading, students can make connections with their vocabulary, paying more attention to what was being read and understanding words by using the text around the words. Crowe (1999), in his article *Young Adult Literature*, explains how to make the cover of a book "catchy" in order to gain interest in the book. Students can be engaged before they open the cover. Comprehension led to enjoyment and students were motivated to share personal understandings and connections with the text; it built engagement and enjoyment for the student and the classroom (Brinda 2011).

Why students do not engage in discussion about what they have read is a question many teachers and even parents ask about their students. They may have a hard time writing, interpreting, analyzing or even responding to their texts (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Sanacore (2008) used the comparison of the student's own life and a character's life in a novel to discuss the different attributes of characters in a book, showing the effectiveness of this strategy to encourage students to think for themselves and analyze what they would have done if they were

that character. Strategies that many teachers use for success are prediction, question, and purpose in the setting for what students are reading. Greenleaf and Hinchman's article outlines the work with a particular student and strategically identifies the growth and development of the reader and the way in which he was been taught and how he expanded his skills. As they say, it is important to design instruction that acknowledges young people, that helps the student to acknowledge themselves as a reader and someone who interacts with their reading and what they have learned (2009).

Studying reluctant readers is an eye-opening reminder of the importance of just generally talking about literature (Gutchewsky, 2001). Struggling readers start out with word learning difficulty, which can lead to reluctance in reading (Worthy, 1996). When they are in need of interaction with the vocabulary, background knowledge, organizing their thoughts when talking about literature, and how it can or cannot relate to their own lives; the students' motivation, and how they approach reading as a whole, is impacted. "Motivation in reading can be fueled by successful experiences," quoted by Worthy in 1996 on page 205, giving the credit to D. Mealey (1990). The research I have read reflects on the fact that some students do not engage in discussion about what they have read. They have a hard time writing, interpreting, analyzing or even responding to their texts. Greenleaf & Hinchman (2009) introduce an extraordinary student who struggled with reading and was identified into the special education realm to help with reading difficulties. Oddly enough this student viewed himself as a reader, because he practiced all of the time. He read a lot at home and identified himself as a "weird news" reader. He enjoyed reading on the internet news sites and then reading things that would teach him about the interesting things he found. He seemed to have many reading abilities and strategies toward

reading, but at the same time he was labeled a reluctant reader, because he did not always enjoy reading at school (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009). Motivation for reading and student choice tends to run on the same path. Teachers should not always make decisions for students; rather, they should decide ways they can help students make their own decisions for reading (Lamberg, 1977). Teachers should provide opportunities for the students to move from what they know to what they may want to investigate (Lamberg, 1977). It seems as though if a student has not found a teacher willing to invest in getting to know him or her better they may develop into even more of a reluctant reader and may never choose to pick up a book (Greenleaf & Hinchman, 2009).

It is interesting how the students interact in their groups and classroom to decipher the stories they have read, either fiction or nonfiction readings. Sanacore (2008) writes about identifying the reasons students are reluctant to learn. He quotes Protheroe from 2004 in stating that it is vitally important to engage reluctant learners by using their own interests to support their successes (2008). As Sanacore states, “if teachers expect students to value learning, they should help them grow beyond token rewards and give them opportunities to respond to learning in personal ways” (p.41). Addressing the student interests should certainly spark dialogue in the classroom when discussing literature. Sanacore also talks about the optimal conditions for enjoying learning: students will be self-motivated and encouraged to be learners. Identifying what interests students have can be the excellent information teachers need to motivate their students and have them become eager-to-learn students. Teachers should not talk too much at the students, but encourage them to talk about what they have read (Crowe, 1999). Sanacore’s article says a lot about challenging students while making it interesting, and allowing for choices

and some student responsibility with their education without always using tokenisms or rewards. Their education will become reward enough and their self-esteem will show it.

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose for this project was to observe the effect of multiple reading strategies on the reluctant reader's motivation to read as well as on their skill development. Helping a student to increase positive attitudes about reading with strategies in choral reading, partner reading, along with small groups and journals is an attempt to increase reluctant readers' motivation to read. Small group reading allows for an engaging atmosphere, so interaction, discussion, and literacy skills can be enhanced. The setting for small groups can permit encouragement and motivation of reading. The process for this research was clarified while reading my peer-reviewed journal articles. I was reading about the importance of tapping into background knowledge and heightening with second grade students and following them into their third grade school year. I developed the additional piece of including three special education students to tap into another student population in my research. Truly the original inspiration for my research project was students in Title One. My students showed a low motivation for reading or reluctant reading, and each of them was at a different reading level. I wanted to see if I could make a difference in their approach to reading and help them to enjoy the book they were reading. Creating an environment that creates interest and an exploration of literature I felt was very important to the increased success of students and their education. Vocabulary building is also one of the areas in which I saw readers needing some guidance, modeling, and interaction to grow in their learning.

The research design was planned to encourage students to be avid readers. My strategies include small group reading, reading journals, vocabulary development, comprehension discussion, reflection, encouragement, and, one of the most important things, getting to know the students and letting them have some control in their learning. Small group meetings were set up by communicating with the classroom teachers and scheduling a time for our groups to meet without interfering with their classroom work. The students were split into groups according to which homeroom teacher they had in order to accommodate classroom schedules. Our small group meetings were made up of no more than four students to one teacher. Small groups are an identified way of interacting with students to help foster motivation with reading and help students to develop more of an identity with their knowledge and skills to help them become more successful readers. My plan to use reading journals was to make a paper trail of student successes and to help the students express the meanings and ideas they identify with while reading the story. The journals are a student's personal view of the piece of literature shared in small group settings. My research also focused on two other aspects of literacy that include vocabulary and comprehension. Students use group discussion and background knowledge to identify vocabulary they may not know the meaning of. The students then spend time recording the word and drawing a picture in their reading journal so they have a reference to identify meaning when they see that particular word at a later time.

The students read *A Mouse and the Motorcycle*, a half chapter to a chapter at a time and discussed what took place. The group discussion included characters, setting, and how they can relate themselves to the character or setting. This interaction helps the students to activate their thinking and reflect on what they comprehend while we are reading together. The small group

interaction is meant to bring interest to reading. Talking together aids in advancing the student's reading attitudes from reluctant to choosing to pick up a book to read and talk about.

During the interaction with my special education students we spent time reading through a specially made reading review binder I created to help reinforce their fluency in reading. The SRA direct instruction curriculum we use in our classroom has a word review at the start of each chapter. I created a three ring binder that will be used as a word review before starting the reading with this small group. The reason for the review binder was to create confidence and stamina while reading our chapter book. This was another opportunity to increase motivation and skills in the students approach to literacy.

Participants and Setting

All of the participants were second grade students when the original data were collected during the spring semester of 2013, and third grade students during the fall semester of 2013 as this study continued. I did add another group to my study that included three participants from the special education classroom, two girls and one boy. The new participants are third grade students during this fall semester of 2013. The participants include five students from the regular education program and two students from the Title One program and the three from special education, four are girls and three are boys. All participants are Caucasian. A total of ten students took part in this study. All of the children will have pseudonyms on any and all written information throughout the process. The study was completed in a Title One and special education classroom. Both instructional spaces are shared with other teachers of similar focus. This type of classroom was chosen to be able to conduct our small group discussions without disrupting what the regular education teachers were doing during the day. This setting offered

more ability to be flexible with assessments and journaling, because we had more space to conduct our reading meetings. The study took place at a small rural Midwest school with a school population of about 650 students from grades pre-k through twelfth grade. The school has over a 40% free and reduced lunch population. Our average grade level student population is about 50 students. Our school participates in the SAGE program which reduces each classroom third grade and younger to about twelve students in each room. Our fourth through sixth grade students in are not part of the SAGE program, which gives those about 25 students in each classroom.

Materials

I needed to develop an idea of reading material for the students' appropriate reading level, which was determined by easycbm.com and Fountas & Pinnell Assessments given to the students prior to the start of our reading group. Student and Parent surveys were copied from the article *Measuring Attitude Toward Reading: A New Tool for Teachers* by Michael McKenna and Dennis Kear, often referred to as the Garfield attitude survey for elementary students. Having access to a computer with internet service was a required in order to complete the www.easycbm.com assessments prior to our novel reading. Having the Fountas & Pinnell assessment tools to administer the vocabulary testing before and after the study was a necessary item to have ready for use. I used the antonyms and synonyms lists 1-3, one list for each time I administered the test. For reading journals I chose to use a bound notebook which the students decorated and made their own. We kept the notebooks with all of my research supplies until the study was completed. Then the children who participated in the study were excited to bring them home to share with their parents. This was the beginning of giving the control to the students. They each made their own book, and each looked different from the others with their own personal touches.

Having pencils and crayons, colored pencils, or markers available for writing and drawing was another important tool to have close at hand. This helped the students to stay focused and diligently working on the task at hand. When I added my three special education participants, I was using SRA direct instruction curriculum in reading during our regular teaching time. I continued to use this curriculum to teach reading class. I created a three ring binder with previous completed reading chapters. Each section in the SRA direct instruction manual begins with a review of sounds and words. I created a three ring binder with all of the previous level practice items in it. The binder and the direct instruction manual became a part of the study as of the fall 2013 semester. The use of the SRA curriculum and the three ring review binder was used with the three additional students added in the fall semester 2014, but this was not used with the original seven participants that started the study spring semester 2013.

Procedures

Developing a vision of my study was the first stage of this project. Once I decided I wanted to work with reluctant readers, I met with the individual second grade teachers. I talked with them about what we felt a reluctant reader was and what strategies they have tried in their own classrooms to reach all their readers. In doing this I was able to decide exactly the direction I wanted to go with the study. We discussed many different ideas about assessing student background knowledge, understanding why they are reluctant to read, and small group reading. I picked small group reading as a focus, because I had a classroom set up to do just that and fortunately a schedule that allowed me the time to bring my group to my room to read. The classroom teachers determined which students were reluctant readers in their classrooms and would benefit from reading strategies that would increase their desire to read. The students would not have to be the lowest readers, just reluctant. The students who were chosen had a

variety of reading abilities and interests. There was not a material incentive offered as a part of this study. The inducement would be creating an enjoyable and creative reading environment. The ten students were actually divided up into a group of three, a group of four, and my three newly added students in the fall semester. A letter was written describing the study, explaining that I was doing it to complete my studies at the university. I included a permission slip to be returned by the parents. The students met with me in the Title One/Special Education classroom. The parents' involvement included filling out a reading attitude survey at home indicating how they view their child's attitudes towards reading. The data was collected through the use of a Garfield attitude survey. A Fountas & Pinnell benchmark vocabulary assessment, easyCBM.com, and criterion based measurement scores (CBM) were administered in my classroom to assess the level of reading and background knowledge of the students. I began the study by conducting the Garfield reading survey with the students at school and sending one home to the parents to fill out. The next step was collecting the CBM test scores and administering the Fountas & Pinnell Assessment. We spent six weeks with twenty minute sessions two times each week reading the novel *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* in a small group setting and finding new vocabulary words to identify and put into our reading journals to help foster confidence, interaction, experience, and love for reading. I wanted the students to listen and pick out words they had not heard before or words they did not know the meaning of. We discussed each word and talked about the meaning. We looked for context clues and decided how they fit into the story. I wrote the words on the whiteboard in the room; they copied them into their journal, and drew a picture to help them to remember what the word meant. We continued to read and identify words and discuss the characters and settings, all in small groups. At the end of the six weeks, I administered the reading attitude survey and assessments again.

The results were compared with the results from the initial assessments. When the students came to school in the fall semester of 2013, we picked right up where we had left off. We had not finished the novel completely, because we spent so much time discussing what we had read and connecting it to our own lives. Instead of picking a new book this semester the students decided they wanted to use the same book. I felt this was a way of giving them some control over what they read. I kept the books over the summer and asked the students not to finish yet, because we would read it again in the fall. They really did love the story about the little mouse living in the hotel, and were very excited to continue to read this story. They started our fall semester taking the same assessments and reading survey as spring semester, only now as third graders. There were additional strategies added to the fall semester to continue to increase their vocabulary development and reading enthusiasm to expand comprehension skills. We continued using our reading journals to develop positive attitudes about reading. I compared the previous results with the new results to determine if the strategies continued to make a positive impact. The participants were expected to participate in a small reading group with individual reading, group reading, and shared reading just like we had done the previous semester. They kept a reading journal with new vocabulary words and character descriptions as well as chapter summaries or pictures describing the events of the chapter. The students had time to read and talk about what they read. The students discussed and defined new vocabulary words using their writing and drawings, with several examples provided here.



They recorded the meaning and added a picture or creative flare to remember the new work in their journal. The students read this story together talking about the different elements of literature including, characters, setting, conflict, and how they felt about the story. They met as often as their schedule would allow during the normal school day, preferably two to four times a week for about twenty minutes. This schedule was worked out between me and the classroom teacher and adjusted as needed. Students continued the small group work until the book and assessments were completed. They were expected to participate and reflect on their reading. Parents were informed on the reading material and asked to talk to their children about their reading at home.

An analysis of the test scores, observations, reflections, and survey results was used to evaluate this study. The evaluation portion of this study helps to determine if the intervention strategies and activities made a difference to the reluctant readers participating in this study. This analysis also took into consideration the attitudes of this group of students about reading from the beginning to the end of the study. This study ended with the same seven participants that started the study spring semester 2013, but I added three students in the fall semester of 2013 for a total

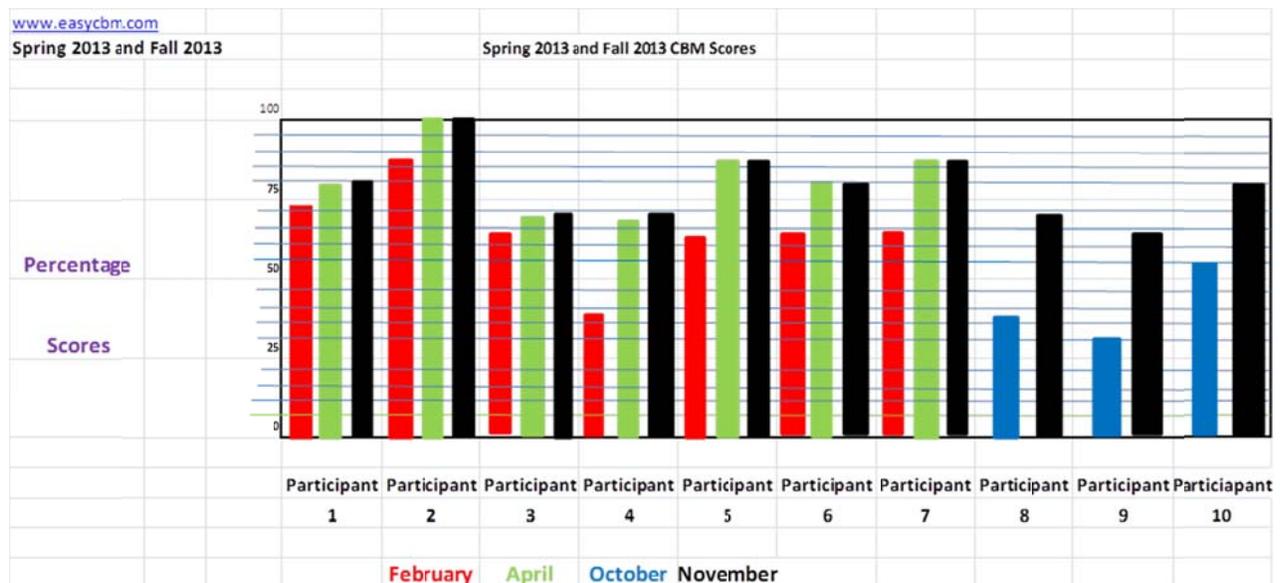
of ten students. I added three participants to see if I had the same results for an additional student population. As I switched from teaching Title One students to teaching special education this school year, I wanted to include my new population of students. Due to the lower reading level for these three students I wanted to offer a review aspect created from their own curriculum books to help engage them in the reading process and set them up for success when approaching our reading group. After we finished our direct reading curriculum studies, we took a small break of about five minutes before continuing with our small group reading. Once we reconnected in our group we reviewed the binder of words and sounds. This was a successful start to reading the novel. When we partook in shared reading time I made sure students did not struggle reading a word for more than a couple of seconds before offering guidance in pronunciation. The participants took part in the journaling and assessment pieces just like the rest of the students in the other groups. The information for the three additional participants was only collected in the fall semester of 2013.

Results and Analysis

Students who are identified as reluctant readers may not always believe they have a reason to read, so I found a way to help them relate to what they are reading and increase the interest factor, promoting student motivation to read. An analysis of CBM (criteria based measurement) assessments, Fountas & Pinnell vocabulary assessments, observations, reflections, and survey results were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies that were used. The analysis of this study helps to determine if the intervention strategies and activities made a difference to the reluctant readers participating in this study. This analysis also takes into consideration the attitude this group of students has for reading at the end of the study compared to the beginning.

The benchmark assessments were given at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. The following results show the academic growth of the participants in the reading groups.

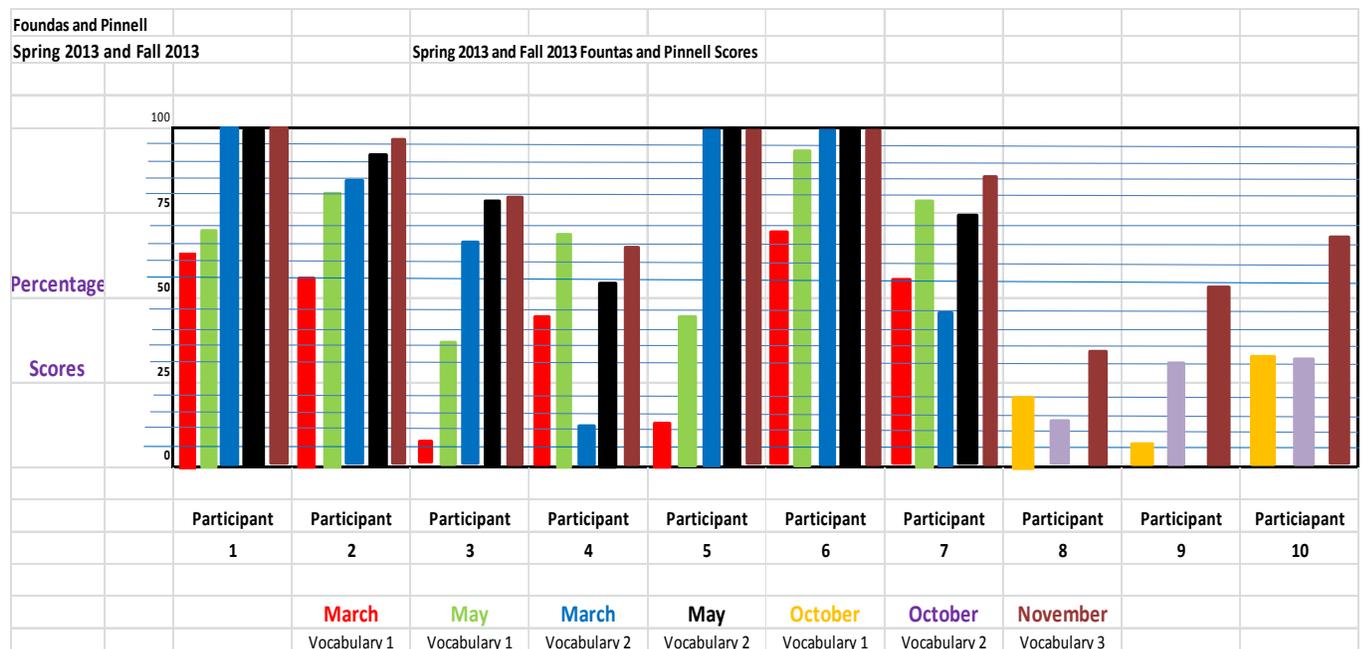
The first assessment used the www.easycbm.com assessment and was completed online. I used this assessment for reading comprehension, instructing the students to read a passage and answers questions about what they read.



As the graph shows, each student showed an increase in the percentage of their CBM score, which is amazing. Through observation one of the things I noticed the most between the pretest and the post-test was the motivation of the students to do well on there assessments. During the first test, it was evident the majority of students just wanted to get it done and were willing to sacrifice their score for completion of the assessment. It was exciting to observe the change of approach to the test on the positive side with increased confidence and ownership of their own learning. The students showed more pride and accomplishment with the attempt of the final

assessment. The CBM assessment was a connection to the subsidiary question relating motivation to success in reading. Reading success in the skills measured in the CBM scores showed an increase in skills. This can be paired with informal observation revealing increased motivation to do well with the assessments at hand. The success in reading skill assessment could be linked to the increased motivation and attitude toward reading.

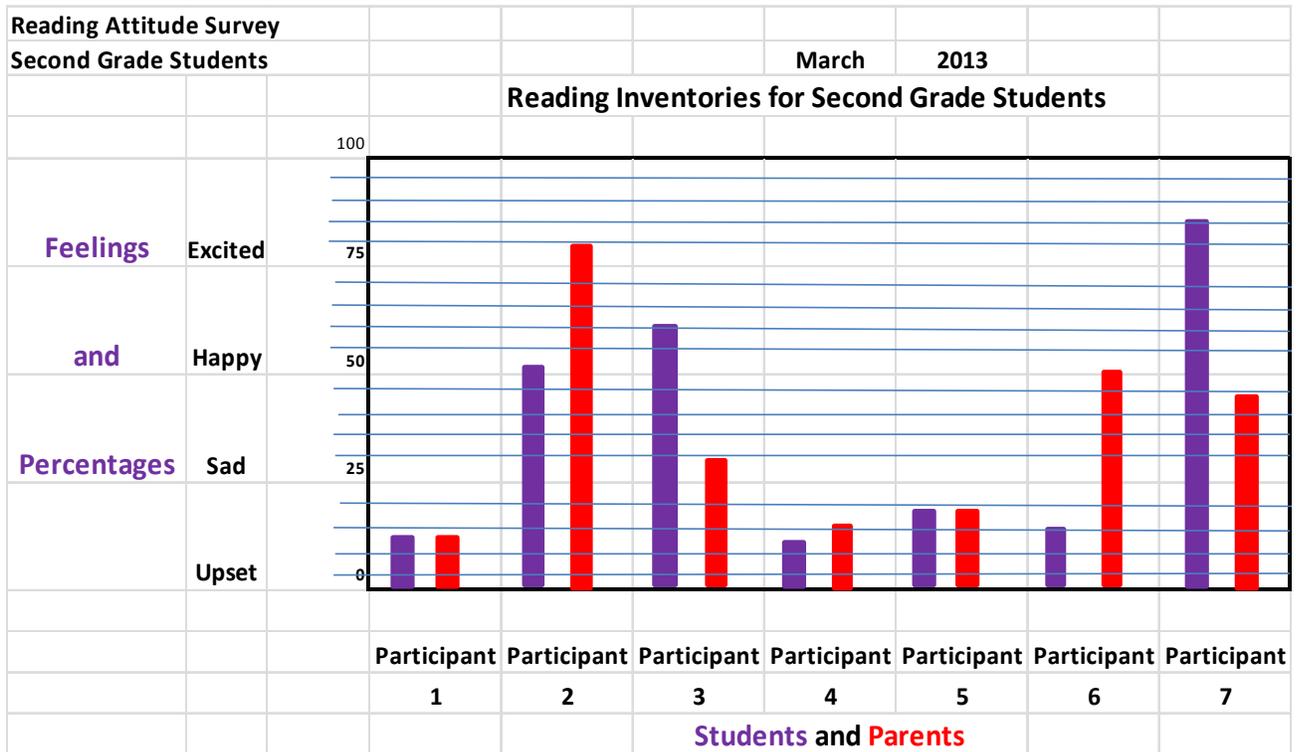
Next, I used the Benchmark Assessment System by Fountas and Pinnell (2011). This test is used to determine the students' instructional reading level as determined by their vocabulary particularly related to synonyms and antonyms. I chose this assessment to guide my knowledge of their vocabulary background and thought process with words. The results of the assessments are listed below by assessment and when they were administered. This information can reflect on the question I had of using small groups to engage in choral, independent, and partner reading to help to increase motivation along with vocabulary skills in reading.



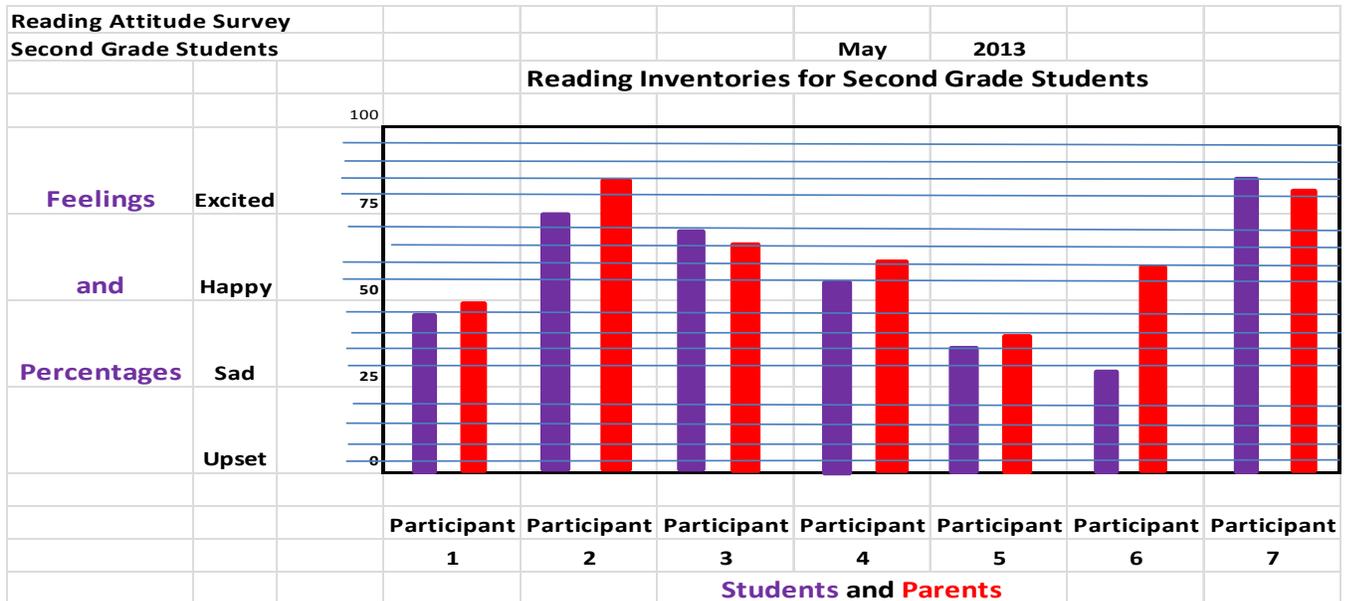
As with the previous test findings, all students increased their scores. I realize that, due to the short time frame of this project, the assessments do not necessarily show changes in the reading level of these students, but through observation it was noticed that their attitude toward the assessments increased, so they seemed to have more motivation and pride to do well in their work. I am interested in the fact that they all increased their scores. I would be hopeful that given more time and encouragement with the reluctant reader interventions, I would see an increase of reading levels. Through the observation of each of the student groups, I saw the ongoing desire in the students to find success in what they were doing. Successful reading experiences seemed to transform students in their willingness to continue with our novel and increased interest in what we were doing. The participants would constantly see me in the hallways and ask if it was their time to come to our group meetings. They wanted to know what was coming next in the story and participated in group discussion about character, vocabulary, and settings of the story.

I also administered a reading attitude inventory using the Garfield survey. I did this first in March again in April and finally in November of 2013. Interestingly enough, you will notice the results for Participant 7, who did not want to have to read; her first score in March was really high, that was due to her wanting to get out of reading. She thought if she scored high she wouldn't have to be a part of my study and not have to read. When we took the survey again the bar was still high, but this was a more accurate score for her present level. I believe that if she would have answered the questions honestly the first time there would be a more significant change in her score. Using the Garfield inventory has an impact on the answer to one my original questions comparing individualized reading strategies to increased attitude and motivation to reading. Did specific reading strategies increase the motivation of reluctant

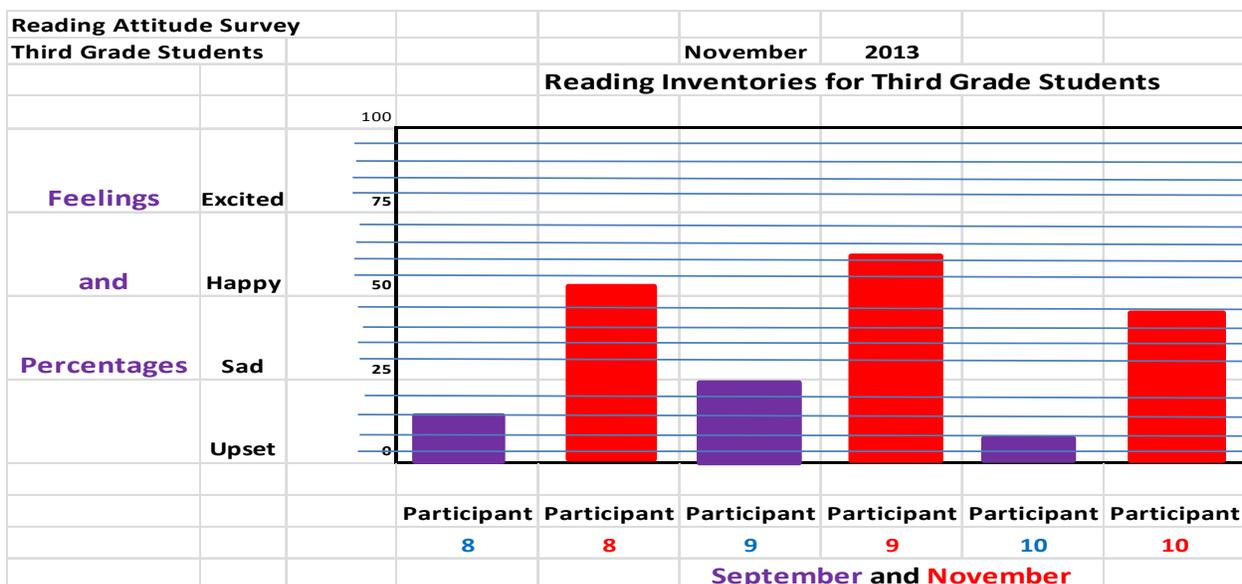
readers? The following information helps to confirm the correlation of small groups, reading journals, and literature interaction can increase the motivation and attitudes of reluctant readers.



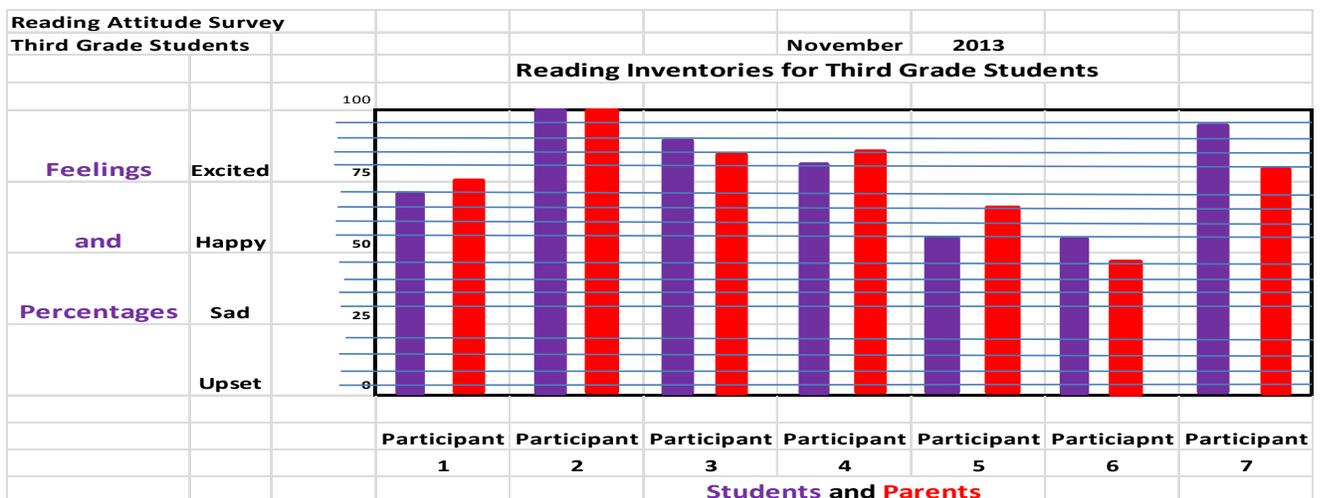
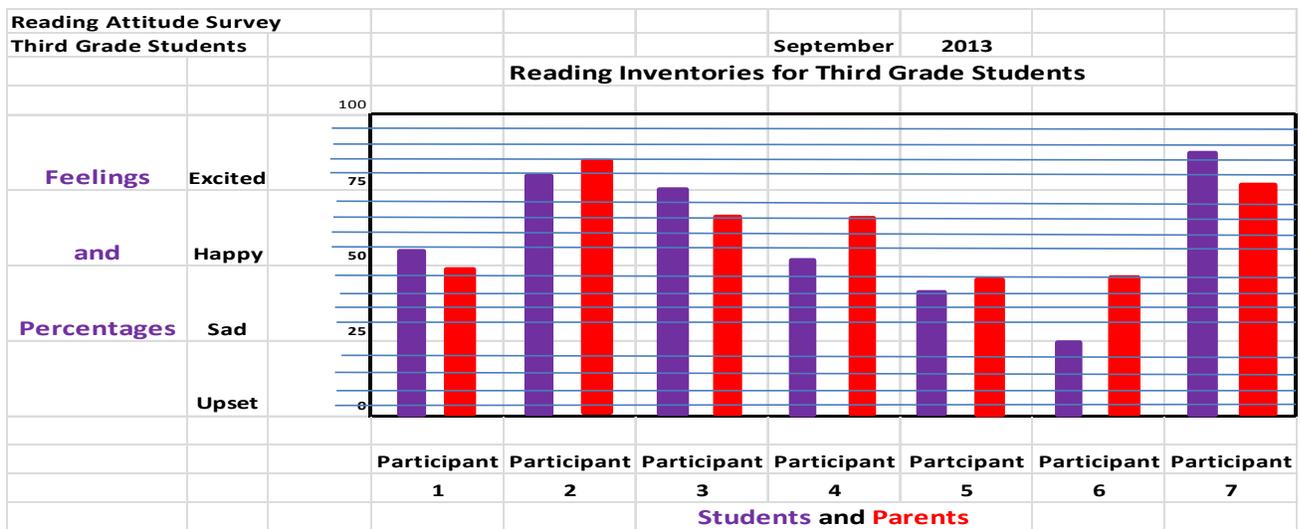
As you can see, the results from the attitude inventories at the beginning of the study were pretty low. As you look at the next graph, you will notice that the scores increased and, with observation, I believe that they all increased in direct relation to the interest in our small group reading and discussions. The participants were engaged and motivated in our group meetings. It was fun to watch them learn with each other.



The three participants that I included in the fall semester did fill out a reading attitude survey, but I was unable to get a response to the survey I sent home. I did find in just a short time the three additional students increased their own scores with the inventory after participating in a small group reading study.



They did not have as much time, but with the use of direct instruction and allowing for review and facilitating success with the tasks at hand, I found the participants growing in their ability to comprehend and use vocabulary clues to help them be successful. These three additional participants all filled out an attitude inventory that was much more positive than the original survey. After only a few weeks working with this group I found that they began to show great progress.



Discussions and Implications

Previous studies from Ganske, Monroe, and Strickland in 2003 helped to identify the importance behind small group reading and the connection of reading journals in reflecting on individual experiences with literature. Also, Clementi in 2010 and Ambe in 2007 focused studies involving vocabulary and comprehension support for reluctant readers. Brinda in 2011 added to previous studies on reading together to increase motivation and positive approaches to literacy. All of these authors and researchers supported the interventions of small group reading, vocabulary, and comprehension to instill the importance of these approaches to motivating the reluctant reader. As of yet, I had not found a study that incorporated a combination of interventions including small group reading, vocabulary and comprehension, along with creating reading journals to motivate and support the reluctant reader when approaching reading. The combination of this study incorporates all areas of research, yielding improved results and motivation to read.

This study was widely accepted by other classroom teachers. They were so happy to have someone invest some additional time with their students in hopes to help increase their excitement for reading. Teachers want to know what works and they want to implement best practice interventions and strategies in their classroom, so they were very accommodating to help and be flexible with this study in order to help find some new ways to interact with reluctant readers and help them increase their reading performances. The principal of the school was also very supportive of this project. It will be nice to see some additional reading groups and reading journals started in classrooms in the future here at our school. I believe the new reading curriculum, will help to implement some of the interventions and strategies used in this study to

help advance the motivation of students and their reading. I was very pleased to see the overall increased motivation and attitudes about reading during this study.

Limitations and Conclusion

As mentioned before, I really only see one limitation to this particular research project, and that would be time. I think having some additional time would really drive home the results of this project and help to increase the reliability and validity of the information presented. The teachers chose students in their classrooms who were using avoidance and lacked motivation for reading. Determining when or how a student abandons their reading tasks, as well as identifying the reading strategies used by the reader, and whether or not there is a particular area in which the reader may struggle, such as comprehension, can help teachers identify why students are reluctant readers. Listening to the students talk about the stories we were reading and the journals they were creating was just incredible. One of the things I do question, though, is the real validity of this project, due to the fact that I was something new to them. They were always excited to come and always excited to be a part of our reading group. What I am unclear about is whether that is due to the excitement of something new or the excitement of reading. They, in a way, had an opportunity others did not in their classroom and that is always a cooler thing in students' eyes. Also, this was something they were able to leave their classroom for and get special attention. Motivating students to be less reluctant readers and more confident readers is very gratifying. I have been enjoying my time with my reading groups, finding a way to interact with them, while involving them in the process of their own education to build confidence and excitement for reading. I am excited to have the opportunity to motivate lifelong readers. There are a lot of articles and research on reluctant readers, and it seems to be all pointing in the same direction. Students need to feel like they matter and are worthy of learning. These attitudes

build confidence and give them the encouragement to want to do their best and create their own successes. I feel honored to be working with such a fine group of students who, when I first started to see them didn't really seem excited about having to participate in reading instruction, progress to becoming readers who are excited to read and have even used the words "Do I get to come read today?" Currently, I am working with one particular student who at the beginning did not want to be pulled aside to read, but about half way through our project said "You know I first didn't know about this reading stuff, but now I love it!" I would like to take this research in many different ways and I do believe it can be split out many directions. What I truly want to do though is find a way not only in small groups, but in large groups across the board to bring in reading journals, Readers Theater, and other activities to create a fun loving place for students to catch the love for reading. Even though a student is a reluctant reader, it does not mean that they cannot become a skilled and enthusiastic reader. Teachers need to know their students and how they learn to in order to best teach and motivate them to be the best they can be. As I read about extraordinary students in the journal articles for this research, it became evident that finding the reason behind reading difficulties is as challenging as finding interventions to build confidence and success. Another conclusion for me is the importance that we all need to get to know our students and how they learn to best prepare them for a successful future. The students' hard work was noticeable in our reading group and it was apparent how much motivation seemed to be coming from students who not long ago were labeled reluctant readers.

No matter what academic level reluctant readers are, teachers can find their "breakthrough" experience and experience the greatest of teaching rewards as they watch the students discover the love for reading (Grimes 1991).

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