

Focus Project:

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Paper to Accompany PowerPoint Presentation on Small Group Interventions and Improving  
Fluency

Kamille Samborski  
TE 842  
Michigan State University

My teaching experience for the past two years has been in a school where the number of “struggling readers” is alarmingly high. According to the DIBELS assessment, 19 of my 24 students were considered “high risk” and according to the DRA assessment, only about 6 of my 24 students were considered “at grade level.” The NWEA reading test results also confirmed that most of my students were not where they need to be as readers. Other class data is consistent with the data of my class. As a result of this data, I began implementing small group interventions during specials time. These students need every extra instructional minute possible. I held small group tutoring sessions four times every week, twice focusing on reading and twice focusing on math. During the two extra 40-minute sessions every week, I kept four to five students and we would work on activities to improve their reading, depending on my group of students and their needs.

The small group intervention times were helpful for students and also effective. I would really like to research more strategies and ways to spend small group intervention time, and more importantly identify some of the best, most effective strategies to use during this time, as I plan to continue to implement this next school year. I decided to focus on the fluency aspect of reading for this project. In my school, there is so much focus on comprehension and only comprehension, and oftentimes I think that the importance of fluency and the impact it has on comprehension and reading success are forgotten. That being said, my focus question is:

What are some the most effective approaches to improving fluency skills during small group reading interventions?

Other teachers in my building also implement small group reading interventions and it seems like we all struggled with trying to figure out the best way to spend those valuable minutes

that benefited students most. I have created a PowerPoint presentation meant to be shown to other teachers in my building, suggesting ways to spend this reading intervention time to help increase fluency skills. Because we have struggling readers of all different levels within every grade level, I am outlining many suggestions that can be adapted and used at various grade levels, and I will leave it to the teachers to decide what they can use at their grade level and for their particular groups of students.

During the research phase of my project, I was able to consult many of the resources we used in the Elementary Reading Assessment and Instruction course. I researched the basics of reading: fluency and comprehension. I then further researched fluency and how fluency skills impact reading comprehension. I researched effective approaches to fluency building and compiled a list of suggested activities to use with individuals and small groups of students. I was then guided to research on how to create an environment that fosters fluency building. Other related topics I researched included the benefits of small group work and the psychology of children and our students' psychological needs. I consulted many resources from the Elementary Reading Instruction and Assessment course. Specifically, I consulted *Assessment for Reading Instruction* by McKenna and Stahl which outlined strategies to use for building fluency skills. I read about the benefits of small group work in Harvey and Daniels' *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action*. Other research literature and articles from the course helped me better understand the basics of comprehension and fluency and how they are related. A book titled *Comprehensive Classroom Management, Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems* provided me with a basic understanding of the psychological needs of children and that these needs are fundamental before learning can begin.

What I found from my research is organized and outlined in a PowerPoint Presentation titled “Small Group Reading Interventions and Fluency.” The PowerPoint begins by giving teachers basic background information about the small group reading interventions that I implement in my classroom. I then continued the presentation by reviewing the basics of reading, comprehension and fluency. Comprehension was defined as, “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning throughout interaction with written language” (NCEE, 2010, p. 11 credited to Snow, 2002). Fluency was defined as reading with “appropriate timing, expressiveness, stress, and intonation” (Worthy & Broaddus, 2001, p. 335). Because we read for meaning, many assume that the focus should be mainly on comprehension. However, fluency is important in comprehension, as explained, “if children cannot read the text relatively accurately, their comprehension will suffer” (McKenna & Stahl, 2009, p. 148) and “fluency contributes to comprehension” (Worthy & Broaddus, p. 337). Some suggested strategies said to be effective in improving reading fluency that I came across during my research include echo reading, repeated readings, listening to reading, partner reading, problem solving in reading, choral reading, performances, paired reading, buddy reading, sharing favorites, and several others outlined in the presentation. Additional information about small groups and teaching in general is also provided, as these factors can influence the teaching and learning that happens during intervention time. The research is presented in a way in which teacher colleagues will find organized, practical, and valuable.

In conclusion, I believe that every minute spent with students can be made into valuable learning time. As an educator, I know it is my responsibility to do whatever it takes to guide students in reaching their potential, and oftentimes that involves extra time spend with students, outside of regular class times, especially for very at-risk students. Creating small group

intervention sessions built into the day has proved to be effective in improving reading skills as well as students' confidence and feelings of success. I hope that my research and the presentation that I created will not only improve the quality of the time that I spend with my students during small group intervention time, but that the other teachers in my building will also walk away with many practical, effective strategies to improve the reading skills of our entire student population.

## References

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