

Running Head: Comprehension through Puppetry
Teaching Comprehension Strategies through the use of
Puppets & Sensory Experiences

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Abstract

Comprehending while reading is an important skill for making meaning. Learning how to comprehend and think about books, while decoding words, is a very demanding task. Many children in the primary grades are so focused on decoding words that they aren't thinking about what they are reading. The purpose of this study was to see how exposure to comprehension puppets and sensory experiences, through whole and small group lessons, would affect students' ability to think about what is being read and retell stories. Would their listening comprehension scores increase? Would their reading comprehension scores increase on the F&P Assessment? The comprehension puppets were used 1-2 times a week during read-alouds, guided reading, and during the mini-lesson prior to independent reading. A pre and post attitude survey, listening comprehension assessments, and F&P Assessments were used to determine if students demonstrated growth in understanding comprehension skills. Research did show that the use of comprehension puppets and sensory experiences increased students listening comprehension.

Introduction

Student's listening and reading comprehension can be boosted through the explicit instruction of specific comprehension strategies. Since reading is a meaning-making process, students need to be taught strategies to help them make meaning. In order to do this students need to be engaged in discussions and take ownership for their learning. Some strategies that engage readers and help them make meaning while reading are props/puppets, music, and hand motions during read-alouds.

What does research say about strategies that are effective for teaching comprehension?

In order for students to become proficient readers and writers they need to be taught several strategies that they can use before, during, and after a reading experience. These strategies need to be explicitly taught so that students can self-monitor their thinking during these literacy experiences (Morrison, V. & Wlodarczyk, 2009). Recently, research has shown that comprehension instruction is an essential feature in primary-grade literacy programs (Block, Parris, & Whiteley, 2008). Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin (1990, cited in Collins Block, Parris, Whiteley, 2008) noted, "...that by third grade, children who cannot comprehend tend to fall further behind their peers in overall reading abilities regardless of their decoding skill levels" (p.461). Duke (2001, cited in Gregory & Cahill, 2010) stated, "Thanks to the comprehension revolution (1970-1990), we have been able to develop new intellectual tools, increase recognition that there is something more to reading than decoding, and better determine what good readers do as they read" (p.515). Enhancing children's comprehension and language capabilities is essential for promoting literacy growth.

Helping students interact with text needs to be done in an engaging way that recognizes student's diverse learning styles. Howard Gardner's multiple

intelligence theory outlines eight intelligences or ways students learn best.

Included in the eight intelligences are linguistic, musical, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences. (Gardner, H. 1993). Baker, Dreher, & Guthrie (2000, cited in Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009) stated "Getting students to engage with texts involves a multiplicity of simultaneous activities, including motivation, content knowledge, literacy strategies, and social collaboration before, during, and after a literacy event" (p.110). Research has shown that effective strategies for increasing engagement and comprehension include reading aloud, the use of puppets and props, integration of music, concrete and sensory experiences, and kinesthetic movements, such as hand motions.

Read Aloud Strategies.

Read-alouds are essential in engaging students in literature and providing teachers with opportunities to introduce comprehension strategies (Myers, 2005). However, studies on reading aloud have not always produced strong results. Text selection and quality discussions focused on the ideas in the book, play a big role in the effectiveness of the read aloud. To simply choose an unchallenging text and read it aloud is not good enough (Beck & McKeown, 2001). So what makes the read-aloud an effective strategy to develop language and comprehension skills? Dickinson (2001, cited in McGee & Schickendanz, 2007) says, "Research has demonstrated that the most effective read-alouds are those in which children are actively

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involved asking and answering questions and making predictions rather than passively listening." (p.742). An effective and engaging read-aloud has many educational benefits including vocabulary development, comprehension growth, listening and speaking skills, and motivation to want to read and write (Morrison & Włodarczyk, 2009).

An effective interactive read-aloud includes the following components: reading a single book repeatedly, reading books related by topic, vocabulary instruction, teachers modeling higher level thinking skills, teachers asking questions that require thoughtful and analytic talk, and teachers prompting students to recall stories (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007). Developing questioning skills is vital to comprehension growth. Research has shown that self-questioning skills promote a deeper understanding and increase independence in learning (Glaubman, R. Glaubman, H. & Ofir, 2001). When teachers take advantage of the read-aloud process to model questioning and ask thoughtful questions, students are guided toward independence in questioning. Secondly, the texts that are chosen for a read-aloud need to contain challenging concepts so that students have an opportunity to explore the ideas presented (Beck & McKeown, 2001). McGee and Schickedanz (2007) state, "While predictable books have a role in preschool and kindergarten literacy programs, sophisticated picture books play an additional role

of expanding vocabulary and enhancing oral comprehension" (p.743). Lastly, a study by Beck and McKeown showed that children often ignored the linguistic content and relied on the pictures alone to answer questions about a story. Read-alouds can be improved by deliberately waiting to show the pictures at times, until after the reading and discussions have taken place (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

Reading aloud to students is not a difficult task in itself, but taking advantage of the read-aloud effectively is demanding and complex. Edwards Santoro, Chard, Howard, and Baker cite "There are certainly times when read-alouds can simply focus on the enjoyment of books; however, read-alouds must be carefully planned if they are to affect students' comprehension" (p.407). Keeping the text ideas as the focus of discussion, while monitoring and scaffolding children's ideas to help them construct meaning is key. An effective read-aloud experience can greatly enhance children's literacy and comprehension skills (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

Concrete and Sensory Experiences.

Comprehension is a complex and abstract process. Teaching comprehension strategies in a way that helps young learners think in a concrete way can be very effective. This can be done through concrete and sensory experiences. McGregor states "First impressions are critical to a learner. When introduced to a new

thinking strategy, the learner instinctively asks, "Is this interesting? Do I need or want to know this? Can I succeed in thinking this way?" A concrete launching lesson helps students reply with a resounding yes to each of those questions (McGregor, 2007, p.3). These concrete lessons are opportunities for students to think without the use of text. Objects are used in place of text to introduce a new thinking strategy and students are able to think, make connections, and share. Sensory experiences include the use of art, music, movement, or food to further explore a new thinking strategy. Children can easily make connections to concrete objects, which allows all students to share and contribute to the discussion. This boosts confidence and helps children feel comfortable in sharing. (McGregor 2007). A crucial aspect of concrete and sensory experiences is the sharing and talking among peers. During concrete and sensory lessons students are paired and encouraged to share their thinking during turn and talk. McGregor explains "Reading is a social act. To promote deep thinking in our classrooms, we must build in time for talk... When students are simply encouraged to turn and talk, *every student* gets the chance to be heard or to listen to a classmate, as compared with a more traditional approach..." (McGregor, 2007, p.6). When teachers emphasize the social aspect of reading and allow students to actively participate and bring their background knowledge or schema to the learning experience, meaning is constructed (Lennox, 2012). A combination of concrete and sensory experiences

paired with student discussion and sharing encourage and support comprehension growth.

Comprehension Puppets.

Since young children often construct and express their learning through dramatic play experiences, puppets can be an engaging instructional tool to help support read-aloud lessons (Myers, 2005). Meyers (2005) says, "...I use them [comprehension puppets] to make the lessons more enjoyable and assist my children in generating language and finding their "voices" when learning the strategies" (p.316). Meyers used four puppets to aide her in teaching comprehension strategies. The Princess Storyteller summarized, Quincy Questioner asked literal questions, Clara Clarifier helped children clarify their thinking and ask deeper questions, and the Wizard was the predictor. Each puppet was introduced and modeled with think-alouds during a read-aloud (Meyers, 2005). Stadler and Ward (2010) cited, "Researchers have presented stories orally or orally paired with visual stimuli such as pictures, movies, videotapes, or with tangible props such as puppets, costumes, or dolls. Soundy (1993) recommends toy props as an effective tool for actively involving preschool and kindergarten students in retelling story events." (p.172). Puppets or props create a sensory experience for children in which they can be comfortable to express their ideas and thinking without the constraints of text. Once students are comfortable

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expressing their ideas and using oral language to express their thinking the puppets can be transferred and used with picture less books or text itself (McGregor 2007).

Music.

"Gardner noted that the musical intelligence is the first intelligence to emerge in young learners. Many young children appear to be naturally inclined to hum or to sing a tune so it is beneficial to build upon their musical interests and enhance their literacy development simultaneously" (Paquette & Rieg, 2008, p.228). Since children gravitate to music it can easily and naturally be integrated into all curricular areas. This integration across curricular areas helps develop and extend vocabulary and comprehension skills. A classroom environment that is musically and literacy-rich will capture children's interest and encourage creativity, while setting the stage for a positive learning environment (Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Music can aid in the sensory experience for young learners to once again help them express their thinking and learning without the use of texts.

Hand Motions.

Naturally, comprehension instruction will look different with younger children than it would with older children. Instruction will be more active and visual. This kinesthetic approach to instruction results in children having a better

understanding of what they are reading (Gregory & Cahill, 2010). When children are presented information through a variety of pathways (e.g., auditory, visual, kinesthetic), their retention of information increases significantly (Block, Parris, & Whiteley, 2008). In a study looking at kindergarten comprehension strategies Anne Gregory and Mary Ann Cahill (2010) observed kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Hope, as she introduced the following strategies: activating schema, making connections, visualizing, asking questions, and inferring. This was done by defining the strategy first, then providing a visual representation of its meaning, and lastly asking students to use the strategy, through the use of hand signals, during the story. The hand motions give children concrete images to go along with each comprehension process. Children can demonstrate, with the use of hand motions, that they are metacognitively aware of their thinking (Block, Parris, & Whiteley, 2008).

What techniques help children develop ownership in the use of these strategies?

The goal of teaching comprehension strategies to children is to teach readers how to read reflectively and challenge themselves to think more deeply (Hoyt, 2002).

In order to help students take ownership in their learning it is essential to first model the strategies, through a think aloud, and then provide several opportunities for student talk. When students are invited to take more control, they see the

purpose of the strategies. It is the teacher's job to provide students with the tools they need to talk meaningfully about text and allowing them to learn from one another (Brown, 2008). Cunningham and Shagoury state "Comprehension and community go hand in hand as the students learn to work together and do the hard work that goes along with making meaning out of difficult texts" (p.55). Research shows that modeling and reciprocal teaching are two effective instructional methods to help students work together take ownership in their learning.

Modeling/Think Aloud.

Thinking aloud is the process of stopping whatever you are doing, giving a signal to show what you are doing, and then saying out loud what you are thinking. You say out loud what you would normally be thinking in your head. This allows the teacher to share their thinking process with students (Dori, 2007). This explicit modeling of thinking processes gives students language to describe the strategies they are applying. They can also see that adult readers think deeply about what they are reading (Hoyt, 2002). Kane (2003, cited in Dori, 2007) stated, "Thinking aloud introduces young children to metacognition, the act of thinking about one's own thinking. Efficient readers use metacognition to monitor and control the reading process to ensure they continually make meaning from the text" (p. 101). (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007) found that children's answers during a read-aloud were more likely to be related to the story if the teacher had modeled analytical thinking

prior to questioning the students. Most young children need teachers to model how to analytically think and question, as they are not yet capable of engaging in this skill on their own (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007).

Reciprocal Teaching.

According to Myers (2005), "It [reciprocal teaching] was created by Palincsar and Brown (1984) and is rooted in the theoretical work of Lev Vygotsky, who developed the concepts of the zone of proximal development and of children giving support to one another (scaffolding)" (p.315). In reciprocal teaching, students work together in small discussion groups with a discussion leader. They are engaged in four essential reading processes: predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing (Hoyt, 2002). Marcell, DeCleene, and Juettner (2010) noted "What makes RT unique is that four strategies are explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced *cohesively*-in the context of authentic reading experiences (p.689). "Hoyt (2002) states, "The goal is to teach readers how to read reflectively, challenge themselves to think more deeply, and to use group interaction to enhance everyone's learning" (p.228). The teacher will contribute more to the discussions at first, but will eventually shift the control of analytic thinking to the students. As the teacher shifts the responsibility to the students, they will start to model and scaffold strategies for each other (Brown, 2008). A study by Pamela Ann Myers found that kindergarten students are able to take ownership for their own

learning and participate in discussion groups, through the use of adapted reciprocal teaching (Meyers, 2005). The goal of strategy instruction and reciprocal teaching is for learners to become self-regulated. When students' are self-regulated they are able to choose the comprehension strategy needed from several strategies in order to accomplish a particular goal in reading (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009).

Proficient readers have a toolbox full of strategies and are able to use the strategies needed during reading in order to make meaning.

Conclusion of the Literature Review

Strategies that prove to be effective for teaching comprehension skills include methods that involve the integration of the multiple intelligences such as music and movement. Using music and movement during the read-aloud can increase engagement and give children a concrete movement to associate with their thinking process. Modeling strategies and allowing children opportunities to discuss books gives them a voice and allows them to take ownership for their learning. The research shows that children of any age can engage in comprehension instruction and in group discussions. Through modified instructional methods kindergartners can participate too! In my study I wanted to see what effect comprehension puppets and sensory experiences would have on my kindergartners and their ability to retell stories that were read to them. Comprehension strategies were introduced first through concrete experiences. Then the comprehension puppets

were introduced as a sensory experience through modeling and used during read-alouds. Lastly, the puppets were available to explore and use during choice time.

Action Research: Teaching Comprehension Strategies through the use of Puppets and Sensory Experiences

Introduction/Purpose

I am a kindergarten teacher currently teaching at a Midwestern town public elementary school. As I was conducting year end assessments in the spring of 2010, I noticed that several students were not able to adequately retell stories. I became curious if the retell was challenging due to a lack of experience retelling or if students were so involved in the decoding of the text that they didn't make meaning while reading. The kindergarten team with whom I worked felt that our kindergarteners would be able to pass the reading assessment if they had a better understanding of comprehension strategies. My personal goal the following year was to work on teaching comprehension strategies through the use of puppets and music. My hope was that through the use of props, students would have a deeper understanding of retelling and questioning skills and be able to transfer this knowledge over while reading on their own.

I did a pilot action research project that incorporated the use of current research and best practices to help guide my students toward becoming secure and

independent at using comprehension strategies and retelling stories. The pilot action research was conducted in the spring of 2011, with 9 kindergarten boys and 11 kindergarten girls. It was a 6 week project that incorporated the use of comprehension puppets and music. I also tried to introduce and guide students through reciprocal teaching groups. I started by interviewing the students and completing a Reading Attitude Survey (see appendix 2). Next, I did a read-aloud with the same big book twice over the course of a few days. The read-aloud was strictly a read-aloud with no discussion or questioning. Then I gave each student the Listening Comprehension Assessment (see appendix 1). These were my baseline measures. After the 6 weeks of teaching I re-conducted the Reading Attitude Survey and Listening Comprehension Assessment and each individual's score.

The results from my pilot action research showed that 100% of my students had made the year end benchmark by achieving a 3 on the Listening Comprehension Rubric (see appendix 1). The biggest limitations of the pilot study were the time constraints and being able to effectively model, guide, and release reciprocal groups to independence. My biggest wonder after I completed the pilot study was if kindergarten students' would be able to transfer their retelling knowledge from the read-aloud into their own reading. How strong of a retell would they have when completing the DRA or Fountas & Pinnell reading assessments?

My current action research project is investigating kindergarten students listening comprehension, as well as their own reading comprehension after the introduction and use of props and puppets during my teaching. Due to time constraints for effectively modeling and releasing students to independence, I removed the reciprocal teaching aspect for this study. I have a kindergarten class of 9 boys and 9 girls that participated in the research. I have 2 additional boys in the classroom who were included in the teaching, but I did not receive parent permission to share their data. I am using the same methods as I did in the first action research investigations, but I have made some minor adjustments. First, I have lengthened the study to 10 weeks of teaching comprehension strategies. I am hoping to explore more deeply with each comprehension strategy through the use of sensory experiences. Next, I have taken out the reciprocal groups based on the time constraints to adequately release students to independence in the pilot action research. Last, I am completing the Fountas & Pinnell Assessment (see appendix 3) in order to analyze growth in comprehension during the child's independent reading, and I am also continuing to assess listening comprehension and completing the Reading Attitude Survey (see appendix 2). I anticipate that through the use of current research I will be able to use best practices to guide my students toward becoming secure and independent at comprehending and retelling stories.

Research Question

How will the use of hands on exposure to comprehension puppets and sensory experiences through whole and small group lessons affect kindergarten students' ability to retell stories and will their listening and reading comprehension scores increase?

Research Sub-Questions

Will students use hand motions to share their thinking during read alouds?

Will student enjoyment increase during read alouds with the use of the puppets and increased understanding of the text?

Method

The entire kindergarten class, 11 boys and 9 girls, have been introduced to the puppets through read alouds (the study includes 9 boys, and 9 girls due to parent permission). I spent the first half of the school year establishing read-aloud routines and modeling how to think about stories and share with a partner. The students have had opportunities to share with partners and with the whole group their thinking during and after the read alouds. In January 2014 I explicitly taught comprehension strategies, first through the use of a concrete experience (for most strategies) and next through a sensory experience with music and puppets. The strategies I taught were as follows: metacognition, making connections, visualizing, summarizing, questioning, and predicting. I also introduced the use of hand motions to express thinking during a read aloud. This was modeled, but due to time constraints was not formally measured. I did observe how often

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kindergarten students used the hand motions to express that they were thinking during the read-aloud. During guided reading the strategies were reviewed and practiced with the books at their level. Lastly, the puppets and concrete objects were placed in a dramatic play station with the books we used during the read-alouds. The “story station” was available for students to explore during free choice time.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN for WHOLE GROUP LESSONS

Week	Comprehension Strategy	Concrete Object Lesson	Comprehension Puppet	Books used for Read Aloud
1&2	Metacognition	Reading Salad Think Aloud Bubble		<u>Llama Llama and the Bully Goat</u> by Anna Dewdney <u>Winter</u> by JoAnn Early Maken
3	Summarizing		Teller Troll	<u>The Carrot Seed</u> by Ruth Krauss <u>Charlie Needs a Cloak</u> by Tomie dePaola <u>Maisy's Pool</u> by Lucy Cousins
4&5	Visualizing	Visualizing Tubes Objects in Nature		<u>Cats Colors</u> by Jane Cabrera <u>Cookies Week</u> by Cindy Ward "Cats" by Eleanor Farjeon "Umbrellas" by Lillian Moore
6	Predicting		Madame Predicta	<u>The Three Dassies</u> by Jan Brett
7&8	Questioning Wondering		Quincy Owl	<u>The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry, & The Big Hungry Bear</u> by Don and Audrey Wood

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				<u>Brave Bear</u> by Kathy Mallat <u>Letter to Amy</u> by Ezra Jack Keats
9	Making Connections: Text to Self Text to Text Text to World		Discussion Dragon	<u>The Three Dassies</u> by Jan Brett <u>Courderoy's Pocket</u> by Don Freeman <u>A Day with Doctors</u> by Jan Kottke
10	Review of all strategies and putting them all together during the read aloud		Review all puppets	<u>Henry's Wrong Turn</u> by Harriet M. Zeifert <u>Three Hens and a Peacock</u> by Lester Laminack

Data Collection

I collected quantitative and qualitative data to support my research. I completed a series of base line assessments in January 2014 including the following: Reading Attitude Survey (see appendix 2), Listening Comprehension Assessment (see appendix 1), and Fountas & Pinnell reading benchmark assessment (see appendix 3). All of the assessments were completed before the introduction of the concrete object lessons and comprehension puppets. After the 10 weeks of instruction I completed all three assessment measures (see appendix 1, 2, and 3) to analyze the growth of the class in the area of comprehension. The qualitative data was the interview or Reading Attitude Survey (see appendix 2). I used the information gathered from the survey to see if their interest and understanding of text increased. Lastly, I taped some of my students playing in the "story station" during free choice in order to observe and analyze reading behaviors.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed to see if the entire class increased in applying comprehension strategies. I looked at student growth in three areas. First of all I looked at the Reading Attitude Survey (see appendix 2) to look at student's enjoyment of reading and ability to explain how they solve comprehension problems when reading. Next, I looked at growth in answering questions about stories they listened to using the Listening Comprehension Assessment (see appendix 1). I was looking to see if they were able to answer beyond the text questions. I wanted to see if students could think deeply about books and form opinions and inferences, rather than just summarizing what had happened in the book. Overall I looked to see if they moved levels within the rubric, which is based on 4 levels of recall. Lastly, I looked at their independent reading comprehension. The F&P assessment (see appendix 3) has two areas of comprehension that are assessed. The two areas look at comprehension within the text and beyond the text. I analyzed each child's independent reading comprehension to see if their total comprehension score increased on a 7 point scale.

Results

My goal in this action research project was to specifically help move the students in my class who had scored a 2 or below on the district wide kindergarten listening comprehension assessment (see appendix 1). The rubric for this assessment and

the percentages of children in each group after the January assessment is shown in figure 1. Three of my eighteen students scored a 1 and nine of my eighteen students scored a 2 on the January Listening Comprehension assessment. These 12 students were my target group. The year-end goal is to score a 3 or above on this assessment. I only had six kindergartners who were at level 3 or above on the rubric in January.

Figure 1: Rubric for Listening Comprehension Assessment and Class Scores

1 Has not met grade level standards and needs improvement	2 Does not consistently and independently meet standards	3 Independently and consistently meets standards	4 Exceeds grade level standards
After listening to and discussing the same story, recalls random elements from the story; responses don't match questions.	After listening to and discussing the same story, answers literal questions (who, what, and where) about the beginning, middle, and end.	After listening to and discussing the same story, answers questions that describe events from the beginning (characters and setting), middle (problem), and end (resolution) of the story; includes characters emotions and basic inferences.	After listening to and discussing the same story, student retells to include: *Beginning, middle, end *Characters, setting, important events *Character emotions and/or motivation In addition, student answers questions to predict what might happen next (after the story) OR if the events or characters were different.
17% of Class in January	50% of Class in January	28% of Class in January	5% of Class in January
0% of Class in April	17% of Class in April	33% of Class in April	50% of Class in April

The results of the study actually showed growth in listening comprehension for 72% of my total class of 18 students. Secondly, ten of my twelve targeted students (83%) also showed noticeable growth on the assessment, and 9 of them achieved their year-end goal. Figure 2 shows the scores on the listening comprehension assessment in January and April for the class as a whole and figure 3 shows the growth of the twelve targeted students on the assessment in January and April.

Figure 2: Listening Comprehension Scores in January and April for the Whole Kindergarten Class

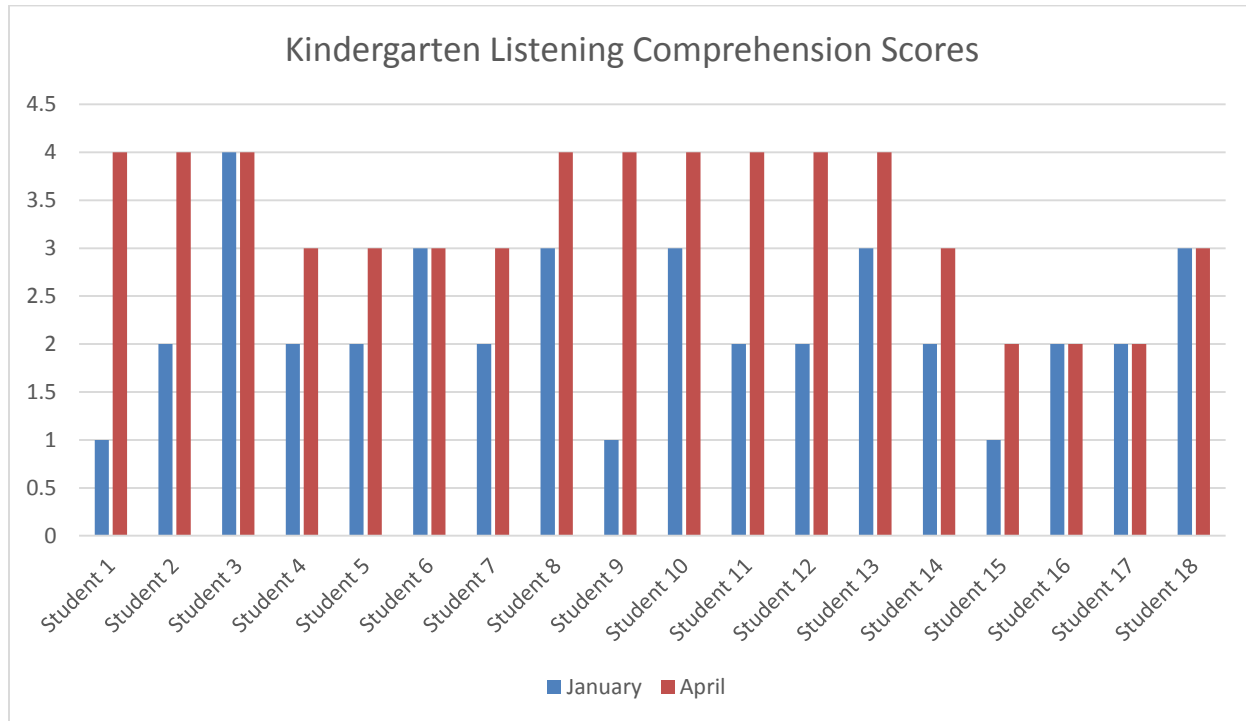
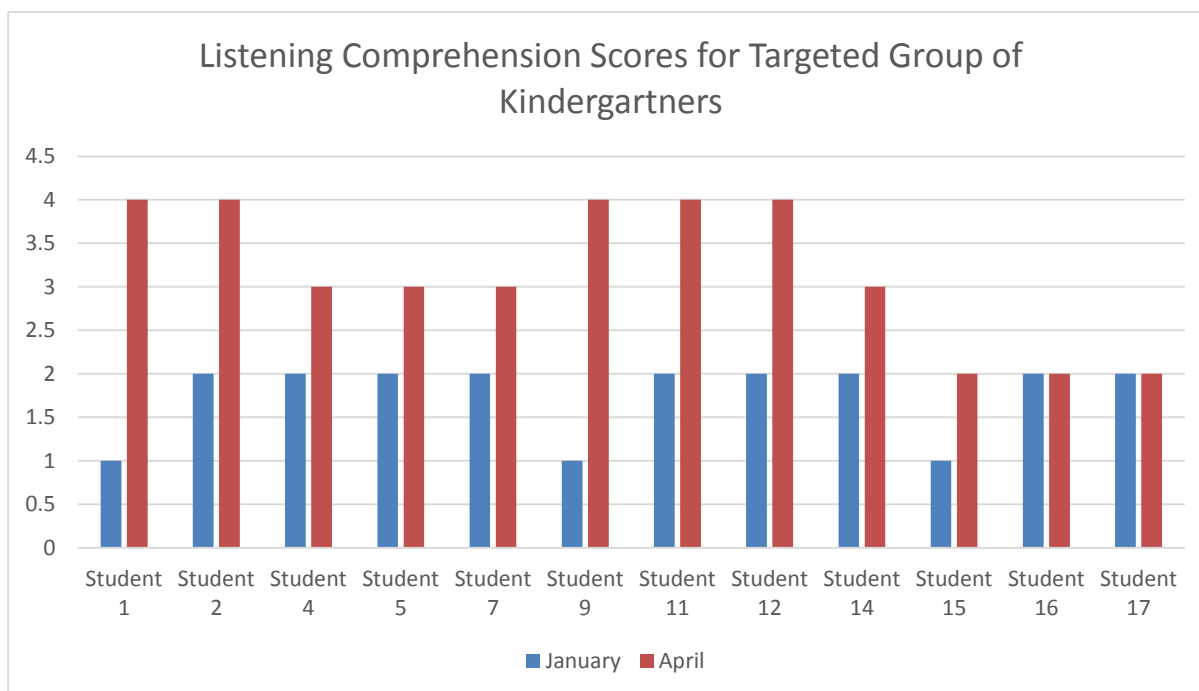


Figure 3: Listening Comprehension Scores in January and April for the Twelve Targeted Students



The data charted in the graphs shows that 15 out of 18 kindergarten students achieved the year end goal of scoring a 3 or higher on the listening comprehension assessment. One concern I noted was that Students 16 and 17 didn't show any growth at all from January to April. The reason may be because of a few things. One of the students has very limited school experience and language barriers, which could account for the inability to answer questions beyond the text. The other student has behavior concerns and was reluctant to participate in partner sharing activities. We used partner sharing daily during the read aloud process and this student often withdrew from the group. I was not concerned with Student 15

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not reaching the level 3 goal. This student had very low comprehension and verbal skills when they entered kindergarten. Although this student didn't reach a level 3 on the rubric, they did move from a 1 to a 2 and is showing growth in verbally expressing himself.

There were also 9 children who achieved a level 4 on the rubric, which is very impressive. In order to receive a score of 4 the child needs to answer most of the questions asked. The questions are all inference based and force the child to think beyond the text and to predict what may happen if the story were to continue on. The questions are open ended and there is no wrong answer. Students need to feel comfortable enough to be creative and take a risk. I noticed that children who did not meet the level 4 requirements were more hesitant about having the correct answer versus letting their imagination take the lead.

Figure 3: Independent Reading Comprehension Scores for Kindergarten Students on the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment

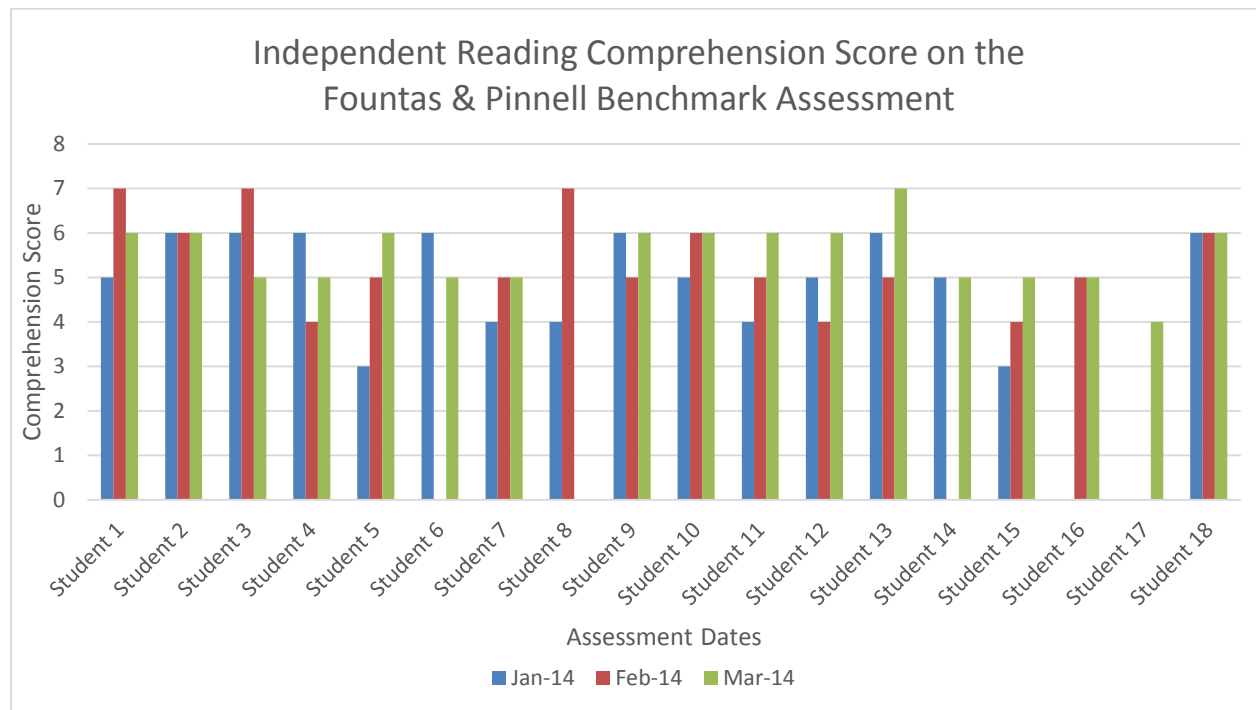


Figure 3 shows that when I had students independently read and complete a retelling using the F&P Assessment (see appendix 3) all students were able to score a "satisfactory", which equals earning 5 out of 7 points on the F&P retelling rubric. There were several students whose retelling scores decreased at some point during the 3 months of assessments. However, I think this is because of the complexity of independently reading the text without doing a picture walk or stopping to talk about the book with a partner, and then having to remember everything that happened in the book plus think beyond the text. When I listened

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to the students share what the story was about, I observed stronger retell skills and more confidence in thinking and sharing thinking. 100% of my students scored at least a 5 on the rubric in March, with the exception of Student 8 and Student 17. Student 8 did not pass the next leveled text and therefore did not have a score during the month of March. However, Student 8 did show significant growth from January to February with the retelling process. It is my hope that when they do eventually pass the next reading level assessment they will continue to have strong retelling skills. Student 17 achieved a 4 on the F&P retelling rubric, however this was the first time that they passed a leveled text. In the previous months they had never passed the A book and therefore this is their first time answering these questions. I would expect to see growth as this student begins to read more. Overall, I am not surprised to see inconsistencies with the comprehension score when the kindergarten student independently read. There are many complexities that accompany an emergent reader while they are decoding and remembering what is read. They are not experienced readers with developed skills and strategies needed to effectively comprehend a book that is challenging for them. As the text difficulty increases it makes sense that their comprehension may decrease. My goal for them would be to score between 5-7 on this assessment.

Lastly, I had given a pre and post attitude survey to find out how children felt about listening to stories and what strategies they used to help figure out words and ideas they didn't understand. I noticed that during the pre-test survey all of the children said they liked to hear stories read to them and a majority of them liked fiction or both fiction and non-fiction. 28% of the children said that they always understood everything that was read to them and when I asked what they did or what strategies they used to help them understand all of them said they asked an adult or did nothing at all. There was also a lot of confusion, because when I asked what they did when they didn't understand something in a story many of them replied that they try to sound the word out again. I think that this is the focus for them right now as beginning readers and so it is hard for them to differentiate between understanding ideas and what words mean versus figuring out how to read a word. During the post-test survey 28% of children said that they always understood everything that was read to them. I found this fascinating because the other children in the group were quick to correct them and remind them that even Mrs. Johnson doesn't understand what all words mean in books. When I asked them what strategies they use to help them better understand books 100% reported something about the comprehension puppets and their role in reading. I did notice however that when they named the puppet that could help them many students merely stated the role/job of that puppet, and not exactly

how they internalized the skill so that they could think for their self. When I specifically asked how the puppet helped them understand books they are reading several students were able to explain how predicting, making connections, and wondering helps them think about what they are reading. I am wondering how I can help them transfer these learned skills so that they are internalized and they can think on their own? I know that more time to practice is one of the key factors in this learning. I also believe that these students need more time to grow and use these new skills. If they can continue to use these skills as they acquire increased reading ability, they will be amazing thinkers!

Discussion

There were many things that went well in this study. I was most impressed with the amount of student sharing that happened when students worked in partners. Their discussions and ideas were very rich in detail and it appeared that they had a good understanding of the comprehension strategies that were being taught. We were also able to create useful anchor charts during these lessons and referred back to them several times during subsequent lessons. I was impressed with the level of engagement when I used puppets, music, and props. There was a lot of laughter along with learning. Next, students were able to show me with hand signals when they were thinking during the read aloud. There was a lot of thinking at times and it made it challenging to give all students the opportunity to share

aloud. However, this is why I have them paired during a read aloud so that they can at least share their thinking with their partner. This also allows for quieter students to share more comfortably in a less threatening environment. Lastly, students showed their enthusiasm for learning during their time spent at the "Story Station" set up in my classroom. It was very fulfilling to watch them use the strategies and techniques taught and "practice" the skills with their peers during their free choice time. They took on the voice of the puppets and it was clear that they were learning and having fun at the same time.

Limitations & Plans for Future Research

The biggest limitation in this study was time. I would have liked to tape students' responses on the pre and post survey since kindergarten students can't sufficiently record their own responses to the questions asked. I didn't have time to meet with each student one on one, so I had to complete the surveys in small groups. This meant they could hear their classmate's responses to questions and didn't think for themselves at times. It would have been more authentic to get each child's own response without peer influences.

Reciprocal teaching groups could be very beneficial to the learning process. In order to effectively create reciprocal groups there needs to be sufficient time to model the roles of each member in the group. Kindergarten children are capable of

working in discussion groups, but need a strong facilitator. It would be worth investigating further through an action research project that spanned a longer period of time. If the modeling of reciprocal groups was done all fall and winter, kindergarten students may be able to take the lead in late spring when children are more mature in their skills. It would be interesting to see if students would show more progress in comprehension skills with the use of reciprocal groups.

Conclusion

The comprehension puppets and sensory experiences will continue to be an integral part of my read-aloud procedure. Making the abstract concept of comprehension strategies more concrete for young learners through the use of sensory experiences is effective and engaging. This teaching strategy acknowledges each child's individual learning style and addresses several of Gardner's multiple intelligences. Teaching in this manner also allows for scaffolding of new learning and guided practice in order to eventually gradually release students to independence in regard to comprehending during their own reading. In the future I would like to incorporate reciprocal teaching groups as it will give added benefits to the read aloud experience. However, I will have to be sure that I have a group of kindergartners who are ready and teach them when the time is right. I have shared the results with my kindergarten team members. We have continued to collaborate on how we can use the puppets and sensory lessons to help increase

Comprehension through Puppetry

student's comprehension skills. In conclusion, the puppets and props are an effective method to teach comprehension skills. In my future study, I want to look at how comprehension skills can be enhanced through reciprocal teaching.

Appendix 1: Listening Comprehension Assessment Rubric

Kindergarten Listening Comprehension: January

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: To be completed after reading a story aloud (without discussion) to the class 2 times, with the student not using the book. Begin with Level 2 questions and adjust your questions depending on student response. *Examples to show sample question and/or response to Corduroy, by Don Freeman.*

Level 1 (student recalls 0-1 event)	Notes																	
Student recalls random or unrelated elements/events.																		
Level 2: (student recalls 2-3 items listed below)																		
Who was in the story (characters)? <i>-Corduroy, little girl (Lisa), the mother, the watchman</i> Where did the story take place (setting)? <i>-department store</i> What was the problem in the story? <i>-Corduroy was missing a button so the little girl's mother didn't buy him. OR</i> <i>-Corduroy was lonely and wanted a home</i> How did they fix the problem (resolution)? <i>-Corduroy searched the store for his lost button but he couldn't find it; Lisa came in to buy him the next day, even without his button; she sewed a button on him when she got home OR</i> <i>-Lisa bought him and brought him home</i> How did the story end? <i>-Lisa bought Corduroy with her own money and brought him home to live with her</i>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 33%;">Area</th> <th style="width: 33%;">Yes</th> <th style="width: 33%;">No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Character(s)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Setting</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Problem</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resolution</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Area	Yes	No	Character(s)			Setting			Problem			Resolution		
Area	Yes	No																
Character(s)																		
Setting																		
Problem																		
Resolution																		
Level 3 (student recalls all of Level 2 and 1-2 additional items listed below)																		
CHARACTER EMOTION: Why was Corduroy sad in the beginning of the story? <i>-He didn't have a home – no one seemed to want to buy him OR</i> <i>-He couldn't find the button for his overalls</i> CHARACTER EMOTION: What made Corduroy happy at the end? <i>-Lisa came back and brought him and brought him home</i> INFERENCE: Why do you think the Corduroy was so worried about finding his button? <i>-He thought that if he found his button someone might buy him.</i> INFERENCE: Why was the watchman so surprised to find Corduroy upstairs? <i>-Because teddy bears can't move from the shelf.</i>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 33%;">Area</th> <th style="width: 33%;">Yes</th> <th style="width: 33%;">No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Character Emotion</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="2">Basic Inference</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="margin-top: 20px;"><i>Note: Answers may vary from what is given as an example. Accept answers that match the questions and the story.</i></p>			Area	Yes	No	Character Emotion					Basic Inference						
Area	Yes	No																
Character Emotion																		
Basic Inference																		

Level 4 (student recalls all of Levels 2, 3, and 4)	Notes		
	Area	Yes	No
What might have happened next, after the story ends? <i>-Answers may vary</i>	Predict what might happen next, after the story.		
Can you think of a different ending for this story? <i>-Answers may vary</i>	Predict what might happen if the events or characters were different.		
What might have happened if the watchman hadn't found Corduroy? <i>-Answers may vary</i>	<i>Note: Answers may vary from what is given as an example. Accept answers that match the question and the story.</i>		
If Lisa had not come back to buy Corduroy, what do you think would have happened? <i>-Answers will vary</i>			
How might the story have been different if Corduroy had the button when Lisa first came into the store? <i>-Answers will vary</i>			

Additional Comments:

SCORING RUBRIC

1 Has not met grade level standards and needs improvement	2 Does not consistently and independently meet standards	3 Independently and consistently meets standards	4 Exceeds grade level standards
After listening to and discussing the same story, recalls random elements from the story; responses don't match questions.	After listening to and discussing the same story, answers literal questions (who, what and where) about the beginning, middle and end.	After listening to and discussing the same story, answers questions that describe events from the beginning (characters and setting), middle (problem), and end (resolution) of the story; includes character emotions and basic inferences.	After listening to and discussing the same story, student retells to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ beginning, middle, and end ◦ characters, setting, important events ◦ character emotions and/or motivation In addition, student answers questions to predict what might happen next (after the story) OR if the events or characters were different.

Kindergarten Listening Comprehension: End-of-Year

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: To be completed after reading a story aloud (without discussion) to the class 2 times, with the student

not using the book. Begin with Level 2 questions and adjust your questions depending on student response.

*Examples to show sample question and/or response to **Tops and Bottoms, by Janet Stevens.***

Level 1 (student recalls 0-1 event)	Notes		
Student recalls random or unrelated elements/events.			
Level 2: (student recalls 2-3 items listed below)			
Who was in the story (characters)? <i>-Bear, Hare, Mrs. Hare</i> Where did the story take place (setting)? <i>-Bear's house and Hare's house</i> What was the problem in the story? <i>-Hare was very poor, and his family was hungry and needed some food</i> How did they fix the problem (resolution)? <i>-Hare tricked Bear into letting him plant vegetables in his garden – Hare kept the tops or bottoms (whichever was better) and gave the other to Bear</i> How did the story end? <i>-Hare bought back his land, and he and Mrs. Hare opened a vegetable stand</i>	Area	Yes	No
	Character(s)		
	Setting		
	Problem		
	Resolution		
Level 3 (student recalls all of Level 2 and 1-2 additional items listed below)			
CHARACTER EMOTION: Why was Hare sad in the beginning of the story? <i>-He didn't have enough money to buy food for his family</i> CHARACTER EMOTION: What made Hare happy at the end? <i>-His clever plan tricked Bear into letting Hare use his land. Hare kept the tops or bottoms and made enough money for food.</i> INFERENCE: Why do you think the Bear was so lazy? <i>-He didn't have to work because he had lots of money from his father</i> INFERENCE: How did Hare get vegetables from Bear? <i>-He tricked him with wanting tops or bottoms – whichever was best.</i>	Area	Yes	No
	Character Emotion		
	Basic Inference		
<p><i>Note: Answers may vary from what is given as an example.</i></p> <p><i>Accept answers that match the questions and the story.</i></p>			

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Level 4 (student recalls all of Levels 2, 3, and 4)	Notes		
<p>What might have happened next, after the story ends? -Answers may vary</p> <p>Can you think of a different ending for this story? -Answers may vary</p> <p>What might have happened if the Bear had been selfish and hadn't let Hare use his land? -Answers may vary</p> <p>If Hare had not planted vegetables, what might he have done to get food for his family? -Answers will vary</p> <p>How might the story have been different if Hare had owned the land instead of Bear? -Answers will vary</p>	Area	Yes	No
	Predict what might happen next, after the story.		
	Predict what might happen if the events or characters were different.		
	<p><i>Note: Answers may vary from what is given as an example.</i></p> <p><i>Accept answers that match the question and the story.</i></p>		

Additional Comments:

SCORING RUBRIC

1 Has not met grade level standards and needs improvement	2 Does not consistently and independently meet standards	3 Independently and consistently meets standards	4 Exceeds grade level standards
After listening to and discussing the same story, recalls random elements from the story; responses don't match questions.	After listening to and discussing the same story, answers literal questions (who, what and where) about the beginning, middle and end.	After listening to and discussing the same story, answers questions that describe events from the beginning (characters and setting), middle (problem), and end (resolution) of the story; includes character emotions and basic inferences.	After listening to and discussing the same story, student retells to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning, middle, and end characters, setting, important events character emotions and/or motivation In addition, student answers questions to predict what might happen next (after the story) OR if the events or characters were different.

Appendix 2: Reading Attitude Survey

Name _____

1. Do you like to hear stories?

YES

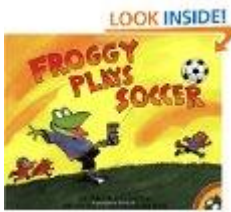


NO

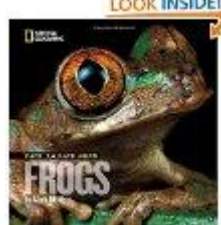


2. What kinds of stories do you like to hear?

Fiction



Non-Fiction



3. Do you always understand everything in the stories that are read to you?

YES



No



4. If there is a word or something in the story you don't understand, what do you do?

5. What strategies can you use to help you understand stories?

Appendix 3: Fountas and Pinnell Sample Assessment

Socks • LEVEL C • FICTION

Recording Form

Student _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Teacher _____ School _____

Recording Form

Part One: Oral Reading

Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.

Introduction: Socks the cat was sleeping in lots of different places, and the girl wanted her to wake up. Read to find out what makes Socks wake up.

Summary of Scores:

Accuracy _____
 Self-correction _____
 Fluency _____
 Comprehension _____
 Writing _____

Recording Forms

Sources of Information Used

Page	Text	Sources of Information Used		E			SC		
		E	SC	M	S	V	M	S	V
2	Socks was sleeping on the bed. "Wake up, Socks!" I said.								
4	Socks was sleeping on my chair. I said, "Wake up, Socks!"								
6	She was sleeping on the couch. "Wake up, Socks!" I said.								
Subtotal									

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Comprehension through Puppetry

Part One: Oral Reading *continued*

Sources of Information Used

Page	Text	E	SC	E			SC		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
8	She was sleeping on the rug. I said, "Wake up, Socks!"								
10	She was sleeping by the window. I said, "Socks, wake up!"								
12	Socks was sleeping by the door. "Wake up!" I said.								
14	Socks was sleeping under the table.								
Subtotal									

Comprehension through Puppetry

Socks • LEVEL C • FICTION

Recording Form

Part One: Oral Reading *continued*

Sources of Information Used

Page	Text	E	SC	E			SC		
				M	S	V	M	S	V
14 <i>cont.</i>	"I can wake Socks up," I said.								
16	Purr								
Subtotal									
Total									

Accuracy Rate	Errors	9 or more	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
	%	Below 90%	90%	91%	92%	94%	95%	96%	97%	99%	100%

Self-Correction Ratio	$(E + SC) \div SC = 1: \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$
--------------------------	--

Fluency Score	0 1 2 3
Fluency Scoring Key 0 Reads primarily word-by-word with occasional but infrequent or inappropriate phrasing; no smooth or expressive interpretation, irregular pausing, and no attention to author's meaning or punctuation; no stress or inappropriate stress, and slow rate. 1 Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- and four-word groups and some word-by-word reading; almost no smooth, expressive interpretation or pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; almost no stress or inappropriate stress, with slow rate most of the time. 2 Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups; some smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; mostly appropriate stress and rate with some slowdowns. 3 Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases or word groups; mostly smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; appropriate stress and rate with only a few slowdowns.	

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Recording Forms

Comprehension through Puppetry

Recording Forms

Part Two: Comprehension Conversation

Have a conversation with the student, noting the key understandings the student expresses. Use prompts as needed to stimulate discussion of understandings the student does not express. It is not necessary to use every prompt for each book. Score for evidence of all understandings expressed—with or without a prompt. Circle the number in the score column that reflects the level of understanding demonstrated.

Teacher: Talk about what happened in this story.

Comprehension Scoring Key

- 0 Reflects **unsatisfactory** understanding of the text. Either does not respond or talks off the topic.
- 1 Reflects **limited** understanding of the text. Mentions a few facts or ideas but does not express the important information or ideas.
- 2 Reflects **satisfactory** understanding of the text. Includes important information and ideas but neglects other key understandings.
- 3 Reflects **excellent** understanding of the text. Includes almost all important information and main ideas.

Key Understandings	Prompts	Score
Within the Text Socks the cat was sleeping in many different places in the house. A girl was trying to wake Socks up but she would not wake up. The girl got Socks to wake up with some food. <i>Note any additional understandings:</i>	Talk about what Socks was doing in this story. What happened when the girl told Socks to wake up? What happened at the end?	0 1 2 3
Beyond and About the Text Socks was a sleepy (or lazy) cat. Socks woke up because she wanted to eat the food. The picture showed that Socks was lazy because she was sleeping. The picture on the last page showed Socks saying "Purr" because she liked the food and was lazy and sleepy. <i>Note any additional understandings:</i>	Tell what Socks is like. Why did Socks wake up? How does the author show what Socks was like? How does the last page show that Socks was happy?	0 1 2 3

Guide to Total Score

- 6–7 **Excellent** Comprehension
- 5 **Satisfactory** Comprehension
- 4 **Limited** Comprehension
- 0–3 **Unsatisfactory** Comprehension

Subtotal Score: ____/6

Add 1 for any additional understandings: ____/1

Total Score: ____/7

Part Three: Writing About Reading (optional)

Read the writing/drawing prompt below to the student. You can also cut the prompt on the dotted line and give it to the child. Specify the amount of time for the student to complete the task on a separate sheet of paper. (See *Assessment Guide* for more information.)

Writing About Reading Scoring Key

- 0 Reflects **no** understanding of the text.
- 1 Reflects **very limited** understanding of the text.
- 2 Reflects **partial** understanding of the text.
- 3 Reflects **excellent** understanding of the text.

Write about three places that Socks liked to sleep. You can draw a picture to go with your writing.

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