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THESIS TITLE: WHAT IMPACT DOES LITERATURE CIRCLES HAVE ON STRUGGLING READERS' COMPREHENSION?

AUTHOR: CAITLIN WILLIAMS

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DR. LAURIE STOWELL

DR. JANET POWELL
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Thesis Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate what impact literature circles had on struggling readers' comprehension. Three struggling readers from a second grade classroom participated in this study for a total of six weeks. Each struggling reader was partnered with a strong reader throughout the study. Data was collected from a number of sources to analyze if comprehension was improving. First, discussion sheets were analyzed for comprehension. Next, dialogue during discussions was observed for use of comprehension strategies. Then, answers to end of the book questions were reviewed for understanding. And lastly, DRA scores were examined for any improvement in reading level and comprehension scores. Based on all the data collected the participants comprehension improved in a number of ways. The discussion sheets provided a model of how to use each reading strategy while reading. The dialogue between participants and their group members aided in solidifying the understanding of the text. And the peer interaction supported each reader in terms of modeling what good readers do and providing guidance when needed. These struggling readers provided information that is important to teachers and researchers alike. Literature circles is a great way to teach struggling readers how to comprehend and enjoy text that is above their reading level.

Keywords: literature circles, struggling readers, reading comprehension, reading strategies, action research
Chapter One

Introduction

Literacy Conversation
If you are like me
You are weary
Weary of tests and test scores
Weary of “scientific research,”
Weary of “stuff”
Stuffed into our curriculum

Our weariness
Drags us down
Like dead weight
And we fail to question
What we are told to do
Even when we know
It’s not right
For our children

We trust materials
But not ourselves
We believe the media
But not ourselves
And if it’s “research”
We embrace it
And quickly doubt
All we know

These are tough times
In which we teach
We need courage and energy,
Compassion and skill,
Knowledge and insights
And time together
To collaborate and reflect
And renew ourselves

Trust your own literacy-
What you do
In your life and in your classroom,
What you know
In your mind and heart and bones,
What you believe
And what you’ve researched and observed.

Take charge
Of your own literacy and teaching
Shape it
By your own hand and vision
Do not be swayed
By loud, insistent voices
Listen to and value your own voice
You are the teacher.
-written by Regie Routman (2000)

I am a teacher of a second grade classroom. I am lucky to be a teacher. I love my job. I am in charge of teaching many important concepts to children including one of the most critical-teaching reading. Second grade is a wonderful and significant time for children as readers. This is the year most children blossom as readers and develop a love for reading that can stay with them for their lifetime. As their teacher, my job is to foster this love of reading and guide them as readers to new and exciting places.

Like most things in life, children experience reading in their own individual ways. Each child brings to a book his own background knowledge, his own preconceived notions of what the book is going to be about. Research done by Rosenblatt (1978) states

The reader brings to the text his past experiences and present personality. Under the magnetism of the ordered symbols of text, he marshals his resources and crystallizes out from the stuff of memory, thought, and feeling, a new order, a new experience, which he sees as the poem (p. 12).
The “poem” is what the child has created in his mind while reading the text. It is his understanding of the text. Each child’s “poem” will be different and as teachers we need to remember this.

Not only do children bring individual ideas and thoughts to each story, they also bring different strategies as readers. Students use two main types of reading strategies while reading. One type helps them comprehend what they are reading. Examples of comprehension strategies are: predicting, summarizing, questioning, evaluating, and making connections. Predicting is when the student uses prior knowledge, the pictures, the title, or something the author previously stated to help them formulate what they think will happen next in the story. Summarizing is used by students to help them remember the main events that happened in the story. It helps them focus on the main ideas and the order of the story. Questioning allows the students to formulate questions about what they are reading. They can be questions that they still have after reading a certain section or they can be questions that they know the answers to from reading the story. Evaluating the book is a strategy readers use to check with themselves if they are learning what they want to learn from the story they are reading (Houghton Mifflin, 2003). Making connections is another strategy that helps readers better comprehend what they are reading. Readers use this strategy when they find connections in the story that either relate to themselves, text-to-self, to another story they have read, text-to-text, or to the world around them, text-to-world (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997).

The second set of strategies consists of word attack skills that children use when they don’t know a word. Examples of this are: looking at the pictures, skipping
the word they don’t know and then coming back to it when they get to the end of the sentence, looking for smaller words within bigger words, taking the ending off the word to see if they can figure the word out then, taking a picture walk to see if they can decide what they story is going to be about, and looking for chunks they know and using that information to help decipher the word. Some students have a wealth of strategies they use while reading and others have very few. It then becomes the teacher’s job to arm our students with as many different strategies so they can be as successful as possible.

Not only do children’s reading strategies differ but so do their reading levels and their need for specific instruction. For the purpose of this study reading levels are determined by using the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) (Beaver and Carter, 2003). DRA is a developmental reading assessment used by teachers to give students a reading level. The level is determined by the student reading different stories with the teacher until the text level becomes too hard for the child and their comprehension and fluency are jeopardized. The teacher notices this because the child cannot remember the majority of the story or his fluency-the smoothness of his reading becomes choppy and he can’t read most of the words. DRA levels start at a level A (Kindergarten level) and go up to a level V (sixth grade).

Based on all these differences, literacy instruction becomes a complex web of balance that should include five main components that are critical to the delivery of a balanced reading program. The five main components of a balanced reading program are reading aloud (when the teacher reads aloud to the class), shared reading, guided
reading, independent reading, and language opportunities to respond critically and thoughtfully (Routman, 1994).

Shared reading is defined by Routman (1994) as "...a reading situation in which a learner-or a group of learners-sees the text, observes an expert (usually the teacher) reading [the text] with fluency and expression, and is invited to read along" (p.33). Routman continues by saying,

Shared book approaches may include:
1. Teacher reading [teacher reads]
2. Student reading [student reads]
3. Paired reading [expert reader reads, novice reader follows along with enjoyment]
4. Tape recorder [students reads with tape recorder] (p. 34-35).

Guided reading is a time the teacher can get together with an individual child or a group of children and read their way through the book, thinking and discussing the text. Each person in the group has a copy of the book including the teacher. The teacher’s role is to know each child’s competencies, interests, and challenges and be there for support (Mooney, 1990, p.11). Guided reading is used to guide readers in strategies they may still need to try while reading.

Independent reading is when the children are in charge of their own reading by reading self-selected books. They choose their own books, do their own reading, and use their own strategies to figure out words they don’t know.

Literature circles is the area of focus for this project. Literature circles have many names in the teaching profession. Some of the most common are discussion
groups, book clubs, and literature conversation groups (Routman, 2000). Hill (1995) states literature circles as,

Discussion groups in which children meet regularly to talk about books...

Groups are determined by book choices;... are heterogeneous and include a range of interests and abilities... a group of students... read different titles...

During literature circles, students meet in small groups to discuss their books... They may share a favorite passage, raise a question, express a personal reaction, or talk about literary elements (p. 2).

The benefits of literature circles are obvious. Literature circles fall under most of the main components of a balanced reading program; shared reading because they children can choose to read the book aloud together, guided reading because the teacher is always guiding the discussion groups in improving the discussion, independent reading because the group has a choice in reading it silently by themselves, and responding critically and thoughtfully to text obviously because the group discuss the book every other day. The only question that still exists is: Are struggling readers being included in literature circles?

There is no doubt that struggling readers need explicit guided instruction to help improve their reading level but they also need to have time to share their ideas about books with their peers. They need time to enjoy literature because it is good literature. Struggling readers should be afforded the same exciting reading activities as their peers that are reading at grade level or above. They should not be solely reading repetitive texts, learning sight words, and discussing boring literature with their teacher. Literature circles is a time for children to connect with one another
through literature and all students should be given the chance to explore the world of literature circles. They should be given a chance to learn to love literature. Mem Fox (1993) also agrees when she states, “I’m certain that learning to read and learning to love reading owe a great deal (much more than we ever dreamed) to the nature of the human relationships that occur around and through books” (p. 136).

Choice is a big part of literature circles and why they work. When choice is part of the equation children seem to be more excited about their learning. Literature Circles promotes that love of reading and enables the children to have higher-level discussions while reading. Routman (2000) states,

> Literature Conversations are the best way I know to get students excited about literature and talking on a deep and personal level. With guidance and modeling, students of all ages are capable of understanding literature on multiple levels and responding to it thoughtfully (pg. 172).

Literature circles enable the reader to bring to the text his own background and share that background with the group. The discussions are generated by the students with guidance from the teacher. This is a place struggling readers can have a voice, a voice they may not have known they had if not given the chance to participate in such an experience. Much can be learned by watching children discuss books they have chosen and are excited about.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact literature circles has on struggling reader’s comprehension. The areas that will be explored are the benefits, the challenges, and the changes that take place in the struggling readers while
participating in literature circles. The focus of this study is a group of three struggling readers in a second grade class. The researcher is the classroom teacher who acts as a facilitator to the literature circles. Data for two rounds of literature circles was gathered and analyzed to determine what impact literature circles have on the struggling readers’ comprehension. A round of literature circles consists of reading the entire book, having discussions with the group throughout the book, and presenting a group project to the class at the end. The information provided by this study will add to the research on literature circles and guide teachers and administrators on how to best use literature circles with struggling readers.

The overarching question of this study is the following: What impact does literature circles have on struggling readers’ comprehension?

Rationale

Many books and research studies have been formulated around the benefits of literature circles. As Brabham and Vallaume (2000) state,

Literature circles support the repositioning of stances that control talk in the classroom, allow students to take responsibility for developing and discussing their own questions and interpretations for text, and launch more complex levels of thought, language, and literacy for students and teachers (p. 2).

This research supports a number of my ideas and theories but it falls short when it comes to struggling readers in the primary grades. My experience and research in my own classroom is that even if the book is above where the struggling reader can read, the motivation and excitement that takes over when they can participate with their peers in a reading group outweighs the challenges they face.
Good modeling takes place, discussions blossom, and readers foster that love for reading. When struggling readers are given a chance to use their brains in higher-level discussions and interactions with their peers, reading becomes something they see as exciting and meaningful rather than hard work and boring.
Introduction

In this chapter, research and theories that support the study’s question, what impact does literature circles have on struggling readers’ comprehension, will be discussed and analyzed. First, literature circles will be outlined to substantiate their importance. Secondly, how struggling readers can benefit from literature circles will be analyzed. In addition, reading comprehension will be looked at in terms of how literature circles can help improve the comprehension of struggling readers.

Literature Circles

According to Mather (1992), there were a number of strategies to teach reading but to choose only one would not be beneficial to all students. He also made the point that not all students learn in the same ways. One of the main things Mather’s said was that a combination of strategies was what would help a child become a successful reader.

Based on what Mather’s said, a solid reading program should provide children with a number of reading strategies to become successful. When a teacher uses only one method of teaching reading in class, the class, in turn, as a whole, may not be as successful as its potential allows. It is important for teachers to allow for a balance of reading instruction to take place in their classrooms so that all children can learn in their own ways. Literature circle should be one component of a solid reading program.
Literature circles provide teachers and students with a balanced, meaningful activity that encourages all students to participate in different ways. They also provide a number of reading strategies to encourage a child to grow as a reader.

Daniels (1994) states

Literature circles are predictable, playful, and meaning-centered activities in which kids exercise lots of choice and responsibility, teachers demonstrate their own literacy, structures are provided that help students function at a higher level than they could unaided, and everyone gradually adopts a new language for talking about their work together... (p. 37)

One important aspect of literature circles that makes it so successful is the social interaction that takes place between students in the group. As Vogotsky (1978) implied, learning is a social process where individuals create understand through their interactions with others. This interaction makes literature circles meaningful to the students. They have a set aside time each day to interact with their peers and discuss a book they are reading together. This is much different than filling in a worksheet about a book they have just read; where no interaction goes on with peers or even the teacher.

Brabham, Greene, Villaume, Kidd (2000) emphasize the importance of literature circles when they state, "In literature circles, the students' insights and inquiries, not the teacher's list of questions, drive the discussion. Literature circles serve as launching devices or scaffolds that help students generate ideas and their own thoughtful conversations about what they have read" (P. 279). In conjunction, both Taylor (2002) and Pressley (2001) agree that more writing and reading growth
occur in classrooms where students are actively engaged in literacy activities rather than answering simple fact questions generated by a worksheet. They continue to explain an actively engaged classroom as one where students share their ideas with a partner or small group.

An exciting component of literature circles is the responsibility and ownership it lends to the students. They are in charge of their own learning and the teacher is quietly guiding them in the right direction. The discussions become a time to talk to the text, to share personal connections, to see if others understood the story in the same way, and it is a time to argue opinions. Literature circles is a time for students to take charge of their own learning while interacting with their peers.

Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, Rodrigues (2003) believe that effective teachers actively engage their students in literary activities and give students responsibility for discussing text which in turn provides the teacher with high pupil involvement. They continue to state that when the teacher provides modeling and coaching for their students it not only helps them learn but it also helps the students take responsibility of their own learning.

Numerous studies have been done on cooperative learning and the benefits they offer students. Literature circles is a great model of quality cooperative learning. Glasser (1986) states, “Cooperative learning increases student motivation by providing peer support. As part of a learning team, students can achieve success by working well with others. Students are also encouraged to learn materials in greater depth than they might otherwise have done” (pg. 1). Caposey & Heider (2003) extend this idea by stating, “The more students work in cooperative groups, the more
they understand, retain, and feel better about themselves and their peers.” (p. 21-22).

Literature circles is a great model of how cooperative groups can benefit all different types of readers.

Literature circles and struggling readers

Many opponents of literature circles feel struggling readers don’t belong in literature circles because they need explicit direct instruction to improve as readers. They do need this but they also need time to interact with peers and observe what good readers do. Walker (2003) states, “Struggling readers need opportunities to read text and construct meaning in a social context that accounts for their individual differences” (p.206). Struggling readers need a balance too. The interaction with peers benefits struggling readers immensely. Walker (2003) states, “To meet the needs of struggling readers, we must create programs that contain multiple features of outstanding instruction that focus on meaning and scaffold learning within a social context while allowing students to demonstrate their individual differences in a coherent and collaborative classroom” (p. 207). Literature circles is all this in one. Sweet (1997) extends this idea by confirming that struggling readers need time to read relatively easy text so they experience success, but that they can benefit from reading text that is more challenging. She continues to say that interest and prior knowledge are two factors that allow students to read beyond their reading level. Ganske, Monroe, Strickland (2003) conclude, “When the texts used builds on students’ interests and knowledge, the combination of knowing a lot about the topic and being able to discuss the text with stronger readers makes it possible for those who struggle to handle materials that would otherwise be too difficult” (p.121).
Not only do struggling readers face the struggle of reading books but some also lack the motivation to read. Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, Afflerbach (1993) believe many children are at risk for reading failure due to motivational factors. Gambrell (1996) believes there are four main areas that significantly affect motivation in readers; their familiarity with the book, social interactions about the book, access to books, and book choice. If these four aspects are provided to the reader the motivation to read improves. In literature circles all four areas are addressed. Before literature circles begins the teacher does a book talk with all the choices to provide the background of each book. Secondly, one of literature circles main goal is to provide readers with social interaction with peers, a time to discuss the book that was chosen. Literature circles also improves access to books by introducing new titles and authors to students they may not be familiar with. Finally, literature circles is based on choice. The groups are formed by the books the children choose, not the teacher. Groups end up being heterogeneously group based on choice.

Another reason struggling readers lack motivation is because they lack the strategies they need to be successful. Poor readers do not have strategies as a natural part of their reading repertoire (Feilding & Pearson, 1994). The scaffolding that literature circles provides helps struggling reader begin to use strategies to help them comprehend. The discussion sheets used in literature circles is an excellent scaffold for struggling readers. They guide the reader to focus on the important comprehension strategies. Discussion sheets will be discussed in the following sub heading.
Literature circles provides many scaffolds that struggling readers need to become better readers. Motivation plays a big role in how a struggling reader will participate in an activity. Because literature circles provides choice, social interaction with peers, discussion sheets to focus comprehension on what good readers do, and peer support, literature circles can only be seen as a benefit and a motivator to struggling readers.

**Literature circles and reading comprehension**

Literature circles provide a number of scaffolds to support quality comprehension and higher level discussions about texts. Ganske, Monroe, Strickland (2003) believe, “Instructional formats like literature circles can .... aid [in] students’ comprehension” (p.121). One of the first scaffolds used in literature circles to help with comprehension are the discussion sheets. They are used by all the students when they come to meet and discuss the book. The discussion sheets help focus readers on different components of comprehension. For example, discussion director directs the students to question the text and provide open-ended questions about the story. Passage picker guides readers to focus on lines, phrases, or pages that interest them as readers and writers. Clever connector helps students focus on connections that can be made with the text. Word wonder creates a place to write down words that confuse, interest, or bother the reader while reading. Awesome artist is a job that works on visualizing parts of the story. And lastly, super summarizer provides a place to summarize the section that was just read. Daniels (1994) summarizes the purpose for the discussion sheets nicely when he states, “We designed our own set of discussion roles so that each embodies one fundamental way that readers think-visualizing,
connecting, associating, analyzing, reading aloud, and so forth. For kids who are not yet fluent at surfacing their own deep and diverse reader responses, the role sheets invite and capture those reactions" (p. 39). By providing students with discussion sheets it helps focus the readers on the important aspects of comprehension. Baumann & Hooten (1999) extend this idea by stating, “Comprehension strategies introduced with literature can give students a greater understanding of what they read. In turn, greater understanding can lead to greater enjoyment and the start of a lifelong love of reading” (p. 38). As for struggling readers, this is just one more piece to help them be more successful.

Another aspect of literature circles that provides struggling readers support in comprehension is the peer reading that is provided by a member in the group. The text most likely chosen is above the struggling reader’s reading level. To encourage the struggling reader to participate, a peer reader is assigned to him to read the story aloud. Ganske, Monroe, Strickland (2003) state, “Because most novice readers, regardless of their age, are capable of understanding and appreciating texts that are far more demanding than the ones they can already read, successful teachers capitalize on read-aloud experiences as a means for teaching comprehension” (p.123).

Another area of comprehension that has been researched by a number of people is how peer interactions can build comprehension in readers. This is important to the study because in literature circles the children sit and talk about what they have read in hopes of learning new ideas from each other. Gauthier (2001) reports, “When students work together, communicate their thoughts, and seek answers to different questions, reading comprehension has a fertile setting in which to occur” (p. 218). In
conjunction with Gauthier, Walker (2003) states, “When students talk with one another, they internalize intellectual processes. Thinking is scaffolded by teachers and other students acting as more informed “others” who lead learning forward. As students work together and discuss their ideas, they construct meaning” (p.206). This is very important when talking about struggling readers. If they are participating in the discussion it is building their comprehension in yet another way. They are actually constructing meaning with the help of all the other readers and helping the other readers construct meaning also. Santa (2002) agrees that peer interaction leads to an increase in comprehension. Gambrell (1996) supports this notion also when he discusses small group discussion about a text. He believes that it strengthens a student’s recall, aesthetic response to text, and understanding of what they read.

**Summary**

When discussing literature circles, comprehension, and struggling readers it becomes obvious that the three work well together. By all means, literature circles should not be the only reading activity a struggling reader participates in during the reading day, but they should be allowed to join them. The benefits that literature circles afford struggling readers are numerous; peer interaction, modeling, talking about text to build meaning, listening to quality literature rather than easy, repetitive texts. Besides reading easy texts, and receiving direct reading instruction, struggling readers should be a part of the world of literature circle so they can benefit from the many positive scaffolds they offer.
Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes how one group of struggling readers in a second grade dealt with literature circles in their classroom over a six-week period. The children read two books over the six-week period and participated in two different literature circles groups based on the books they chose. The children met in small literature circle groups daily, alternating reading the text and discussing it. The teacher acted as a facilitator for the student led discussions. The classroom teacher was responsible for all data collection and analysis. The underlying question the researcher was trying to answer for this study was: What impact does literature circles have on struggling readers' comprehension. Action research was conducted to gather this information.

Design

We can learn an enormous amount of information by observing students while they are learning and processing what they have learned. Teacher research is an effective method because teachers know their students, can see changes others may not notice, and can see benefits others may not understand. Teacher research, also known as action research was chosen as the methodology for this study for many reasons. Hubbard and Powell say, “Teacher research is based upon close observation of students work” (p. 5). They continue to state, “Teacher researchers use data from observations, discussions, and writing that is collected during the normal process of teaching and learning…that the aims and objectives of action research are to make
changes" (p. 64). The ultimate goal of action research is to help children. The purpose of this study is to find out if literature circles can help struggling readers improve their comprehension.

Setting

Sunshine Elementary (a pseudonym) is one of seven elementary schools in a small-sized school district in North San Diego County. The school operates on a traditional school year, with the school year starting the last week of August and the summer starting the end of June. The total school population is 725. The ethnic background is 74% Caucasian, 19% Asian, 1% African American, and 5% Latino.

Literature circles is a controversial topic in this district. The district has differing opinions on the benefits, if there are any. Out of the 33 teachers at this school only 10 use literature circles in their instruction of reading.

Classroom Context

This classroom is set up with a balanced reading approach. The teaching is based on the needs of the students. The students are involved in literacy activities for a two-hour block in the morning. The teacher based the model for reading instruction on the book *On Solid Ground* by Sharon Taberski (2000). For the purpose of this study balanced reading is best illustrated by the following daily schedule:

1. *Free choice reading/word study groups (30 minutes)*-Monday through Thursday students read any book they would like silently at their desks. Friday they may read any book with a partner. During this time the teacher is pulling small groups back to work on words study activities.
such as making words (Cunningham, 1994), word sorts, and spelling skills.

2. **Whole group instruction** (30 minutes)-teacher teaches a reading strategy such as summarizing, questioning, etc. to help improve students reading comprehension. The teacher may also teach a literary element, or anything else noticed while working with small groups that the whole class could benefit from.

3. **Independent reading from leveled book bags/teacher is leading guided reading or one-on-one teacher conferencing (30 minutes)** -while the teacher is working with small groups the students are reading books from their book bags that are at their independent reading levels (determined by the DRA). During this reading time they are required to write in their reading response journals at least two times a week but they can write as many times as they want. In these journals they respond to literature using any reading strategy that fits what they are reading. Examples include: summarizing, making connections, evaluating, questioning, predicting, etc.

4. **Literature circles** (30 minutes)-groups meet to either read or discuss the book they have chosen depending on the day.

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1In the beginning of the year, September-January, forty-five minutes is spent on individual reading time so that more time can be spent with guided instruction. During the independent reading time the teacher meets with the struggling readers at least four times a week. From February-June the teacher continues to meet with the struggling readers four times a week for direct instruction through guided reading to support their needs
Participants

Three children from the researcher’s classroom of twenty were chosen for this study, two males and one female. The three children were all considered struggling readers because they were reading below second grade reading level. Struggling readers were chosen by the teacher based on the DRA scores. In second grade the reading levels vary greatly. For the purpose of this study, the benchmark for a beginning second grader is a DRA level of a 18. Children need to be able to read a level 18 with a comprehension score of at least a 16 and fluency score of 94% or greater. Children that don’t meet this benchmark are students that are reading below grade level. A second grade reading level consists of a level 18 on the DRA assessment in the beginning of the year, 24 in the middle, and a 28 by the end of the year. The children need to be reading these levels independently to meet the benchmark assigned by the district. All the children involved in this study have attended this school since kindergarten. They have all been given pseudonyms.

Participant One

Emily is a Caucasian female, eight years old. Emily was reading 4 levels below the benchmark with a score on the DRA of a ten. Emily loves reading and reads with wonderful expression. Her comprehension is excellent at her independent level. She uses a number of reading strategies when she comes to an unknown word. The top three she uses are reread, sound out, and chunking the word. Emily loves to participate and share about stories. Emily has an IEP for speech and sees the speech
therapists once a week for thirty minutes to work on the ‘r’ and ‘s’ sounds. She is very responsible and organized and tries hard in everything she does. She has very high self-esteem and motivation. Her handwriting and spelling are very hard to read. When the first running record was completed on Emily her ability to comprehend the story was exceptional but more advanced stories gave her a challenge.

**Participant Two**

Bruce is a Caucasian male, eight years old. Bruce was reading just below grade level with a DRA score of a 16 from previous year. Bruce is an average student. He completes his work but never extends himself. Bruce’s comprehension is average. He forgets important details when retelling. He likes to read but gets bored after about ten minutes. He has not developed that love of reading yet. He reads very monotone and only uses the sounding out strategy to figure words out that he does not know. During group discussion Bruce is very quiet and uninvolved. When the first running record was completed on Bruce his ability to comprehend the story was minimal.

**Participant Three**

Gary is of Mexican-Iraqi descent. His mother is from a wealthy Mexican family and his father is from Iraq. Gary’s parents are going through a divorce this year. He sees the school psychologist once, every other week to discuss issues he may be facing with the divorce. Gary is reading far below grade level benchmarks. His reading level is an eight on the DRA. When Gary entered kindergarten he did not know his letters or their sounds. In second grade Gary still has trouble with the vowel sounds, digraphs, and vowel digraphs. Gary has average comprehension when
reading because he can rely heavily on the pictures when reading a level eight. He has a hard time focusing when a story is read aloud to him so his comprehension is even less when participating in listening comprehension activities. He very rarely participates in class discussions. When reading Gary uses only the sounding out reading strategy to figure out words he does not know. Because Gary still has a hard time with the sounds this strategy rarely works for him. Gary still writes words without vowels and has very illegible handwriting. He is in the process of going through our SST meetings to see if he has some learning disabilities. When the first running record was completed on Gary his ability to comprehend the story was minimal. Gary does not enjoy reading and finds it very hard to sit and read book for a long extended amount of time. He has definitely not found that love of reading yet.

**Materials**

The materials in this study are very important because they are scaffolds to help struggling readers and to inform the research. All students use the literature circles discussion sheets as part of literature circles activity. Letters were also sent home to the struggling reader’s families to keep them up to date with what was going on during literature circle time. As well, teacher check offs were used while sitting with each group to keep track of participation and reading strategy use. The check off was also used to write down answers to questions asked by the researcher at the end of each discussion. End of the book questions generated by the researcher were also given to the participants to check comprehension.
Literature circle discussion sheets (Appendix A-F)

Jobs are used during every literature circle group. Each child is assigned a job. There are 6 jobs: discussion director, super summarizer, awesome artist, passage picker, word wonder, and clever connector. The jobs rotate after each discussion. The children’s schedule is to read assigned pages and do discussion sheet about their job on the first day. The following day they bring their discussion sheets to the discussion and use them to help lead a discussion of the book. Before the next assigned reading the students change jobs, making sure no one gets the same job. This allows the children a chance to read the book with a different comprehension strategy—a different job. This rotation continues until the book is finished. Once the book is finished the group can decide on one project to share with the class to explain the book (see appendix G for list of options and H for an organization page for the project). The discussion sheets were also collected and scored for completeness and understanding of the book.

Parent letters (Appendix I-J)

Parent letters were sent home to the struggling reader’s family to inform the parents the pages that were to be read for the following day (Appendix I). The student would bring the book home that night to read ahead of the group so they would have an idea of what the story was about. Since the book was always above their independent reading level the text was too hard for them to read by themselves. During the reading days the struggling reader would pair up with a partner and read it again for a second time to improve comprehension.
The second letter (appendix J) was sent home when the student did not finish the job sheet for the day. The letter was to help the child be more prepared for the discussion the following day. The child was asked to bring the book and his job sheet home to work on. These two letters acted as scaffold to help make literature circles a more meaningful activity for the struggling readers.

*Teacher check offs (Appendix K)*

Teacher check offs were used during the student led discussion where the teacher was acting as facilitator. This check off guided the teacher researcher in what was observed. It helped focus the researcher when observing. The observation was geared to the struggling readers only. The researcher was looking for the number of times the participant spoke during the discussion, if they added anything extra, what type of comprehension strategy was used, and if they used the book to support their answers. The check off sheets also had four questions that the researcher asked each participant after every discussion. 1) What do you predict will happen next in the story? 2) What are the main ideas of the story so far? 3) What are you enjoying about literature circles so far? And lastly 4) What struggles, if any, are you having in literature circles?

*End of the book questions (Appendix L-O)*

The end of the book questions were generated by the researcher to check the comprehension of the book by asking questions about the book the reader should know. Four questions were asked each time. Three-four questions concerning facts about the book were asked and one open-ended question.
Procedures

The major data collection took place over a six-week period. The teacher took extensive notes while observing the discussions using the teacher check off pages, collected job sheets, and conducted the DRA. During this six-week period two complete rounds of literature circles were completed. Book selection, how groups were formed, a timeline for the complete literature circle rounds, methods for collecting data, and analyzing student work are described here.

Before the teacher began literature circles modeling and training took place in the classroom. The teacher taught the whole class about what literature circles was and how to do them by reading Henry and Mudge and the Starry Night (1998). Each day the story was read again with a new job as the focus. The teacher used the overhead to show the pages and how to complete them. See Table One for a day-by-day agenda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce literature circles-read story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher also collected DRA scores and running records at the beginning of the year to be used with checking data and growth. See timeline below for yearly progression of instruction and data collection.
Yearly timeline for assessments and literature circles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Beginning of year DRA scores</td>
<td>*Mid year</td>
<td>Last round of DRA scores</td>
<td>Final DRA scores</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accumulated</td>
<td>literature circles accumulated</td>
<td>literature circles accumulated</td>
<td>scores accumulated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Running Records given</td>
<td>training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Book selection**

For both rounds of literature circles, each lasting approximately three weeks, the teacher researcher chose a total of ten books for the children to choose from, five for each round. The teacher researcher looked for books that would hold high interest for the readers, be regarded as high quality literature, and books that would promote good quality discussions. The class had a chance to choose the books in descending order of which one they wanted to read first to the book they wanted to read last (see appendix P-Q). When the groups were formed only four books would be read and the least favorite discarded. Before the children chose their books the teacher would do a short book talk of each book by reading the back cover, showing the cover, and showing the class examples of pages to allow them to see the approximate reading level. For the first round of literature circles the books that were chosen by the teacher researcher were *Marvin and the Mean Words* (1997), *Marty Frye Private Eye* (1998), *My Mom the Frog* (1996), *The Zack Files* *The Misfortune Cookie* (1998), and *Magic Tree House High Tide in Hawaii* (2003). The four books that formed the groups were *Marvin and the Mean Words* (1997), *Marty Frye Private Eye* (1998), *The Zack Files* *The Misfortune Cookie* (1998), and *Magic Tree House High Tide in Hawaii* (2003).

*Forming groups*

The groups were formed by the researcher using the children's choice pages. The researcher was able to put the children in either their first or second choice for both rounds. The researcher placed the struggling readers in their groups first, making sure that no more than two of them were in a group so that there was enough support for each reader. Secondly the researcher placed the stronger readers who would be good models and support with the struggling readers. The last deciding factor for each group was the entire make up of the group and how each individual would interact with the other members of their group. The goal was to minimize any distraction that might cause the struggling reader to get sidetracked from reading and discussing and create a group that would act as a scaffold for the struggling reader. In the first round Emily was reading the book *Marvin and the Mean Words* and Gary and Bruce were reading the book *Magic Tree House High Tide in Hawaii*. For the second round Bruce and Gary were reading *Nate the Great and the Pillowcase* and Emily was reading *Junie B. Jones is not a Crook*. 


Time line

The timeline for literature circles is critical to how they are managed by the researcher. Because there are four groups it is important to have alternating days when two groups are reading and two groups are discussing. The researcher also trained four parent volunteers to help in facilitating the discussions when she could not be present at a group’s discussion due to the observation that needed to be done with the struggling readers. On the first day of literature circles (Monday) two groups read the assigned pages in the book and did their job pages. The other two groups read out of their independent reading book bags that day and waited to start literature circles the following day. The second day (Tuesday) the two groups that read the day before brought their job sheets to the discussion and had a discussion facilitated by an adult. Each person would share their job pages and discuss the part of the book they read. See Table two below for a week-by-week explanation of how the rotations operated for the groups that the struggling readers were involved in. The teacher researcher used this time to collect notes on the struggling reader, paying attention to what was said, how in depth the comment was, how related it was to the book, and what reading strategies they were using. The days continued like this alternating from reading to discussing until the books were finished. When the books were finished the researcher collected all the discussion sheets. They were scored for completeness, and understanding of the book. Additionally at the end of the literature circle round the participants were given a teacher generated comprehension page to complete. The researcher also conducted the DRA two times throughout the cycle of
literature circles to see any progress in their reading during their involvement in literature circles.

Table Two

Week One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

² These groups read out of independent book bags so that not all the groups were reading and discussing on the same day. This gives the researcher the ability to sit and observe each group.
### Week Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marvin and the Mean Words</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Week Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marvin and the Mean Words</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choose share out session project</td>
<td>Work on project</td>
<td>Work on project</td>
<td>Work on project</td>
<td>Share project with class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Tide in Hawaii</td>
<td>Choose share out session project</td>
<td>Work on project</td>
<td>Work on project</td>
<td>Work on project</td>
<td>Share project with class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis**

Data was collected from the participants to be analyzed. Completed job sheets, researcher’s check off sheets, answers to end of the book questions, and DRA scores were the materials used to gather the data.
**Job Sheets**

The job sheets were collected after the literature circle book had been completed (book finished and discussion completed). The job sheets were scored for completeness and understanding of the book. The teacher expected the job sheets to be completed due to the extra support from home. If the job sheets were not completed, then the researcher concluded that the home support was lacking. The understanding of the book was scored by a yes or a no. A yes meant the response proved understanding and a no meant misunderstanding took place.

**Teacher check off sheets**

Teacher check-off sheets were analyzed for the number of responses provided by the participants. The categories that were the focus for this study were 1. The number of times the participant spoke during the discussion. 2. If they added anything extra on their own without being prompted from peers. 3. What type of comprehension strategy/strategies were used. 4. If they used the book to support their answers. The check off sheets also had four questions that the researcher asked each participant after every discussion. 1) What do you predict will happen next in the story? 2) What are the main ideas of the story so far? 3) What are you enjoying about literature circles so far? And lastly 4) What struggles, if any, are you having in literature circles? These informal discussions provided the researcher with important information about how well the participant comprehended the story and allowed the participant time to discuss their feelings about literature circles.
Answers to end of the book questions

These questions were asked as another means for the researcher to check the comprehension of the story after all the discussions, peer reading and support took place. The answers were scored either correct or incorrect. Most of the questions were simple basic fact questions about the book with a few open-ended questions.

DRA scores

DRA scores were gathered three times throughout the year. The scores were looked at in two different ways. The researcher was looking for improvement in comprehension and level of reading growth. A third, fluency, was noted but not analyzed for this study. The first was solely the DRA level each participant's first assessment in second grade was. These levels were watched as the year progressed. The other area that was of major importance to this study was the comprehension score given through the DRA. The researcher was careful to pay attention to the comprehension score in the beginning of the year to see if that scores rose. When the reading level got harder the comprehension became harder. The researcher paid close attention to that when analyzing the scores.

Summary

This study's focus is the overarching question: What impact does literature circles have on struggling readers' comprehension. The methodology chosen for this study was action research due to the fact that the teacher in the classroom wanted to learn if her struggling readers were benefiting from literature circles in anyway. Data was collected and analyzed to determine if struggling readers' comprehension
improved in this setting. The results of this data will be discussed in the following chapter.
**Chapter Four**

**Data Analysis**

**Introduction**

In this chapter the participant’s comprehension is discussed and analyzed as well as their participation in literature circles. Each participant will be discussed individually. Each participant’s results will be organized in the same manner, outlining any major themes that surface. First the job pages will be analyzed. Secondly, the teacher check off sheets as well as a discussion of the findings. Next, the end of the book questions will be evaluated for comprehension of each story. And lastly, the DRA scores will be studied for any improvements in comprehension scores and reading levels.

**Emily**

Emily came into second grade as a struggling reader. She was reading far below the benchmark with a score of a 10 on her DRA. In the beginning of the year she should have been reading at a level 18 DRA independently. Emily very much enjoyed reading and always worked hard to read books. She was wonderful at reading with expression and her comprehension was exceptional when she read books at her level. Emily struggled to improve her reading level. Her progress was slow for how much she read during reading time. I was worried that Emily’s comprehension would start to fail her when the book levels were far above her independent level.

Emily was present for every literature circle discussion and reading time. She was always prepared and ready to share her ideas with her group. Her mother was very supportive and always worked with her at home. Emily took her book home
every night to work with her mom. One thing Emily said during this study of note was, "Is it literature circles time yet, I have something really great to share!" Her attitude about literature circles was always positive and excited

**Job Sheets**

The first piece of data analyzed for Emily was her job sheets. Each job sheet was analyzed for completeness and if it showed understanding of the text. Table Three explains how the pages were analyzed.

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Shows understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passage Picker</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Summarizer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Artist</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Shows understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clever Connector</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Summarizer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Wonder</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Artist</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emily’s job sheets were completed everyday when she came to the discussion.

All of her job sheets showed understanding. One example of a response that showed understanding was when she wrote about the book *Marvin and the Mean Words* (1997) as Super Summarizer. She wrote:

"Frst his grandmthur went on the bus with him. Next thar whus a axidint.then thay plade telefone. Finally marvin got sperated from scool."

Her summary was very concise and showed that she was working on the main points taught in class by using the sentence starters such as first, next, then, and
finally. She stuck to the main ideas that were going on the story when she was reading that section of the story. Both of her summaries used the same sentence starters to help her write.

Another example of Emily’s response to *Marvin and the Mean Words* (1997) that showed understanding was when she was Discussion Direction. Her questions were centered around the book and showed she was really understanding what good questioning was. She wrote:

“What did he find for his card? Did he write a b instead of a d, what did he mean to write? What do you predict will happen in the next chapter? What would change in the story if marvin liked his teacher?”

Emily filled in her Passage Picker job sheet with a number of great passages that she wanted to share with her group during the discussion that showed thinking was taking place while she was reading. She wrote:

“Pg. 66 Wen Marvin thout not to sit next to his friend who was talking”

“Pg. 69 Wen marvin called his friend an eraser head”

“pg. 70 wen marvin talked about his devlish streek getting smaler”

When Emily was reading the book *Junie B. Jones Is Not A Crook* (1997) her connection to the book gave a good example of a reader who could remember a part of the story because of a text-to-self connection.
“Wenjunie fownd the mittens reminded me of a speshial paer of mitten I wore to a show last yeer. Mine wer blak to.”

Her word wonder page was filled with words that she knew and words that she had learned about. She chose words like “sometimes” because it was a compound word, “happened” because it started like happy, and “Mrs.” Because it was a funny name to call your teacher.

Both of her awesome artist pages were filled with creative pictures that she drew from her imagination. She did not copy a picture from the book. Both pictures showed how she visualized the text in her mind.

Teacher Check-offs

After analyzing the job sheets the teacher check off pages were reviewed for information that supported the comprehension shown on her job pages. First tallies were made on the pages for the number of times she spoke and participated in the discussion. Emily held a different job for each discussion. Next, teacher notes were analyzed for any additional information that would support Emily’s comprehension. And finally, after each discussion, four questions were asked of Emily to see if she was using predicting and summarizing strategies correctly and also to get a sense of how she liked literature circles. See Table Four for a chart that explains teacher check off tallies that Emily received during her discussion.
During the discussions that took place about *Marvin and the Mean Words* Emily used a number of comprehension strategies to help her understand the book. A number of times Emily used one or more strategies while discussing the book with her peers. When she was passage picker she discussed with the group the passages she had chosen and then went into detail about why she had chosen them. For example she evaluated the book and made a connection when she stated to her group:

“I liked this part of the story (referring to when Marvin called the person in the painting eraser head) because it reminded me of when my sister and I call each other names. I've never called her eraser head but other things”. The group liked her connection and they started talking about all the names they call their brothers or sisters. It was a good conversation because it related to the book.
During her passage picker discussion day she added one comment about the book on her own. She answered the discussion director's question about the museum. The discussion director asked the group how they would feel about going to a museum. Emily quickly raised her hand to answer that question. She said she goes to museums with her family two or three times a year and really likes it. She said she likes it because she loves drawing and it is interesting for her to see professional people's art.

When Emily was super summarizer she basically shared what she had written on her job page and left it at that. She did not extend or add any extra detail to what had gone on in the story. The only other time she spoke was when the passage picker talked about a part in the story that reminded Emily about her grandmother. She said: "I liked that part too because my grandmother is hard of hearing also and sometimes I get embarrassed when I have to talk loud to her." Based on teacher notes it seemed like Emily was just listening contently to everyone in her group but wasn't too involved during this discussion.

Emily really shined when she was discussion director. Being discussion director meant she had a chance to act as the teacher-she was in charge of her group and how it ran. Emily relished this moment to lead. She asked everyone in her group to answer all her questions and give reasons why they thought that. This was what was modeled for her in the beginning but not all the children were doing this in her group. One of the best questions she came up with was "How would the story have changed if Marvin liked his teacher?" It really got the group thinking. The answers
that the group gave were all different and unique. Emily kept probing her group for the why aspect of her question. She always responded to each answer with a “good job!” or a “Nice answer!” It also seemed that because she was discussion director she was more involved in talking during this day. She added to the word wonder’s word by explaining that the word “remembered” had three syllables because she had just learned that in class. She also added to the clever connector’s connection about hearing someone talk about you behind your back. She had added that someone had talked behind her back once and it really made her feel bad. She had a great discussion day.

When Emily was the awesome artist everyone loved her picture of Marvin’s face when he learned that his teacher wasn’t talking about him when she said the mean words. The group had to guess what they thought she had drawn a picture about. She was not allowed to copy a picture from the book. The group was having a hard time deciding what part of the story it was from until Emily gave them a clue. She said,” This part is towards the end when Marvin is talking to his teacher.” She opened her book and pointed to where it was close to. After she used the book everyone else in her group opened their books and started looking for the part she had drawn. They finally guessed it and complimented Emily on her creativity. The pictures showed that she was using visualizing while reading because she didn’t copy a picture from the text.

During this discussion day she made one prediction based on a question the discussion director asked about what the group thought would happen when the class
got back to school. Although the story ended before the class went back to school Emily jumped in to answer the question first. She replied, “I think Marvin is going to tell the class that he really likes Mrs. Bird and then he is going to have a great rest of the year!” Emily was less involved in this discussion and at times she seemed a little distracted by the members in her group that were not on task.

After each discussion Emily was asked four questions, two about comprehension (predicting and summarizing) and two about literature circles. The first time Emily was asked to predict what was going to happen next in the story she responded by saying, “I don’t know, I haven’t read that part of the story yet.” She was reminded that predicting is a strategy to help comprehension. She was told predictions can be just what you think will happen and they could be wrong. After this every one of her predictions was something that could have happened in the story. Only once out of the four times was she right. After the third discussion she predicted, “Marvin is going to get lost at the museum because he is a bad kid.” Her prediction during the fourth discussion about what would happen when they got back to school was also a good example of her ability to use prediction as a strategy.

Her summaries were very simplistic but stated what happened during each section of the book. Every time she answered my questions she always used the sentence starters to answer the questions orally. She never went into a lot of detail when summarizing but she did tell the events in sequence. An example of one of her oral summaries: “In the beginning Mrs. Bird was celebrating her hockey team winning a game by giving the class a treat. In the middle, Marvin overheard Mrs.
Bird talking about him. In the end Marvin helped his grandma find her glasses.” 

Emily could have given more detail but her summary was sequentially correct.

Emily’s feelings about literature circles were mixed. In the beginning she was frustrated with how hard the book was to read for her but she liked that she could take it home and read ahead with her mom. She said this gave her the chance to try to read a few pages with her peer buddy instead of only listening. She really enjoyed working with her friends and she especially liked the time they had to talk about books. She said she liked discussion director the best because she felt special leading her group. Her final comment about literature circles sums up her thoughts nicely; “I think I can read a little better now, it helps to hear a good reader read and I follow along. The job pages really help me remember what I’m supposed to think about when reading.” How nice! Emily enjoyed discussing her literature circle book with her friends. On numerous occasions Emily would make comments like: “How much longer until literature circles? I can’t wait for you to hear what I wrote about-I think you will like it!” She never seemed to back away from her group even though the book was above her reading level. She was always paying attention and made good eye contact with her group members. A number of teacher notes stated how nicely Emily made eye contact with members in her group when they were speaking.

In Table Five Emily’s discussion for Junie B. Jones is not a Crook is analyzed from the teacher check-off pages.
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job/date</th>
<th>The number of times spoken during discussion</th>
<th>Anything added to the discussion on own</th>
<th>What comprehension strategy/strategies were used</th>
<th>Was the book used to support comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clever connector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Text to self, questioning, connecting</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Summarizer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Summarizing, evaluating</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word wonder</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Questioning, visualizing, connections, analyzing</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Artist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Visualizing, questioning</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emily has a fun time connecting to books. You can tell by her facial expressions how much she enjoys finding similarities between herself and the main character. When Emily was the clever connector she asked the discussion director if she could go first. Teacher notes refer to Emily as a “Happy camper today-full of energy and giggles”. The discussion director let her start and she shared about how she has a pair of black gloves just like Junie B. A group member corrected her by saying they were mittens not gloves. Emily then replied by saying, “Oh yeah! That’s what I meant. Mittens are way softer than gloves and I bet Junie’s mittens were as soft as mine!”

During this discussion day she also answered one of the discussion director’s questions. He asked the group who they thought took Junie B. Jones’ mittens. Emily raised her hand immediately and responded with a convincing—“No one, I think she
just didn’t look hard enough. Maybe she will go back and look for them after school and find them. That is what I would do!” Teacher notes for this day report, “This question sparked a great conversation with Emily’s group. Everyone in the group was very attentive and interactive on this day.”

In the following discussion Emily was the super summarizer. Her interaction on this day was minimal and less enthusiastic. She read her summary to the group and that was it. No one responded to her and the discussion director went on to the next job. The only other time Emily spoke in this discussion was to answer a discussion director’s question about her favorite part so far. Emily responded by talking about the mittens again.

The third discussion was much better than the previous. Emily was the word wonder. Emily seemed a lot more involved and excited. When it was her turn to share she made sure everyone found the word on the page she was talking about and then she read the sentence. She did a wonderful job reading the sentence to her group. Teacher notes commented that is seemed like Emily had practiced the lines maybe the night before with her mom. She did a nice job explaining to the group why she had chosen the words and a couple of peers in her group told her good job. She looked very proud of herself.

She commented two times about other student’s pages during this discussion on her own. Once about the clever connector’s connection and another time about the awesome artist’s picture. When the clever connector shared her connection about having a bear backpack Emily talked about how her sister has one just like it also. The awesome artist’s picture was very detailed and Emily found the page the artist
was drawing about first! She opened her book and pointed to the part where the artist had drawn about. The artist had not copied a picture from the book. This was a great example of how well Emily was visualizing what she was reading.

The last discussion about Junie B. Jones is not a Crook went well for Emily. She shared her picture and everyone in her group guessed that she had drawn a picture of Junie B. talking to the pink fluffy girl about her mittens. Once again she got a couple of comments from her peers about how nice her drawings were. The only other time Emily talked during this discussion was when the discussion director asked her if she would have given the pen back to the lost and found. She replied, “Of course, the pen didn’t belong to Junie B. and it is not ok to take others things.”

After each discussion about Junie B. Jones is not a Crook I asked Emily the same four questions I asked her during Marvin and the Mean Words (two comprehension and two literature circle questions). Her answers were very similar to the previous book. Her predictions were all plausible answers that related to the book. This time she got two predictions correct. She predicted that Junie would take something from the lost and found and that she would find her mittens again.

The majority of her summaries were simplistic and lacking a lot of detail but they were in the same order as the text. Her best oral summary was when she talked about the part of the story when she was word wonder and her interaction with her peers was the greatest. She explained how Junie B. had wanted the bear backpack but didn’t take it. Then she said how she found the cool pen and took it home and pretended it was hers. She continued on about how Junie’s grandpa talked to her about his wallet and how he had lost it. She even told me that the wallet had a picture
of Junie B. in it and all the money too. This summary had a lot more detail than the others.

Her feelings about literature circles were consistent with the previous book. The level frustrated her at times, but she was very glad she could take the book home and read it with her mom. She commented on how she did not like the job super summarizer as much as the others because it wasn’t as fun. I asked her at the end of this book if she wished she was not in literature circles and she replied with a loud “NO!” She said she really loved talking about the books with her friends and listening to what they had to say about what she did.

End of book questions

After Emily finished each book and had her final discussion she was given five questions to answer about the book. By looking at her answers to both sets of questions, Emily has understood the main points from the stories. Her answers were short but correct. These were her responses:

**Marvin and the Mean Words**

1. Who does Marvin hate in the beginning of the story?

   Teacher

2. What did Marvin hear his teacher say when he forgot his jacket? Who was she talking to?

   She wiched Marvin wud leeve. She wuz talking to a man.
3. What did Mrs. Bird want to talk to Marvin about at the museum?
   To thank him for leading the game.

4. What was Mrs. Bird really talking about when Marvin thought she was talking about him?
   The hockey player Marvin on her favorite team.

5. How would you feel if you heard your teacher say something mean about you?
   I would be so sad because I love my teacher.

Junie B. Jones is not a Crook

1. Who gave Junie the Mittens?
   grampa

2. Why did Mrs. take them away from her?
   She was talking in class

3. What did Junie want to take from the school lost and found?
   A cute bear backpack

4. Who took her mittens?
   A fluffy girl

5. What was your favorite part of this story and why?
   When she wanted to take the backpack. It made me laugh.
**DRA scores**

The next important piece of data to analyze was Emily’s DRA scores. Emily came into second grade far below the benchmark of a second grader. Her confidence was high and her eagerness to read all the time helped keep her positive and motivated to become a better reader. See Table Six for her scores throughout the year. See Table Seven for the district benchmarks.

| Table 6 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **DRA scores for Emily** |
| Month of assessment | October | February | June |
| **DRA Level** | 10 | 16 | 18 |
| **Comprehension level** | 17 | 17 | 18 |
| **Accuracy** | 90% | 96% | 91% |

| Table 7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **DRA benchmarks for second grade** |
| Month of assessment: | October | February | June |
| **DRA Level** | 18 | 24 | 28 |
| **Comprehension level** | ≥ 16 | ≥ 16 | ≥ 16 |
| **Accuracy** | >94 % | >94 % | >94% |
Based on the districts benchmark Emily was below grade level throughout the year but she made steady progress. Throughout each level her comprehension stayed at adequate level and a little above the district’s benchmark. Her accuracy fluctuated, but her expression during reading stayed exceptional.

Bruce

Bruce was an average student who didn’t put a lot of effort into his work, especially reading. He hadn’t found that love of reading yet and it always seemed like a chore for him to read during reading time. His first reading assessment in second grade showed that he was right below grade level on his comprehension. He scored a DRA level of an 18 but his comprehension at that level was below. This will be discussed later in this section. He had a hard time remembering what happened in the story and his sequence was always out of order. Main events were usually skipped when retelling a story. His fluency and word attack skills were adequate. The main focus for Bruce was to build his comprehension.

Bruce was present for every literature circle discussion. He really seemed to enjoy reading with his friends. He was a very social child but at times made poor decisions about appropriate behavior when working independently. His mother worked with him at home a few times but not consistently. He took his book home three times over the entire course of this study once to do a job sheet that was not completed in class and twice to read ahead with his mom. He had a peer buddy assigned to him to read with but he rarely worked with him. The only times he was observed working with his buddy was when he started on his job pages.
Job Sheets

The first piece of data analyzed for Bruce was his job sheets. Each job sheet was analyzed for completeness and if it showed understanding of the text. Table Eight explains how Bruce's pages were analyzed.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Shows understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round One—High Tide in Hawaii</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Picker</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Summarizer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Artist</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Shows understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round Two—Nate the Great</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clever Connector</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Summarizer</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Wonder</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bruce did a wonderful job filling in his job sheets. Each page was completed and written neatly. He paid close attention to what he was supposed to do on each page. Each job page showed that he understood the book except his second super summarizer page, which was a little hard to understand. That will be discussed later.

Bruce did a great job on his passage picker page when reading High Tide in Hawaii. He chose passages that were meaningful to the story and his reasoning was based on the connection each passage made for him. A few examples were,

"Pg. 53-This part reminds me because my mom and dad was in a erthquek."
“Pg. 51-This part reminds me because I ran my hole strett”

“Pg. 50-This part reminds me because I was afrad of sombes”

His two super summarizer pages were very different. His mom helped him with the one about High Tide in Hawaii at home and the other about Nate the Great he did in class by himself. Neither one used the format learned in class by using first, next, then, finally. The summary written at home was organized and sequential and discussed the main points in the story up to that section in the text. His summary about Nate the Great was very hard to follow because it was unclear who Bruce was talking about. Some main points were written down but not all. This was his summary about Nate the Great:

“in the beginning fang woke up and barckt really loud. Then Rosamound tride to put his cloths on but fang grould next. They went on walking around and he was hungry. When the man used the cloth he thought it was a clue but it was’t so he put it dack.”

During this section in the story Nate did go get some pancakes and he thought he had found a clue when the waiter used a small rag to clean the counter but Bruce’s summary never says Nate’s name which is confusing. A major event that Bruce left out was that Nate talked to both Rosamond and Annie to try to figure out what happened to the missing pillowcase. He left out the main points both girls said about the pillowcase.
His two discussion director pages were both completed and done well. His questions showed understanding of the text and good questioning skills. He did both of these job pages at school. A couple examples of his questions from High Tide in Hawaii were,

"why did Jack not want to surf?, why did they tell ther two frinds about the magik tree house?"

These questions show that Bruce was remembering important points from the story. They also are quality questions to promote a good discussion with his group.

The questions he asked about Nate the Great were,

"how did she luse the pelowcase?, what did she do when she trid to find it?, and how did she find it?"

These are excellent questions to ask about the section he had read. They show that Bruce was thinking about the main points that were important to the mystery in the story. Like his previous questions they also promoted quality discussions.

Bruce’s awesome artist picture from High Tide In Hawaii was well done and was drawn about when Jack did the Hula. There was a picture similar to Bruce’s in the book but Bruce added more detail from the text to support his picture that proved his use of visualizing while he was reading.
A number of words on Bruce's word wonder page from *Nate the Great* were names he found interesting. He had never heard the name Rosamond or Big Hex before. He wrote that they were hard to read because he had never heard them before.

All of his job pages showed that Bruce was using the pages the way they were meant to be used to help his comprehension. The only concern was his super summarizer page which showed lack of important details.

*Teacher check-off pages*

The same process was used to analyze Bruce's interactions in each discussion as Emily. First tallies were made on the pages for the number of times Bruce spoke and participated in the discussion. During each discussion Bruce was a different job. Next, teacher notes were analyzed for any additional information that would support his comprehension. And finally, after each discussion four questions were asked of Bruce to see if he was using predicting and summarizing strategies correctly and also to get a sense of how he liked literature circles. See Table Nine for a chart that explains teacher check off tallies that Bruce received during his first discussion.
During the first discussion Bruce was very quiet and uninterested in the discussion. The discussion director had to prompt him to start sharing his passages with the group. Once Bruce started he did a great job. He went through each passage and read it to his group. He explained why he had chosen each passage. All of Bruce’s passages were examples of text-to-self connections that supported his comprehension. One thing noted on the teacher notes was that he read from his paper and very rarely made eye contact with his group. Bruce was reminded that the job pages were tools to help him remember what to say, but not instruments to read from.

During the second discussion when Bruce was the super summarizer he did a much better job participating in the discussion. On this day, he seemed to focus more on the members of his group when they talked and he even answered one of the discussion director’s questions without being asked. He answered the question about
what Jack and Annie were told to make when they left the tree house. He raised his hand first in the group and answered, “A ship”. When it was his turn to share, he tried not to look at his super summarizer page but it was hard for him. The teacher notes reported him saying, “I can’t do this job without reading what I wrote!” Other children in his group told him it was ok to read the summary because it was the hardest to remember all you had written. The group complimented him on his summary.

The third discussion day was the best day for Bruce. He was the discussion director and his questions really sparked some great discussions. He started by asking everyone in the group his questions and he even put in his own answers as well. The question that brought on the best discussion was, “Why do you think Jack and Annie told their two friends about the magic tree house?” Everyone in the group had different answers and everyone was eager to hear what the others had to say.

Not only did Bruce do a great job as discussion director but he also guessed the awesome artist’s picture and used his book to show what part of the story the picture was from. In addition he added his own connection to the part of the story the clever connector was sharing about. The clever connector was talking about tsunamis and Bruce said, “This part reminded me of when I was surfing this summer and a huge wave came. Someone in the water yelled tsunami and I had no idea what they were talking about. I asked my mom when I got out and she told me what it was.” This day was exceptionally good for Bruce because he used three different comprehension strategies when discussing connecting, visualizing, and questioning.
During the final discussion of High Tide in Hawaii Bruce was awesome artist. He shared his picture with the group and they immediately knew what he had drawn. One member of his group complained that he had copied a picture from the book but then another member pointed out all the added detail Bruce had put into his picture from the story. Bruce opened his book to show all the other details he had put in his picture that were not in the book’s picture. The group finally agreed that Bruce had followed directions and his picture was very good.

Bruce also answered a question the discussion director asked about the book. The question was if they like this Magic Tree House book, why or why not? Bruce raised his hand to answer this question. His response was very informative. He stated, “I’ve never read a magic Tree House book by myself before and I loved it. I like Jack and Annie because they are like our age. I want to read another one soon.”

After each discussion Bruce was asked four questions, two about comprehension (predicting and summarizing) and two about literature circles. Bruce did excellent on predicting what would happen next in the story. Each answer made sense and was a plausible answer. Only one of his predictions ended up actually happening in the story. He predicted that Jack and Annie would meet someone to help them build the ship because he couldn’t imagine them building a boat by themselves.

Bruce’s oral summaries started out very unorganized and missing main points in the story. Each time he was asked to summarize the section he was reminded to think back to what he had read and discussed with his group, focus on the highlights,
the main points. He was also reminded to think about the order. The first summary was very basic and simplistic. Bruce tried to use the sentence starters. He said, “First Jack and Annie went to their tree house. It spun around and took them to Hawaii. They had to make a boat, I mean a ship. Oh yeah Jack and Annie live in Frog Creek”. Teacher notes showed that Bruce was not focusing during the questioning on this day. The following two summaries Bruce gave were in order and focused more on the main points from the story. Bruce’s last summary was his best because he put the main points in order. He said, “First Jack and Annie almost got hit by a tsunami. Then the kids ran back to their family and told them what happened. Then Jack told the other boy he was sorry for being mean. Then Jack did the hula. They found out that the ship was friendship.” He had made progress just by practicing the oral summaries and focusing on the main points.

Bruce’s feelings about literature circles for the book *High Tide in Hawaii* were mostly positive. He admitted that the super summarizer pages were the hardest for him. His mom also said the summary was hard for him. He said that telling the summary was easier than writing it down. He enjoyed reading the book he had chosen and listening to his friends talk about the book. He said it was the most fun trying to guess the awesome artist’s pictures. One quote Bruce made that reflected his thinking about literature circles was when he asked, “Are you going to have another Magic Tree House book in the next round—I really liked that book!”

In the second round of literature circles Bruce was in the group *Nate the Great* and the *Pillowcase*. See Table 10 for his participation during this story.
Table 10

Nate the Great and the Pillowcase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>The number of times spoken during discussion</th>
<th>Anything added to the discussion on own</th>
<th>What comprehension strategy/strategies were used</th>
<th>Was the book used to support comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clever Connector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Text to self, predicting</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Summarizer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Summarizing, evaluating</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonder Word</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>analyzing</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Visualizing, evaluating, questioning</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first discussion went well for Bruce. He was clever connector and he enjoyed sharing his idea about the laundry bag reminding him of a paper bag. He told his group that paper bags get holes in them a lot too. He was involved in this discussion and participated when asked questions. He made good eye contact and didn’t read off his paper for this first time.

He added one comment by himself when he answered the discussion director’s question about what the group thought was going to happen next in the story. He answered nicely and even followed it up with the reason why he predicted that. He said, “I think Nate is going to go to Annie’s house to look for the laundry
bag because I think Annie took it by mistake.” It was good to see him using more than one strategy during the discussion.

During the second discussion Bruce was the super summarizer. He read his summary and the group started asking him questions right away because they did not understand what he was talking about. He had to explain what he meant and then the group agreed he had done a nice job. He explained that when he wrote “they” he meant Nate, Sludge, and Fang. He then explained that that the clue Nate thought he found was a rag the waiter was using to wipe the counters. One group member gave him a tip for next time. She told him maybe next time he could reread what he wrote to make sure it made sense. She sounded just like the teacher.

He also answered a question the discussion director asked him about which part of the story did he like the best so far and why. Bruce answered, “The part when Nate thinks he found the pillowcase but it was just a rag. I liked this part because I thought it was the pillowcase too.” He was involved in the discussion on this day and made good eye contact with his peers.

When he was word wonder his participation was not as strong. He was really distracted by a friend that was in another group. He wasn’t paying attention to the other group members when they were talking and he forgot he had a job to share. Luckily the discussion director was keeping track. When he shared his job he forgot to tell why he had chose each word and the group members had to remind him each time. This was an off day for Bruce.
The final discussion for Nate the Great was a lot better for Bruce. He was the discussion director and he took his job seriously. Teacher notes remarked, “Bruce is really with it today—what a great leader—wow!” The group liked his questions and were eager to answer them. When he asked, “How did he find the pillowcase?” the group competed to see who could answer the question first, each member adding something more to the person before them. When Bruce asked his group if they would read another Nate the Great book and why the discussion sparked again. All of the members said yes. Bruce added that he would because he likes reading mysteries. During this final discussion Bruce also guessed what the awesome artist’s picture was. The awesome artist had drawn a picture of Rosamond holding up the pillowcase to check to see if it was the one she was missing.

At the end of each discussion Bruce was asked the same four questions as the previous round. He answered the questions very similarly to the previous round. All of Bruce’s predictions were logical and supported his comprehension of the story. His one improvement was in his oral summaries. Each one was sequentially correct and contained the main points from the story. Nate the Great was an easier text to summarize because the story line was more basic, but at least Bruce was using information from the last text to improve his summaries. His best summary of Nate the Great was after his final discussion when he was discussion director. He stated, “First Nate figured out that Annie used the pillowcase as a laundry bag. Then he went to Annie’s house to check. Then he took the pillowcase back to Rosamond. Rosamond had gone to sleep. In the end Nate solved the case.”
Bruce responded to the literature circle questions with positive answers. He once again said how much he enjoyed talking with his friends about the books. This time he said, “It was fun to read a mystery and talk about how you think it will be solved. This is the first mystery I have read—it was good.’ In the end he was asked if he wished he was not in literature circles and he replied, “No, I think it is fun.” He never talked about any struggles he had during this round of literature circles.

End of the book questions

Bruce’s answers to the end of the book questions showed he remembered the main points of the story and comprehended what he was reading. His answers were short and simple but the answers were correct. Below were the questions that were asked of him and his responses.

High Tide in Hawaii

1. What did the note from Morgan ask Jack and Annie to build?
   A ship

2. What dance were the villagers doing when Jack and Annie joined the party?
   Hula

3. What did Jack and Annie’s new friends teach them?
   How to surf

4. What almost got them?
   Sunamee

5. What ended up being the ship at the end of the story?
Their friendship with the two kids

6. What was your favorite part of the story and why?

When the big wave almost got them it reminds me of when I surf.

Nate the Great and the Pillowcase

1. Whose pillowcase is missing?

Big hex

2. When did Rosamond see the pillowcase last?

When Annie was over

3. What did Nate think was the pillowcase when he was at the diner?

He thought he rag the waiter was using was it.

4. How did Nate find the missing pillowcase? Who had it?

He went back to Annie’s house and she really had it.

5. What is one thing you think Nate did that showed he was a good detective?

He worked hard and even stayed up almost all night looking for clues.

DRA Scores

The last piece of data analyzed for Bruce was his DRA scores. In the beginning of the year Bruce was just below grade level in his ability to comprehend. He did not spend a lot of time during his day reading. He was never the kind of student who would ask if he could read when he finished something early. See Table 11 for Bruce’s scores throughout the year. See Table 12 for the district benchmarks.
Table 11

DRA scores for Bruce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of assessment</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRA Level</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension level</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

DRA benchmarks for second grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of assessment</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRA Level</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension level</td>
<td>≥ 16</td>
<td>≥ 16</td>
<td>≥ 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>&gt;94%</td>
<td>&gt;94%</td>
<td>&gt;94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bruce’s DRA scores increased from the beginning of the year on target with the district benchmarks in terms of the level he was reading. His comprehension improved in the February assessment and he was even a little bit above the district’s benchmark. By the end of the year he had moved up another level and his comprehension score stayed at the district’s benchmark. Throughout the year Bruce’s accuracy was well above the district’s benchmarks.
Gary

Gary was reading far below second grade standards. He still had a hard time naming the sounds all the vowels made; short and long were often mixed up. He also did not know the majority of digraphs. He hardly ever sat down and read unless someone sat with him and listened. He had definitely not found the love of reading yet. His first DRA assessment in second grade was an eight, which was a first grade benchmark for the middle of the year. He was not a very motivated student and always needed help with everything he tried to do. Gary was always concerned with being wrong. It almost seemed like he was trying to get any attention he could find.

Literature circles was a time for Gary to interact with his peers and talk about the books he always pretended to read earlier in the year. He was present during every discussion and work was never sent home because mom was too busy. If Gary didn’t finish his work in class, the teacher would sit with him during independent reading time to give him guidance. He did his own thinking and writing he was just reminded of what each job demanded of him. Gary was partnered with a buddy who read him the pages and helped him work on his job pages.

The first piece of data analyzed for Gary was his job sheets. Each page was analyzed for completeness and proof of understanding of the text. See Table 13 for the results of his two rounds of literature circle job pages.
Gary’s word wonder pages were done by himself with the help of his peer buddy who was reading to him. His buddy would remind Gary to use stickies to mark words in the book that he thought were interesting, hard, or different while he was reading. If Gary wanted to mark a word his buddy would help him find the word on the page and Gary would put the stickie right under the word. Once the buddy was done reading they would do their pages independently. Gary chose outstanding words with wonderful reasons to support them. The words he chose from *High Tide in Hawaii* were,

“flowery meadow—because thought that it was a describing word”

“golden red glow—I thought it was a big word”

“reading—I remind me when I read”

“Summer day—it reminds me of a hot day”

These words were great examples of Gary thinking about what he was reading and paying attention to the author’s craft. He was also using connections when he was choosing his words.
The words he chose for *Nate the Great* were excellent also. The words he chose were,

“bandana-I thoug it was funny”

“snazzy-I never heard that word befor”

“fang-why did she name her dog name fang”

“pillowcase-I picked this word because that is the mane part of the story.”

These words are great words for showing how much Gary was thinking about his reading also. He chose words because he had questions about them, because they were important to the story, and because they were funny. He was showing how he could use more than one reading strategy while he read.

Gary did an amazing job coming up with questions for his group to answer when he did his discussion director pages. The questions were very focused on the main points and were meaningful to the development of the story. The teacher worked with Gary on each of the discussion director pages. The conversation always started out summarizing what had just happened in the story. After Gary had summarized, a discussion of the main points pursued and he chose parts that would make good questions. From there, Gary started coming up with questions using the question board in the room as a scaffold for the discussion director. This board had a number of generic question starters that could help the discussion director generate quality questions about their book. His questions were great examples of his understanding of the books he read. All of Gary’s questions were outstanding, but the two best questions about *High Tide in Hawaii* were,
“how would you feel if you were by the tsunami? how would you feel if you almost drowned?”

His questions about Nate the Great were also focused and meaningful. He asked,

“What part of the story do you like so far? why did Annie take the pillowcase? why did Annie Lie the first time.”

Gary’s awesome artist pages were completed but he did not like drawing and his pictures were very messy and hard to understand. He was told to write on the back of his picture what he was drawing so the teacher could check to see if he was visualizing correctly. His first picture from High Tide in Hawaii was “Jack srffing a big wav with his frends” and his other picture from Nate the Great was “Rosamond hlding the pillowcase”. Although his pictures were hard to understand, once you looked at what he had written on the back it made sense. Gary did these pages by himself.

Gary was passage picker only once when he was reading High Tide in Hawaii. Just like when he was word wonder his peer buddy reminded him to mark any part of the book he liked with a stickie so he could remember what to write about on his page. He only chose two passages instead of three but he was marked as completing the page because he said he could only find two passages that he wanted to share. The two passages he chose were,

“pg. 21- I like that he corectd him”

“pg. 32-I thought that it was funny whin he said no, mmm means good”
Both of his passages were referring to when Jack and Annie were meeting their new friends in Hawaii and they were trying to get to know each other’s mannerisms. Both of the passages he chose were important points of the story up to that point. His buddy had to help Gary a couple of times when he was doing the passage picker page by rereading to him the two pages he had chosen to write about because he couldn’t remember what parts he had marked. Gary did the writing and thinking by himself.

Gary’s last job page was clever connector when he was reading *Nate the Great*. He did this page by himself once his buddy was done reading the section to him. He made a connection to the story by writing, “Once My dog slept on a riped up stink, old, bed. It reminds me of when big hex slept on the old pillowcase.” This is a great connection to the story and shows that Gary is thinking while he is reading.

*Teacher Check-Off Pages*

The same process was used to analyze Gary’s interactions in each discussion as Bruce and Emily. First tallies were made on the pages for the number of times Gary spoke and participated in the discussion. During each discussion Gary was a different job. Next, teacher notes were analyzed for any additional information that would support his comprehension. And finally, after each discussion four questions were asked of Gary to see if he was using predicting and summarizing strategies correctly and also to get a sense of how he liked literature circles. See Table 14 for a chart that explains teacher check off tallies that Gary received during his first discussion.
Table 14

Magic Tree House High Tide in Hawaii

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>The number of times spoken during discussion</th>
<th>Anything added to the discussion on own</th>
<th>What comprehension strategy/strategies were used</th>
<th>Was the book used to support comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Wonder</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>predicting, evaluating</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Questioning, visualizing</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Artist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>analyzing, visualizing</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Picker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>analyzing, evaluating</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gary’s first discussion about High Tide in Hawaii was when he was word wonder. He paid close attention to what everyone in his group said and really seemed to focus on what others were saying. Teacher notes stated, “I’m very impressed with Gary today, he usually has a hard time paying attention during discussions with the whole class! He is really focusing.” He shared his job sheet with the group and the group commented on what descriptive words he chose. He enjoyed the compliments. After he shared his page he answered two of the discussion director’s questions. First he was asked to predict what he thought was going to happen next in the story. He said, “Jack and Annie are going to go to Hawaii and surf, I looked at the pictures in the book.” Next he was asked who his favorite character was in the story so far. He answered that question, “So far Jack because he is a boy and he likes to read.” His day went great. He did not add anything on his own on this day.
During the second discussion, Gary was the discussion director and once again he was very involved and participated beautifully. He took his role seriously and did a great job keeping the discussion going. He asked his group the questions first and then let the others in his group raise their hand if they wanted to share next. His buddy was a great help guiding him on how to lead the group. He did not add anything to any other member’s comments throughout the discussion but he was paying attention to what was being said.

During the third discussion, Gary was the awesome artist. He shared his picture with the group and they instantly figured out that his picture was of Jack riding a wave. He also answered one question that the discussion director asked him about why Jack and Annie said that the bananas were the best ones they had ever had. He said, “I think Hawaii has really good fruit because it looks really green there.”

On this day Gary seemed less involved and focused on his group’s discussion. Teacher notes stated, “Gary seems distracted today and unmotivated to participate. His peer buddy is absent today.” He did not add anything to the discussion on his own today.

In the final discussion for High Tide in Hawaii, Gary was the passage picker. He stayed focused on his group but wasn’t completely involved. He sometimes seemed to be daydreaming. Teacher notes stated, “Gary seems a little day dreamy today.” He shared his passage picker job sheet with the group when the discussion director prompted him to share. He didn’t eagerly raise his hand to share. He did use his book when sharing his favorite parts and he had his peer buddy help him read the
passages to the group. He only chose two passages to share instead of three and no one in the group seemed to notice. The group listened to his passages but no one added anything or commented on what he had said. The discussion director asked him one question about if he liked the book and why and Gary responded by saying, “I really liked this book because Jack and Annie learn new things. They are like little adults.” Everyone in the group laughed. The discussion ended with everyone agreeing that they liked the book and that they would read another Magic Tree House book again.

At the end of each discussion I asked Gary the same four questions I asked the two other participants (a prediction question, a summary, and how literature circles was going-good and bad). Gary had a hard time predicting in the beginning because he did not want to guess and be wrong. I had to remind him that prediction was just a guess and sometimes your guess would be wrong. His first two predictions were completely off and did not relate to the book at all. First he predicted that Jack and Annie were going to find their parents and go on a vacation and play. After this prediction I reminded him that he needed a reason for why he was predicting what he was predicting. He second prediction was a little more on track but seemed to not be focused on the book. He said, “I think Jack and Annie are going to get sick and want to go home because when I was on vacation I got sick and I wanted to go home”. He had a reason for his answer but it did not really relate to the book and what was going on at that point on the story. After two discussions about predicting and how to do it he final predicted with a focus toward the book. He said, “I think Jack and Annie are
going to become friends with the two kids and start to really like the people. Maybe Jack will do the Hula after all.” He was prompted to tell why he thought that and he replied, “I saw the picture at the end and it looks like Jack is having fun and dancing with the group.” He was right and he used the book to support his predictions.

Gary’s summaries were very basic and lacking detail throughout the story. They were in sequential order but never improved by the end of the story. He usually told about two events and that was it. He did remember the biggest ideas but he hardly ever remembered the small details. Each time he responded to the question, he was prompted to tell more and he always replied that that was all he could remember. His first summary was, “Jack and Annie went into their tree house and then went to Hawaii.” His second summary stated, “Jack and Annie met two kids and they wanted to take them surfing.” His third summary was, “Jack and Annie went surfing and Jack stunk.” His final summary included a little bit more, “The kids almost got stuck in a big wave called a Tsunami but Jack saved them. The group celebrated. Jack and Annie went home. The end!” Although his summaries were simplistic he did remember the main events that happened in the story.

Gary’s feelings about literature circles were very positive. He really enjoyed being able to read with his friends and talking about the book. He said, “This is pretty fun. I have always wanted to read Magic Tree House books. They’re pretty good!” He said that the hardest part for him was when his buddy wasn’t there because he didn’t want to do anything wrong. He said he really liked having a buddy to work with and it helped him to remember the book better. He also said the book
was way too hard for him and if he didn’t have someone to read it to him he would have been very lost. He remarked, “I liked that my buddy read to me and I got to follow along. Sometimes I would get confused about what page I was on so I would just listen.” All of Gary’s remarks about literature circles were positive and he said he couldn’t wait for the next round to start. The only struggle he talked about was the book level being too hard if he had to read it by himself.

In the second round of literature circles Gary was a member of the group that read *Nate the Great and the Pillowcase*. Gary did similarly during his second round of literature circles. He shared his job pages but rarely added anything to the discussion on his own. He had a different peer buddy this group but the level of support he received from this buddy was similar to the last buddy. The story was read to Gary and then the job pages were done mostly by himself unless he asked for support from either his buddy or the teacher. See Table 15 below for his discussion tallies.

**Table 15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job</th>
<th>The number of times spoken during discussion</th>
<th>Anything added to the discussion on own</th>
<th>What comprehension strategy/strategies were used</th>
<th>Was the book used to support comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Wonder</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>predicting, analyzing</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Director</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Questioning, visualizing</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clever Connector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Text-to self connection, evaluating</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awesome Artist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Visualizing, evaluating</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During Gary’s first discussion he was the job of word wonder and he did a great job sharing his words. He opened his book and shared his word with the group. Each time he shared a word someone in his group would comment on his choice of the word. Two group members even complimented him on his word choices. The group thought his best word was “pillowcase” because of his reason. He told the group that pillowcase was the main part of the story and they all greed. During this discussion the discussion director asked Gary what he thought was going to happen next in the story. He was the last person the discussion director asked so he had a lot of answers to listen to before he responded. He replied, “I think the same thing as everyone in the group.” The discussion director reminded him that he had to try to come up with his own ideas or at least put it in his own words. He then answered, “I think Nate is going to look for the pillowcase with Sludge.” This was what one member in his group said but not exactly. Teacher notes stated, “Gary seems in a good mood and paying attention nicely today. He is sitting right next to his buddy.”

The second discussion Gary was the discussion director. He started the discussion by asking his questions to the group. The one question he asked that sparked the most conversation was the question about why did Annie lie in the first place. The group all had different answers and each member was trying to get the other members in the group to change their minds to think the same as them. Gary was just watching everyone and he had a hard time getting the group to move on. His buddy finally had to take control and he shared his role next. His buddy was the awesome artist and Gary guessed what his picture was before anyone else. Some
members of the group complained that Gary’s buddy had told him what he drew but Gary denied knowing the answer. Gary was very focused during the discussion but had a hard time keeping the group on task and moving along. Teacher notes stated, “Gary is trying to do his job but his group is very bossy today and not listening to him. Gary seems to shy away when challenged by his group.”

During the third discussion Gary was the clever connector. He shared his job when the discussion director asked him to share. He told the group about his dog sleeping on a stinky, old bed. A lot of the members in his group had dogs too so they all started talking about what their dogs slept on. The only other time Gary spoke during the discussion was when the discussion director asked him which part of the story did he like best so far. He replied, “When Nate was at the diner and he thought he found the pillowcase because then Nate would have solved the case.” He was focused and on track during the discussion and listened to his group.

The final discussion Gary was the awesome artist. He shared his picture first because the discussion director wanted him to go first. The discussion director guessed the picture after asking Gary to explain his picture because it was so messy. Next the discussion director asked the group questions and he started with Gary. He asked Gary how Rosamond finally got her pillowcase. Gary replied, “I know the answer! Nate gave it to her-Annlie had it!!!!” Teacher notes remarked, “Gary is really starting to settle into his place in literature circles. He seems less and less dependent on his buddy. His ability to pay attention has gotten much better.”
Once again at the end of the discussions Gary was asked the same four questions (predicting, summarizing, literature circle feedback). He did much better the second round on his predictions and his summaries. His predictions were much more focused on the book and had reasons that made sense. Although all three of his predictions did not happen they all showed his focus on the book and his ability to think about the book. His best prediction was after the third discussion before he knew who had the pillowcase. He said, “I think Nate is going to find the pillowcase when he is walking back to Rosamond’s house to tell her he can’t find it. I think this because I bet Nate is getting tired and he can’t keep looking all night in new places.” By the second round Gary had really learned how to predict and give reasons why. He was not as worried about getting the answer wrong this time. He had learned the reason for predicting.

Gary’s summaries stayed simple and basic but he also added some detail here and there throughout his responses. The majority of his summaries still consisted of two-three sentences referring only to the main points that occurred. His best summary was after the second discussion when he stated, “Nate talked to Rosamond to try to figure out what happened to the pillowcase. Then he talked to Annie. Annie told him about how Fang growled at her when she tried to get dressed. Nate still did not know what happened to the pillowcase”. Teacher notes noted Gary saying that the Nate the Great book was easier to summarize for him because there was not as much to remember.
Just as before Gary's comments about literature circles were mostly positive. Once again he said how much he liked reading with his friends and working with a buddy. He also commented on really enjoying Nate the Great. He thought he could read a little of the Nate the Great by himself if he tried really hard. He said, "Nate the Great seems like a lot easier than the Magic Tree House book. I bet I could read half the book by myself". He also commented on liking the mystery in Nate the Great and trying to figure the answer out before Nate did. The one thing Gary said he struggled with this round was being discussion director when his group was not paying attention to him. He did not know what to do. He was asked at the very end of literature circles if he wished he wasn’t in literature circles and he replied, "It is hard when I can’t read the book but I like that someone worked with me. I want to be in it again, the books you choose are sooooo good."

End of the Book Questions

Gary answered all the questions from both books correctly. Similarly to the two other participants, the answers were simple and basic. Not a lot of effort was spent answering the questions. The answers were not written in complete sentences nor did they contain much detail from the stories. Even though not a lot of effort was put forth, the answers were correct and showed understanding of the text. The questions were read to Gary because he had a hard time reading them himself but no help was given when he answered them. The questions to both books and the answers were,
High Tide in Hawaii

1. What did the note from Morgan ask Jack and Annie to build?
   a ship

2. What dance were the villagers doing when Jack and Annie joined the party?
   hula

3. What did Jack and Annie’s new friends teach them?
   Hula and surf

4. What almost got them?
   tsuanmi

5. What ended up being the ship at the end of the story?
   I thought a surf bord but then I fond out frendship

6. What was your favorite part of the story and why?
   Whin jack wantd to reed about tsunamis befor he went in the water because
   jack is alwas reeding.

Nate the Great and the Pillowcase

1. Whose pillowcase is missing?
   Rosamonds cat big hex

2. When did Rosamond see the pillowcase last?
   when she was with Annie

3. What did Nate think was the pillowcase when he was at the diner?
   A rag
4. How did Nate find the missing pillowcase? Who had it?

He went to Annies house because he thought she had it. She did.

5. What is one thing you think Nate did that showed he was a good detective?

Asked questions

DRA Scores

The final piece of data analyzed for Gary was his DRA scores. Gary was far below the benchmark for second grade throughout the year. During reading time he had to be constantly reminded to read his books and stop messing around. The only time he was ever focused on reading his books was when he was reading to an adult. He could maybe sit and read by himself for five minutes. He had a hard time focusing during reading time. See Table 16 for Gary’s scores throughout the year.

See Table 17 for the district benchmarks.

Table 16

DRA scores for Bruce

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Month of assessment</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>DRA Level</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehension level</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
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Table 17

DRA benchmarks for second grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of assessment</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>June</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRA Level</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension level</td>
<td>≥ 16</td>
<td>≥ 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>&gt;94%</td>
<td>&gt;94%</td>
<td>&gt;94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gary’s scores showed slow, steady improvement throughout the year in his DRA reading level. By the end of the year Gary still had not made it to the beginning of the year benchmark for second grade nor had he reached the benchmark for the end of first grade. He struggled constantly throughout the day because of his reading ability and it frustrated him immensely. His comprehension came up in his February assessment to adequate but then fell back down in June. His accuracy rate improved throughout the year, which helped to boost his confidence a little bit.

Analysis

The job sheets played a very important role in the success of the struggling readers. They provided the struggling readers with models of comprehension strategies good readers use when reading and gave them a chance to try them out with guidance and support. Each participant used the job sheets to help them understand the book, guiding them to use these strategies they may have not used if not part of literature circles. The job sheets helped the participants focus on one strategy at a
time and practice how to use it while reading. Each participant completed their job sheets correctly and their answers proved that understanding was taking place.

The next important piece of literature circles that improved the participants’ comprehension was the discussions that followed after the job sheets were finished. Not only did the readers write about the book but they had a chance to talk and listen to their peers discuss the book. So not only were they focusing on one or more strategies while reading, but when they were a part of the discussion all the other strategies were presented to them for a complete look at the book.

This part of literature circles had the biggest impact on the readers’ comprehension when it came down to how well they summarized the book at the end of each discussion. Each participant was able to summarize the book to the researcher by the second round with the main points and in sequential order. The summaries were simple and basic for each participant but the main points were remembered in the end. All three participants summarized best when they were discussion director and mainly because they were the most focused and attentive due to the fact that they were in charge of the group. Based on the teacher notes, the participants were very involved and the most successful when they were discussion director. They took on a role they rarely played and did wonderfully.

Another important aspect of this study that had an impact on the struggling readers was the one-on-one questioning done by the researcher. After each discussion the researcher asked the participants four questions, two comprehension (predicting, summarizing) and two pertaining to literature circles. The two questions about comprehension gave the researcher immediate feedback about what the reader
knew and didn’t know in regards to predicting and summarizing. Each time the researcher met with the participants it became a small mini lesson on the how and why these two strategies were used. By having the one-on-one time to work on these strategies each participant improved their predicting and summarizing strategies to prove better understanding of the text.

Another critical aspect of this study that helped the struggling readers feel successful was the amount of support each participant received, especially the readers Emily and Gary who were the most below grade level. Emily received support from her mom at home every night by either reading with her or helping her on her discussion sheets. Emily commented on numerous occasions how much this helped her work with her group and feel prepared to share. She also was placed with a peer buddy who was a higher reader for any extra peer support she may have needed in class. Teacher notes commented a number of times on how much Emily and her buddy worked together to complete their discussion sheets or read the book together. Emily always looked liked she was enjoying preparing with her buddy.

Gary had no home support to help him complete his job sheets or read him the book. He was partnered up with a high reader each round and worked very closely with this buddy. His buddy was absent once and Gary’s participation that day was minimal. He always listened to his buddy read to him and then he either sat with the researcher or his buddy to complete his discussion sheet. The support was a great model for him in more ways than one. His behavior, his ability to focus while listening to stories, and his ability to talk about books and understand them all improved.
Bruce utilized the least amount of support offered to him because he felt he did not need it. Bruce had support at home on an inconsistent basis and only once did he have his mom help him even though his book and job pages were sent home a number of times. He was also partnered up with a peer buddy but rarely used his buddy for support because the books were at his reading level. Once in a while he asked his buddy how to do a discussion sheet but he completed them on his own.

Through this investigation the researcher concludes that struggling readers should be a part of literature circles because it can improve their comprehension in a number of ways. Although literature circles should not be the only reading struggling readers are involved in, it should be a component of their entire program because of all the modeling they observe and take part in. An important part of this study that made it work so well was the support afforded to the participants. If that support is not part of the set up struggling readers may not be as successful.

Summary

Data was collected from three different second grade struggling readers that were involved in literature circles. Information was gathered from their job pages, their ability to discuss, their answers to end of the book questions, and their DRA scores throughout the year. This data was analyzed for information that would help the researcher understand if and how the participant’s comprehension improved or changed throughout the study. Literature circles can improve a struggling reader’s comprehension for a number of reasons outlined in this section; mainly, peer support and modeling, comprehension strategies practiced while reading, discussion about the text, and researcher one-on-one support.
Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate what impact literature circles had on struggling readers’ comprehension. Three struggling readers in a second grade classroom took part in two rounds of literature circles with the rest of the class, lasting approximately six weeks. Data was collected by the teacher researcher to determine what happened to the struggling readers’ comprehension when they were included in literature circles. The researcher analyzed a number of materials such as discussion sheets, discussion notes, end of the book questions, and DRA scores to inform the study. Based on the researcher’s experience in her own classroom, literature circles improved the struggling reader’s ability to comprehend through many aspects.

Discussion

Literature circles has a number of elements that in turn improved the participant’s comprehension in this study. Discussion sheets were used to teach the participants what strategies help improve comprehension while reading. Each discussion sheet modeled for the reader what to focus on while reading and sequentially proved to help the reader comprehend the story.

Another aspect of this study that proved to develop the readers’ comprehension was the dialogue that followed each discussion sheet. Each participant excelled when they were the discussion director of the discussion. They
took on their leadership role with confidence and focus and their summaries at the end of these discussions verified their ability to comprehend the story. The mere fact that the struggling readers were writing about the story, having dialogue about the book, listening to others opinions, and adding their own in its self improved the readers’ comprehension.

In addition the peer and teacher support provided to the participants was a benefit to the struggling readers. Good modeling took place every day in a number of ways. The peer buddy modeled how good readers read, gave guidance on completing the discussion sheets, and gave moral support while in the discussion. The modeling alone has proved to help the struggling readers self confidence.

If the struggling readers were never allowed to participate in literature circles, their knowledge of reading would have stayed simplistic and basic and their imaginations and creativity would have been stifled. The number of scaffolds set up to help all readers succeed in literature circles is abundant and proves to benefit all readers ability to comprehend, especially struggling readers.

Implications of the Study

Curriculum design and instruction can benefit from the findings of this study in a number of ways. Many teachers and curriculum writers believe in a balanced reading program but have not included literature circles in that description before. Literature circles is a great resource for teachers to utilize when helping struggling readers find other ways to become better readers than just reading decodable texts with basic story lines. All readers need a chance to read books of their choosing and then discuss them with their peers. New meanings are made, books are looked at in
depth, and questions are asked of the readers. This concept is a great way for struggling readers to feel accepted and involved with the rest of the class without being grouped as the low kid. Modeling is taking place throughout the entire process and the teacher is not the one modeling, the peers are modeling and the students are listening.

Limitations

This study, like all studies has some limitations that may limit the findings. One of the biggest limitations is the number of participants. Having three participants gives the researcher limited amount of data to sift through for results. The number of participants was chosen based on the researcher’s class that year. In all research, the sample size can have a major impact on the findings. The researcher has taught second grade for seven years and has struggling readers in literature circles for that entire time. The information the researcher has gathered over the years has helped to make the research meaningful to other teachers and researchers.

Another limitation is the amount of time data was collected. Two rounds of literature circles is not an enormous amount of time to watch struggling readers improve. If the researcher had more time to observe, more improvements may have been found. The researcher was limited to gather data from two rounds of literature circle due to the classroom schedule and timeframe of the year in which this study took place.

Questions for Further Research

In concluding this research, the author finds that more questions need answering and warrant further research. How would struggling readers do if the
support from home or school was not present? Would the discussion be as focused and meaningful if the teacher was not observing each discussion? Which job or jobs helped the participants become the most successful? Was there a major difference in the oral responses compared to the written responses of the participants? Will the participants use the strategies learned in literature circles while reading books at their level? Does literature circles improve the reader in other areas besides comprehension? Literature circles is an area that has just started to be researched, there is still so much more to explore!

Final Thoughts

This has been a long and fruitful journey for me over the past year. I have learned very important information to help guide me in my instruction of struggling readers. I have learned that struggling readers love to talk about books and work with their peers. I have also learned that as teachers we must give struggling readers a chance to experience higher-level literature even if the text level is above their reading level because they have the capabilities to expand themselves as readers if just given scaffolds and support. I am proud of my struggling readers for all the effort they put into learning and improving. They have taught me that all students need to be expected to achieve at high levels. When we have high expectations for all our students, they can achieve almost anything.
Appendix A

Discussion Director

Name ______________  Date __ __

Book __________________________________________

Pages ________

Your job as Discussion Director is to come up with at least 4 questions that have to do with your reading. One of each of the following—Right There, Think and Search, and TWO (2) On My Own (Fat Question)!

Right There _______________________________________

Think and Search ____________________________________

On My Own ______________________________________

On My Own _______________________________________
Appendix B

Super Summarizer

Name ____________ Date ________
Book __________________________
Pages ________________

Your job as Super Summarizer is to talk about what happened in this part of the book. Think about the most important things that happened—the highlights. You may want to follow the "First, Next, Then, Finally, Plan" or the "Who, What, Where, When, and Why Plan." Read over your writing to make sure it makes sense and is in the right order.
Awesome Artist

Name_________ Date_______
Book_________ Pages_______

Your job is to draw a scene from the book. Rather than copying a picture from the book, create your own original picture! Think of the most interesting, funniest, or your favorite part of the story and draw a picture of it!
Appendix D

**Passage Picker**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your job is to pick parts of the story you would like to read aloud. Be sure to mark the parts you find most interesting with a post-it note or bookmark as you read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Why I liked it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Word Wonder

Name___________ Date_______  
Book___________ Pages_________  

Your job is to look for special words in the story. Words that are: new, different, interesting, or hard. Be sure to mark the parts you want to share with a post-it note or bookmark as you read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Why did you choose this word?</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Clever Connector

Name ___________________ Date ______

Book __________________________________

Pages ______

Your job as Clever Connector is to find connections between the book and the world outside. This means making: Text-to-Self, Text-to-Text, or Text-to-World connections. Please tell what part of the story you are connecting to.

________________________
________________________
________________________

reminds me of

________________________
________________________
________________________

Text-to-Self  Text-to-Text  Text-to-World
Appendix G

Share Out Session Projects

- Poster advertising the book
- Reader's Theater Performance
- A sequel to the story
- A board game based on the book
- A story rewritten for younger kids as a picture book
- Write a letter to a librarian recommending the book
- Interview a character or characters from the story
- Letters to (or from) a character
- Gravestone and eulogy for a character
- An artwork-painting, sculpture, poem, mobile, collage, diorama-interpreting the book
- Make a diary of a character in the story
- Create a new cover for the book
- Read aloud key passages-conduct a discussion with the class
- Design a timeline of the story
- Write a new ending for the story
- Create a shoebox movie of your story
Appendix H

Name __________________ Date _______

Share Out Sessions

Book: ____________________________

Group Members _______________________

Share Out Session Project: _______________________

Plan (draw out a sketch of what your final project will look like):

__________________________
Appendix I

Dear Parents,

Your child is participating in a literature circles group in class. To help your child feel more successful tomorrow when the group reads please read the assigned pages with him/her for homework tonight. Talk to them about what is going on in the story so far--have a mini discussion about the book to check for comprehension. Please remember your child may have chosen a book above his/her reading level and that is ok. He/she will still be reading books at their level during independent reading time ☺!

The book your child is reading is ______________________

The pages he/she should read ______________

Thank you for your help and support! I really appreciate all you do at home!

Mrs. Williams
Appendix J

Name ___________ Date ______

Dear Parents,

Your child is participating in a literature circles group in class. Part of this group's responsibility is to read the assigned pages and complete the job page assigned for those pages. For some reason your child was unable to finish the reading and/or the page during the allotted time today. For the group to have a successful discussion tomorrow all members need to have the pages read and their job pages finished. Please help your child work on this for homework tonight.

The book your child is reading is ____________________

The pages he/she was to read ________________

The job page he/she was to complete ________________

Thank you for your help and support! I really appreciate all you do at home!

Mrs. Williams
Appendix K

Teacher Check-Off

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job/date</th>
<th>The number of times spoken during discussion</th>
<th>Anything added to the discussion on own</th>
<th>What comprehension strategy/strategies were used</th>
<th>Was the book used to support comments</th>
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Questions
1) What do you predict will happen next in the story?

2) What are the main ideas of the story so far?

3) What are you enjoying about literature circles so far?

4) What struggles, if any, are you having in literature circles?
End of the Book Questions
Marvin and the Mean Words

1. Who does Marvin hate in the beginning of the story?

2. What did Marvin hear his teacher say when he forgot his jacket? Who was she talking to?

3. What did Mrs. Bird want to talk to Marvin about at the museum?

4. What was Mrs. Bird really talking about when Marvin thought she was talking about him?

5. How would you feel if you heard your teacher say something mean about you?
End of the Book Questions
High Tide in Hawaii

1. What did the note from Morgan ask Jack and Annie to build?

2. What dance were the villagers doing when Jack and Annie joined the party?

3. What did Jack and Annie's new friends teach them?

4. What almost got them?

5. What ended up being the ship at the end of the story?

6. What was your favorite part of the story and why?
End of the Book Questions
Junie B. Jones is not a Crook

1. Who gave Junie the Mittens? ________________________________

2. Why did Mrs. take them away from her? ____________________

3. What did Junie want to take from the school lost and found?

4. Who took her mittens? _________________________________

5. What was your favorite part of this story and why?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
End of the Book Questions
Nate the Great and the Pillowcase

1. Whose pillowcase is missing?

2. When did Rosamond see the pillowcase last?

3. What did Nate think was the pillowcase when he was at the diner?

4. How did Nate find the missing pillowcase? Who had it?

5. What is one thing you think Nate did that showed he was a good detective?
Appendix P

**Literature Circle Selections**

Name __________________ Date ___

Below are your choices for the next round of Literature Circles. Put a 1 next to your first choice, a 2 for your second choice and so on down to 5.

- Afternoon on the Amazon

- Nate the Great

- Liar, Liar

- Enormous Crocodile

- Junie B. Jones
Appendix Q

Literature Circle Selections

Name ___________ Date ___

Below are your choices for the next round of Literature Circles. Put a 1 next to your first choice, a 2 for your second choice and so on down to 5.

___ High Tide in Hawaii

___ Zach Files

___ My Mom the Frog

___ Marty Frye Private Eye

___ Marvin and the Mean Words
References


McMahon, S. I. (1997). Book Clubs: Context for students to lead their own


Parker, S. M., & Quigley, M. C., & Reilly, J. B. (1999). Improving Student Reading Comprehension Through The Use of Literacy Circles. Saint Xavier University


Santa, C. (2002) *Is project CRISS based on solid research? You bet!* National Reading Panel


Children’s Literature References


