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# How Does Teacher Modeling of Fluent Reading Strategies Impact Students' Fluency?

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How Does Teacher Modeling of Fluent Reading Strategies Impact Students' Fluency?

by

Heather Marie Moriarty

Master of Science in Education

August 1, 2007

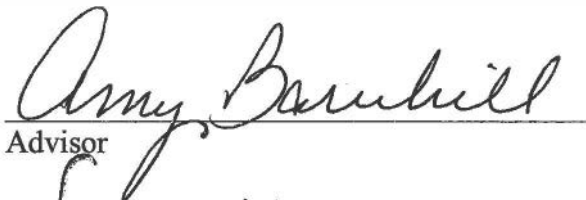
A thesis or project submitted to the  
Department of Education and Human Development of the  
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Master of Science in Education

How Does Teacher Modeling of Fluent Reading Strategies Impact Students' Fluency?

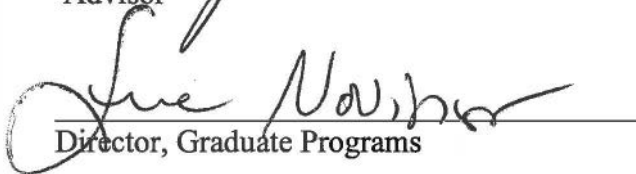
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to discover how teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies impacted students' fluency. This research was conducted because in my class in which I am interning I noticed that students were excelling in oral reading when specific strategies were modeled first. I used the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) as well as observational notes to determine whether or not modeling is an effective teaching strategy.

Five third grade students, three males and two females, provided usable data for this study. Students were assessed prior to data collection using the DRA. The DRA was used to determine the instructional reading level for each student as well as their oral reading fluency score. Although the DRA focuses on comprehension, fluency, prediction, and summarizing, only the oral reading fluency portion and overall instructional levels were used. Students' were assessed three times throughout the school year; once in September 2006, March 2007, and May 2007.

In addition to assessing students oral reading with the DRA and modeling during guided reading, each of the five students were interviewed. The students were asked six questions about modeling and their attitudes and thoughts about teacher modeling. Interviews were analyzed and used to compliment the observations and anecdotal notes that were taken throughout the study.

The results of this study revealed that each of the five students showed an increase in their overall reading scores and their oral reading fluency scores. The

three specific strategies that were modeled to the students throughout the year continued to be implemented during guided reading and the students use each of the strategies on a daily basis with little or no teacher support. The results also showed that students confidence as readers had improved from the beginning of the year.



## **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **Introduction**

Research shows that teacher modeling as an instructional strategy effectively improves students' performance, specifically in the area of comprehension and written language (Fountas and Pinnell, p 17). Teacher modeling can present itself in many different forms and likewise can reap countless benefits for both teacher and student.

The strategy of modeling in the classroom is one that has existed for several years however, it wasn't until recently that more and more educators began to realize just how important it is to incorporate modeling throughout the day in every subject. Before modeling became significant in the classroom, students were expected to reach an acceptable level of work based on their interpretation of the teacher's verbal instruction. Once educators began to realize that the modeling they were using for simple everyday routines and procedures was highly effective, many of them began to implement it throughout the school day in multiple subject areas.

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) state that modeling during a shared reading or interactive read aloud is a key component of a balanced literacy program and further helps students expand their literacy proficiency. By using techniques such as think aloud during oral reading, the teacher can verbalize and model his/her thinking about reading and include questions and connections that can relate to the text. It is also a wonderful opportunity to model fluency for struggling readers. In addition, Routman (2000) believes that small group or guided reading time is one of the most essential

times to model or demonstrate strategies for students to implement in their reading.

Guided reading can be best defined as small group instruction for students who read the same text. The group is homogeneous: the students read at about the same level, demonstrate similar reading behaviors, and share similar instructional needs.

Modeling such strategies during guided reading allows for students to clearly identify how and when to use them. Some strategies that can be modeled during guided reading are fluency, word decoding, and reading dialogue and punctuation.

### **Problem Statement**

How does teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies impact students' fluency?

### **Significance of Problem**

The purpose of this research is to illustrate how children learn best. Oftentimes, educators discuss the importance of teaching to students' strengths but forget that not all students learn best through listening. According to Harry Wong (1997), "In an effective classroom students should not only know what they are doing, they should also know why and how," (p 47). Many students learn best when they are shown how to do something. Modeling is an important instructional technique whether one is discussing the modeling of everyday school routines and procedures or the modeling of a specific reading task. Either way, when a teacher models his/ her expectations, the students are able to get a better sense of what s/he

can do to meet the highest level of achievement. Teacher modeling sets our students up for success and that is what we want for all of our students.

From a teacher's perspective, this research will enhance the teacher's ability to better address his/her students as individual learners being sensitive to the many learning styles in the classroom. In addition, the discussion of different modeling techniques in a professional development setting can help teachers to enhance their own delivery of instruction as well as reflection of best practices. This research will also be beneficial in guiding me, as a first year teacher, in understanding how modeling can impact students' reading. By using my own reflections in regards to the modeling practices that I will be observing during my research, I will gain the knowledge necessary to assess which practices work best.

### **Purpose/Rationale**

The students who participate in this study, as well as those who are in a classroom where modeling is prevalent, will benefit from this research. The students will be able to experience what it is like to be taught at their instructional level as the teacher models fluent reading practices and specifically states his/her expectations. When students have a model of what their reading should look like, they are being set up for success. Comprehension and fluency are strengthened in reading when students receive instruction that is modeled. In addition, students who struggle with interpreting verbal instructions or those who have auditory processing difficulties will be highly successful in completing reading tasks that are modeled first by the teacher.

In terms of other teachers being impacted by this research, they will be able to see how modeling can be effective for a large group of students. It doesn't just target one learning style, it helps to scaffold instruction and reach a variety of students on multiple levels. Teachers can learn more about their students as learners when they apply the modeling technique.

This research is extremely important to me. It is my ultimate goal to be successful in teaching all of my students how to be good readers. It is important to keep in mind that there is not just one universal teaching strategy or technique. Every child learns differently and has different strengths and needs. By researching modeling and how it impacts students reading, I will be learning about how to provide my students with the highest quality of instruction so that they can be reading at or above grade level.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)** - The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a quick, accurate, research-based assessment that helps you target instruction for student success.

**Modeling**- Can occur in more than one way; students view or observe the expectations before completing a given set of guidelines.

**Multiple Intelligences**- This theory proposes that humans possess more than one type of intelligence. Popularized by Howard Gardner who suggested seven different types of intelligence (i.e., visual/spatial, verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal), spanning three domains (i.e. the physical, cognitive and affective domains).

**Small Group Instruction**- Instruction that occurs with anywhere from 2-8 students.

**Whole Group Instruction**- Instruction that is given to the entire class.

**Read Aloud**- The teacher reads while the students listen.

**Balanced Literacy**- A literacy program that includes basic components and contexts for teaching and learning. All aspects of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing receive appropriate emphasis.

**Guided Reading**- Small group instruction for students who read the same text. The group is homogeneous: the students read at about the same level, demonstrate similar reading behaviors, and share similar instructional needs.

**Fluency**- Reading easily and smoothly, and with expression when reading aloud.

**Word Decoding-** A process used to figure out a new word that you meet in a text, but unless you also know the meaning of the word you haven't solved it; you don't have complete access to the meaning of the text.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**



## History

Teacher modeling is not a strategy that has always been implemented in the classroom. “Studies conducted as early as the 1970’s showed that children learn what they are taught, making it clear that teachers must carefully consider that nature of the literacy instruction and experiences young children receive in the classroom,” (Au, 2000). Teachers use to go about instruction in more of a verbal way; assessing what students knew through questioning and observing. Teachers often used a five step approach to their instruction which consisted of the following: assess prior knowledge, build background knowledge, explain various terms, guide discussion, and ask questions, (Kragler, Walker, & Martin, 2005). This five step approach was mainly used when students were beginning a new text. The problem with this approach is that the only responsibility of the teacher was to facilitate discussion.

More often than not, teachers are just simply explaining an activity or concept and then students are left to independently complete the task. Even the most detailed description or explanation of a task can leave a student confused or unclear about what the expectations are. Teachers are beginning to realize that student-centered instruction means modeling and demonstrating so that students are aware of what the expectations are. Part of making the change from a teacher-centered environment to a student-centered environment is setting a good example for the students. According to Reutzel & Cooter (1991), in order for the classroom to lend it self to a more literate environment where students are reading for real purpose, “...there must be opportunities for regular demonstrations of reading strategies, for sharing in the

reading process including responding to books, and for evaluating individual reading process,” (p. 549). When teachers choose to implement strategies such as these as a means to modeling reading behaviors, the student-centered approach is apparent and the old methods of questioning and acting as discussion facilitator do not apply.

### **Gradual Release of Responsibility**

Many studies indicate that teacher modeling is effective in literacy instruction. It is important to remember that once the teacher has done his/her part by modeling his/her expectations, it is then up to the student to complete the task. One strategy that can be used that assists the teacher in modeling and communicating the desired outcome to the students is called the gradual release of responsibility from teacher to child. In this model, the beginning stage requires that the teacher provides the maximum level of support in reading and writing for the student. Once the teacher feels confident that the students are demonstrating a level of reading and writing that is proficient, the responsibility is released to the student. During this time, the teacher can evaluate and assess the students work and modify instruction from there. Using the gradual release of responsibility as a means of modeling instruction in reading and writing is an effective way to make sure that “young children are encouraged, through scaffolding, not just to practice skills but also to put skills to work during real reading and writing,” (Au, 2000).

One of the main components of the gradual release of responsibility is to scaffold instruction. Scaffolding “...consists of getting children involved in joint

problem solving with another peer or adult. As the two work together toward a common goal, the child stretches to understand the new information and, at the same time, is helped by the teacher pointing out the connection between what the child already understands and the new skill or concept,” (Soderman, Gregory, & McCarty, 2005, p. 23). In order to successfully scaffold instruction so that it is effective, it is important that the teacher act as a coach and provide just the right amount of support based on the students’ skill levels. This model of the gradual release of responsibility is most commonly used with struggling readers and writers. When implemented appropriately the outcome is usually significant and rewarding. Students become more independent and less reliant on the teacher.

The gradual release of responsibility can be used throughout the day in a variety of situations. It usually works best when it is used at the one-on-one level. It is important for the teacher to sit side by side with the student so that s/he can observe the student’s strategies as a learner. This helps support the idea that scaffolding instruction creates more of a student or child-centered learning environment. It may be difficult to decide when it is appropriate to scaffold and when it is appropriate to ask the child to try the task independently. For this reason, it is important for teachers and educators to observe the child during self-initiated learning activities (Elicker, 1995). When observing students in this setting, the teacher can evaluate whether or not the student is applying what s/he has learned independently or if the instruction needs to be modified and re-taught in a different way. Scaffolding instruction does not always have to be done “on the fly.” When working with students either one-on-

one or in a small group setting, "... 'scaffolded situations' allow each child to extend current skills and knowledge to a higher level," (Elicker, 1995). Guided reading lends itself perfectly to the opportunity to use scaffolded instruction in relation to the gradual release of responsibility and modeling.

### **The Zone of Proximal Development**

Lev Vygotsky was a Russian theorist who theorized that, "Language is the major bridge between human beings' social and mental worlds and the most significant milestone in children's cognitive development," (Lyons, 2003, 23). Vygotsky developed the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky defined the ZPD as the distance between the child's actual development (the tasks the child can do independently) and the child's potential development (the tasks the child can do with adult help). According to Lyons (2003), "The purpose of instruction is to provide children with experiences in their 'zone'—activities that are challenging but that can be successfully completed with sensitive adult guidance," (p. 48). In order to build upon the known and instruct children in their ZPD, the guidance from the teacher should incorporate modeling of specific expectations for a given task.

The ZPD is also based upon the notion that children learn through communication. It is essential that the teacher create meaningful learning opportunities in which the students are engaged and able to express their thoughts throughout a given task. This allows for the teacher to observe what the child already knows and where to build upon that knowledge. According to Wang (2000):

The teacher is the social intervener who provides the ZPD for the child. With the assistance and communication of the teacher, children can often a better task that they are incapable of completing on their own. According to Vygotsky (1978), an essential feature of learning is that it awakens a variety of internal development processes that are able to operate only when the child is in the action of interacting with people in his/her environment and in cooperation with his/her peers...Meanwhile, the teacher should constantly provide support and explanation to better motivate children to be an active learner.

When the teacher is modeling and the students are responding to his/her instruction, the child's ZPD is strengthened and the teacher can begin scaffold instruction.

When teaching in the ZPD, the teacher must remember that students need the opportunity to learn how to complete tasks. During this learning process it is essential that the teacher guide his/her students by modeling and providing explanations so that they can develop a firm understanding of how to be successful in their own learning. For this reason, teaching based on the theory of ZPD is important so that teacher modeling of reading will impact students reading and their strengths and needs will be met and teaching will be built upon what they child already knows.

### **Guided Reading**

Guided reading is an important piece in creating a balanced literacy program in the classroom. Guided reading groups are usually constructed of three to eight students whom all have similar needs and are reading at similar levels. Groups should be homogeneous and should take student interest into consideration. It is also important to keep in mind that groups are likely to change as students strengths and needs are assessed continually throughout the year. One form of diagnostic assessment that is often used to form guided reading groups is the Developmental

Reading Assessment (DRA). This assessment consists of several components that test the student's oral reading and fluency, comprehension, retelling, prediction, and summary skills. The DRA is an effective way to look at what students do well in addition to what they need to improve on. Using the DRA to form guided reading groups is a great way to make sure that all students are going to receive instruction at their instructional level.

Guided reading will look differently at each grade level but there are several components that should remain consistent. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2001), guided reading should be set up in the following way:

In the small group, you introduce a text that you have selected, and the students read it silently and independently. Students usually read silently, though you might ask individual students to read orally at regular intervals and talk with them individually about the book. You also explicitly teach effective strategies for processing a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts. You select teaching points based on the reader's needs and may assign oral and/or written responses and extensions. You might also engage the students in a minute or two of word work (p. 7).

Consistency in guided reading will help students to become more proficient readers.

In addition to the silent reading and teaching points that occur throughout a regular guided reading lesson, the teacher should use this opportunity to scaffold and instruct students in problem solving, applying strategies and skills, and whatever else is necessary to promote students' understanding (Routman, 2000).

### **Modeling in Guided Reading**

Guided reading lends itself beautifully to teacher modeling of reading.

According to Routman (2000), "...most of the work in small group guided reading

involves helping students put into perspective what you already have demonstrated in other contexts,” (p. 140). The goal is to get students to become independent in specific skills such as fluency, analyzing, predicting, problem-solving, and monitoring and implementing strategies. In order for students to reach this level of independence, the teacher must model for his/her students how to complete these tasks and how to implement the strategies that good readers use. Routman (2000) also states that, “Just because you’ve suggested a behavior or listed it as a guideline, do not expect that students will ‘do it.’ Every expected behavior needs to be modeled—often repeatedly,” (p. 162). Modeling and demonstrations should occur everyday in guided reading. The teacher should engage his/her students by demonstrating what her thinking process is as s/he reads a text orally. This process alone shows students what it is like to be a fluent reader who correctly reads dialogue and punctuation. When students are exposed to this kind of instruction they are being set up for success. After the teacher models what the expected behaviors should look like as well as what his/her expectations might be for a given task, s/he should follow up with questions for the students so s/he can check for understanding and s/he should listen in on students as they read silently to check for fluency.

### **Fluency**

Fluency is an important goal for guided reading instruction. When a student becomes a fluent reader, they are successful in reading punctuation and dialogue so that their reading sounds like everyday speech. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) suggest that the teacher models what it looks like to be a fluent reader. One way the teacher

might do this is by reading aloud to the students during guided reading time. During this read aloud, the teacher demonstrates how to use phrasing and how to use punctuation. The following are examples of strategies that can be modeled by the teacher to increase fluency in guided reading, (Rasinski, 1998):

**Choral Reading-** Students orally reading one text together. This strategy is successful in building fluency because the group must work together and support those who may be struggling.

**Readers Theater-** Students read short scripts focusing on the voice of the character. Students are not required to memorize lines and are allowed to refer to their script throughout the performance. Readers Theater allows students to fluently read in an expressive and meaningful way.

**Read Aloud-** Offers students the opportunity to take a look inside the reading of an expert and understand that, first and foremost, reading is language and should sound like it..

**Paired Reading-** A one-on-one partnership between a skilled reader and a struggling reader. The skilled reader may be another student or an adult. The skilled reader models for the struggling reader what fluency sounds like.

**Echo Reading-** In echo reading, the teacher reads one line at a time modeling fluency and correct phrasing and then asks the student to read the same line back mimicking the exact mannerisms of the teacher.

All of these strategies promote fluency and can be modeled and used during guided reading time. It is important for students to hear examples of strong fluent reader's



everyday. Without fluency or lack thereof, students may struggle with other areas such as comprehension.

## **Comprehension**

Comprehension usually goes hand-in-hand with fluency. When students are fluent readers, their understanding of what they read is usually quite significant. However, when struggling readers have poor fluency skills, their comprehension is usually the first area that suffers. “For optimal comprehension, students need to learn how to: ask questions of the text and its author, make connections to events, characters, etc., visualize, image, or reenact parts of the text, siphon out the important ideas, make inferences backed by evidence, and summarize and synthesize sections of text,” (Cole, 2004). For all of these things to take place independently, the teacher must model for his/her students how to use these strategies during reading and then scaffold his/her instruction based on the students’ individual strengths and needs.

According to Dolores Durkin (1978), less than one percent of reading instruction is focused on comprehension. The reason for such a low percentage is because many teachers are confusing how to teach comprehension with actually assessing comprehension. For example, Cole (2004) states that, “It seems teachers confuse the *product* with the *process*. That is, many teachers think that a worksheet of comprehension questions to be answered by the students is teaching comprehension, when it is actually assessing the product,” (p.79). Because it is difficult to model comprehension strategies without interrupting the reading process, the teacher should take the opportunity to do so during his/her own read aloud

procedures and then scaffold his/her instruction with the students as they are turning the page or after the reading has been completed. One way, in addition to read aloud, that the teacher can model comprehension strategies is by doing what is referred to as a think aloud. A think aloud as defined by Fountas and Pinnell (2002) is a technique that offers information about both processing and comprehension. "Readers talk about skipping text, rereading, searching back in the text for information, predicting, and visualizing. They also report the feelings and understandings they experience as they read a particular text," (Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 8). When think alouds are modeled to students, they begin to develop the understanding that it is ok to make some miscues when reading as long as they do not interrupt the meaning and as long as we are using strategies that good readers use to correct those miscues. When comprehension strategies are taught in relation to fluency and strategies are modeled by the teacher, students have a better chance of internalizing what they have learned and then applying it to their own reading.

## **Chapter Three: Applications and Evaluation**

**Objective/Goal**

My research aimed to discover how teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies impacted students' fluency. This research was conducted because in my internship I noticed that students were becoming more fluent after I modeled fluency strategies during guided reading. I used the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in addition to my own observations and reflections to determine whether or not modeling was an effective teaching strategy.

**Participants**

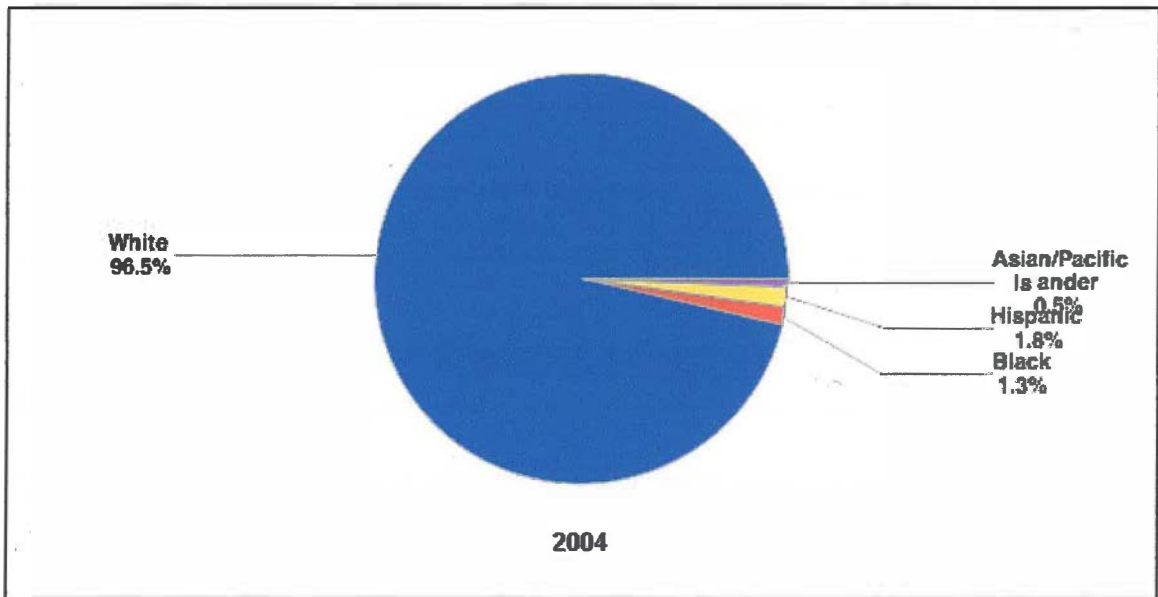
The study took place in a suburban elementary school in a middle size city in western New York. The majority of my research was conducted in a third grade classroom. In this classroom, there are three teachers including myself who are all white females. Both the teachers I am interning with have been teaching for eleven years. There are 34 students in this class; 17 boys and 17 girls. 33 of the students are Caucasian and one student is half African American and half Caucasian. The room is divided so that each side has 17 students. The rooms are separated by accordion doors. The students in this class participate in both whole group and small group instruction. They are grouped according to ability for content areas in Math, Spelling, and Reading. Most Science and Social Studies lessons are done whole group.

The subjects that were studied for this project were five students within my internship placement (third grade classroom) whom I instruct during guided reading. Each of these five students, two females and three males were interviewed (upon permission) and are students who are considered at risk (reading below grade level).

Each of the five students who were interviewed was selected upon review of their reading test scores according to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA).

### School Demographics

**Figure 1**



*2004 demographics are still relevant to 2007 demographics at the school used in this study.*

Some students involved in this research were not able to provide reliable data due to the fact that they were not present for all modeling demonstrations and procedures provided by myself, the researcher. Some students were absent for small portions of this study but their data was still used in the analysis. In addition, this

study was restricted to the five students from this particular internship placement, thus providing limited data.

## **Measures**

The measures that were used to address how teacher modeling of fluent reading practice impacts students' fluency were the DRA, teacher modeling of specific fluency strategies, and student interviews. The DRA was used to measure the impact that modeling had on students' fluency. The DRA is a quick, accurate, research-based assessment used to target instruction for students' success. Since this assessment is research-based, all of the materials have been field tested therefore providing validated and reliable results. In addition, the DRA helps set individual instructional goals and documents students' performance over time.

During this study, all five students' reading levels were assessed in the beginning of the year (September 2006) before any teacher modeling took place. The DRA was the chosen assessment because a portion of it focuses on fluency. As the researcher, I modeled for students, specific fluency elements from the DRA during guided reading. Students were reassessed in March and May 2007 using the DRA to compare whether or not teacher modeling of fluent reading practices were effective in increasing students fluency.

In order to enhance students' fluency skills, I modeled three specific fluency reading strategies: reading aloud, wrapping text, and choral and echo reading. These strategies were modeled and implemented throughout this study and students were

given multiple opportunities to practice and improve their fluency by using these strategies.

Student interviews were conducted in order to develop an idea as to how students learn best. The interview was aimed toward understanding how students define teacher modeling and what specific teacher modeling practices help them to succeed in the classroom.

### **Procedure**

The research plan that was implemented for this study began with the assessment of the students' instructional reading level as determined by the DRA. Each of the five students in my guided reading group were administered the DRA in September 2006. Following the analysis of the DRA, teacher modeling of specific fluency strategies were implemented during guided reading instruction and students were reassessed in March and May 2007. Teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies was demonstrated as the researcher modeled three specific strategies. The first modeled strategy took place as I read aloud to students during guided reading and illustrated what it sounds like to read with expression and voice. This procedure took place during several guided reading lessons through out the year. I showed students how to read with punctuation such as quotations, periods, commas, exclamation points, and question marks. After I had modeled how a good reader sounds, I listened to students as they would quietly read to themselves and I took notes on any improvements or miscues. These notes informed my instruction and help me to scaffold.

The second strategy that was modeled was implemented to help students wrap the text; use their eyes to read words from one line on the page to the next. This strategy involved using an index card to cover the words on a page. As the card moved from left to right revealing the letters of each word, the student would read those words while making sure to keep up with the sliding of the index card. This strategy helped students to self monitor. It was also successful in increasing their words read per minute.

The third strategy that was modeled was choral and echo reading. This strategy was implemented so that students would be able to immediately practice fluent reading skills after they were modeled. For echo reading, I would read a sentence from a chapter or a line from a poem and students would then repeat it back to me making sure to use the same voice inflection and phrasing. In choral reading, the five students and I would read an entire paragraph or stanza from a poem together at the same time. This practice assists the students in their pacing, phrasing, and expression. Each student was given a fluency check list that contains all the elements that a fluent reader should exhibit. They used this check list as a way to self monitor and assess their own progress as well as to determine areas of strengths and needs.

### **Instructions**

This study began with assessing students reading levels according to the DRA. I administered the DRA's using the directions and instructions that were provided. Each of the five students was given the DRA in the same location. It was a private



one on one setting where there were limited distractions. The same location was used for both the September and May DRA.

For the interview portion of this study, I explained to the students that I was doing a project for school and I would like their help. I also explained that I would like to ask them some questions and tape record their answers so that I would be able to really listen to everything they had to say. I also told students that if they had any questions or if they changed their mind about participating at any point during the interview, to let me know.

### **Data Analysis**

Both qualitative and quantitative forms of data were used in this study. As the researcher, I chose to use both qualitative and quantitative analysis because it provided a well rounded study. It is important to observe students' behaviors and measure those behaviors statistically. The DRA was used to collect quantitative data. The students' reading levels as determined by the DRA were calculated in September 2006 and again in March and May 2007. After teacher modeling of fluent reading practices during guided reading, the students reading levels were recalculated in March 2007 and again May 2007 and compared to the original scores. The focus of this study was on the fluency scores of the DRA rubric where students are scored from 4-16 points. There are four areas of the DRA rubric which consist of: Intervention, Instructional, Independent, and Advanced. The Intervention level occurs when students score between 4-6 points on the oral reading fluency portion. A score in the Intervention range reveals that students should be receiving extra support

in reading and are at risk of becoming below grade level readers. Students who score between 7-10 points on the oral reading fluency portion of the DRA rubric are fall under the Instructional category. Since the DRA is testing for students' instructional level, this is the ideal category for students to fall into. It simply means that students should be receiving instruction at that given DRA level. If a student receives a score between 11-14 points, that means that the DRA test level that was given to them is too easy and they fall into the Independent level. Independent levels are those in which students are able to read with little or no guidance or support; they read them independently. The last possible level that students can attain is Advanced. Students who score 15-16 points on the oral reading fluency portion of the DRA have reached the Advanced level and are reading at a level much beyond the level in which they were tested. These specific categories assist the DRA administrator in determining what type of fluent readers students are. The other portions of the DRA were not considered in this study because they do not measure fluency, the reading component addressed in this research. Any score of 4-6 for the fluency section is considered to be frustration, 7-10 is instructional, 11-14 is independent, and 15-16 is advanced. I analyzed the scores and noted any increase or decrease in students' fluency scores by creating a bar graph. After analyzing the DRA scores and the qualitative information based upon observation and interview data, the results of this study were able to be determined.

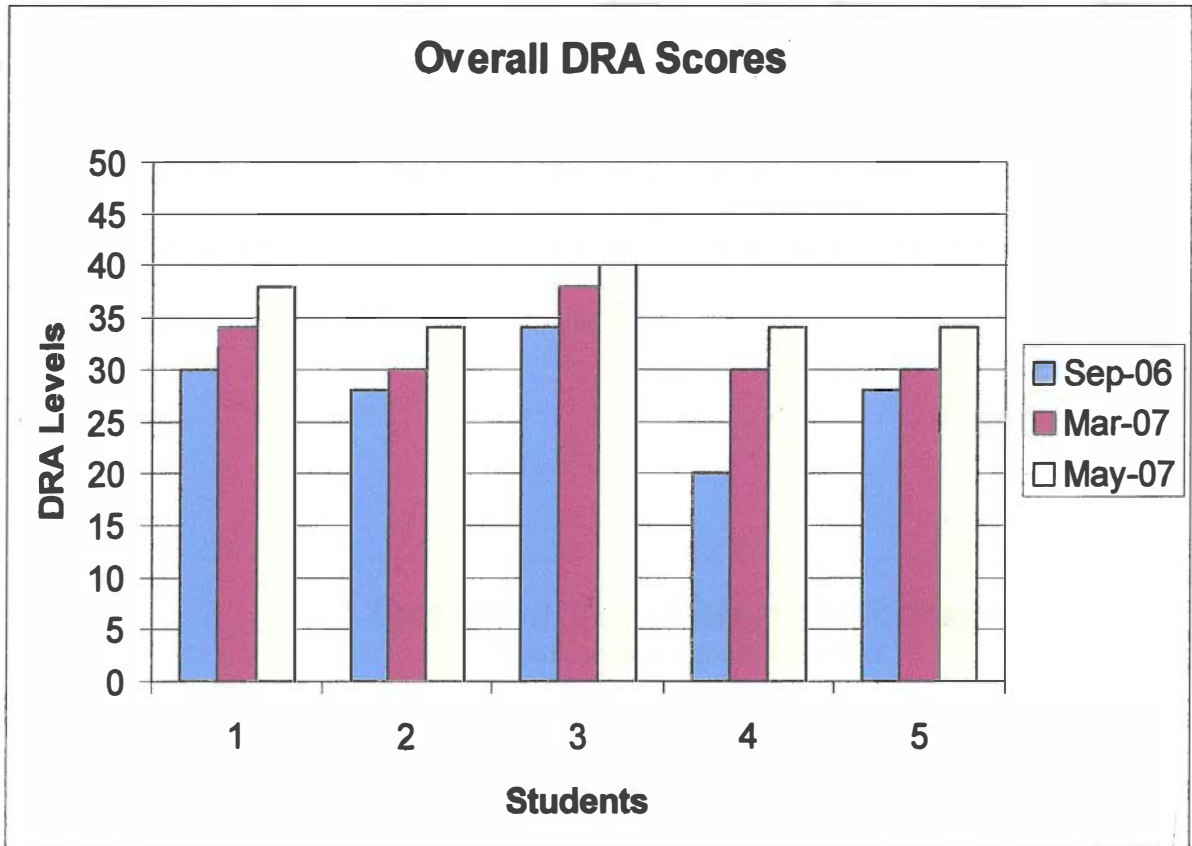
## **Chapter Four: Results**

This research study aimed to discover how teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies impacts students' fluency. The DRA was used to assess the students' oral reading fluency three times through out the year; once in September 2006, once in March 2007, and again in May 2007. The results reveal that each of the five students that were studied showed an increase in both overall DRA scores and oral reading fluency scores. The teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies was implemented to further enhance students' fluency.

## **DRA**

The DRA was administered early in the year to determine students' instructional reading levels. This assessment revealed that each of the five students from this study were reading below grade level and struggled mainly with fluency. Four of the five students began the year reading just slightly below grade level and one student was reading significantly below grade level (at a second grade level). As the year progressed, each of the five students made gains in both their overall and oral reading fluency scores. Four of the five students increased their instructional reading scores by three levels and the remaining student increased by five levels. These increases in overall DRA scores disclose the positive results as none of the five children from this study had scores that decreased or remained the same.

**Figure 2**



### **Fluency**

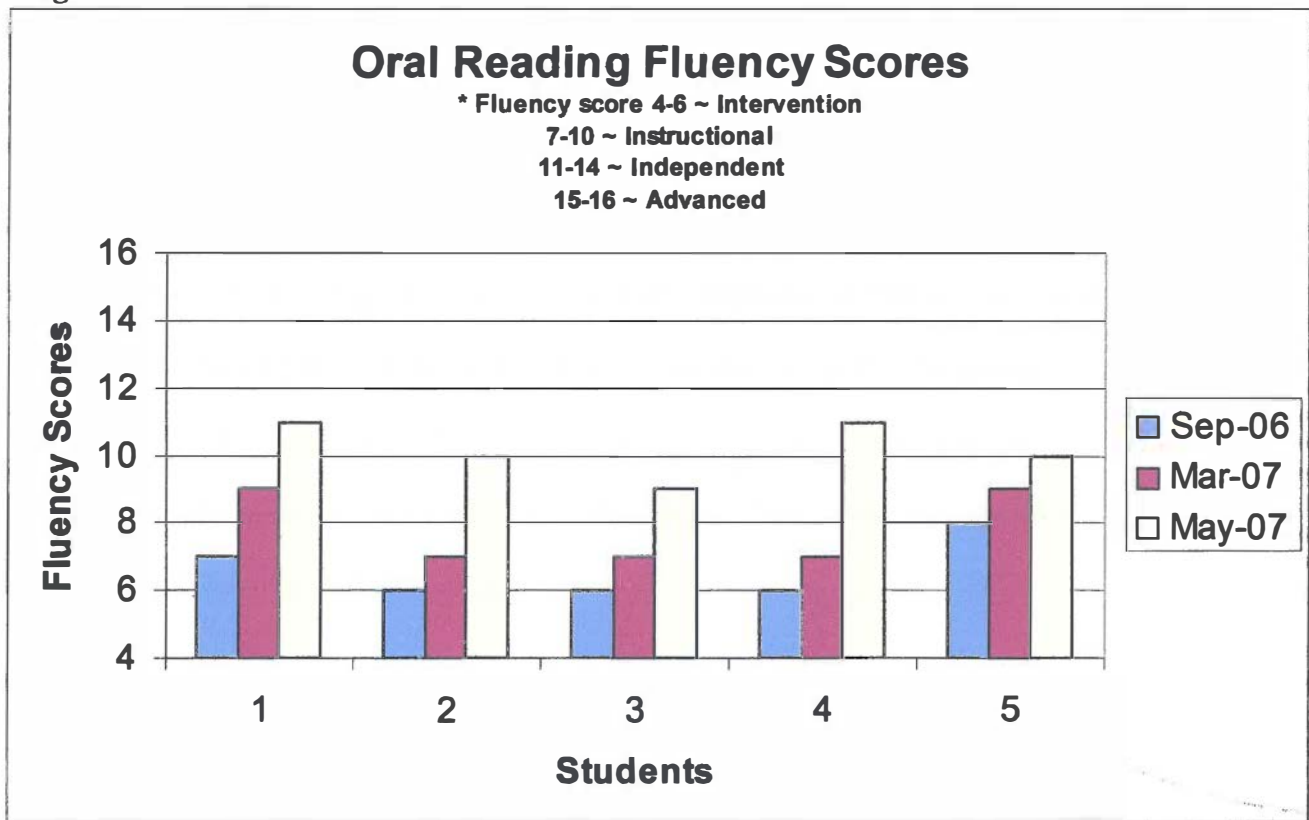
In the beginning of the 2006/2007 school year, the five students who participated in this study showed low oral reading fluency scores. The oral reading fluency portion of the DRA rubric is broken down into four categories: Intervention, Instructional, Independent, and Advanced (as defined in Chapter 3). When scoring students' oral reading fluency, the teacher attempts to define their instructional score.

In September 2006, three of the five students scored in the intervention portion of the rubric. The remaining two students scored in the lower instructional portion. As the year progressed and students were retested, each of their fluency scores increased.

Two of the five

students' oral reading fluency scores were at the independent level and the remaining three had scores that were at the higher end of the instructional level. The results reveal that each of the students from this study has made gains in both their overall reading development and their oral reading fluency.

Figure 3



One strategy that I modeled for students was how to read with expression and voice while paying close attention to punctuation. This strategy was modeled over the course of one week. I took notes and recorded my observations as students began to demonstrate their understanding of what was being modeled. For example, the students would raise their voices when they came to a question mark, they would read bold words loudly, and they would pause for commas. Four of the five students struggled with reading right through periods and as we worked through this strategy, I began to notice that those four students would go back and reread sentences so that they would sound correct and make more sense. In addition, the students also began to practice changing their voices for different characters in the text. One way in which they demonstrated this to me is when they read with a partner. I would listen in and noticed that they were reading as if the text was a script. Each of the partners was assigned a character and when that character was speaking in the text, the students would change their voices so that they were different from the voice of the narrator or the person telling the story. By the end of the week, all five students were demonstrating reading with proper voice inflection and they were slowly making gains in reading while paying attention to punctuation. I continued to model this strategy throughout the course of the year so that students had several opportunities to practice and build their fluency skills.

### **Wrapping Text**

One commonality among the students from this study was that they all struggled to wrap text when reading. They would lose their place when reading from

one line on a page to the next. Difficulty wrapping text is one factor that hinders fluent reading. The strategy that I modeled for these students was to slide an index card across the words on a page and then read those words as they were revealed. This strategy was introduced mid-year and continued to be successful for this group of students up to the end of the school year. As they practiced with the index card, I noticed that their eyes were tracking the words on the page and they were less likely to lose their places when reading. Their fluency was improving as they were reading words more accurately and smoothly. As the year progressed, students were becoming less dependent on the index card and were beginning to wrap the text using just their eyes. I noticed that they had all stopped relying on the index card and I could tell that their reading was more fluent because when they came to the end of a line on the page and the sentences continued, they would continue reading without any inappropriate pauses or confusion about where to go next. The index card helped train and focus their eyes which in turn helped improve the students' overall fluency.

### **Echo and Choral Reading**

The most successful strategy that I modeled for students was the echo and choral reading strategy. The reason that this strategy was so successful was because it required students to practice what they were being taught directly after it was modeled. For the echo reading, I would read a passage, sentence, or line of a poem making sure to model the proper voice inflection and phrasing. After I read it aloud once, students would repeat it back to me using the same voice inflection and phrasing. I noticed over a period of time that students were beginning to carry over



what they were practicing during echo reading into their own independent silent reading. In addition, I also modeled choral reading. The students and I would read out loud together and this strategy was also implemented to improve voice inflection and phrasing. After several weeks of practicing and modeling choral reading, students were reading longer phrases and using expression that reflected mood, pace, and tension. Their accuracy and word rate also increased over time. More specifically, during choral reading I could hear which students were falling behind and which students were going too fast. When we first began, three out of the five students were just mumbling the words which told me that they were really struggling to keep up. I also noticed that as the students had more practice with the actual fundamentals of choral reading, they were able to focus more on proper voice inflection and pacing. There were times when the students became frustrated that they weren't able to keep with the rest of the group, but as this strategy was continually practiced, the students made significant gains. This is a strategy that continues to be successful for these five students.

### **Interviews**

Each of the five students from this study were interviewed and asked questions in regards to their feelings about teacher modeling. I explained to them what teacher modeling is and then asked them specific questions about how it helps or hinders their reading. Even though the students were interviewed separately, their answers yielded similar results. When asked how they feel when the teacher does not model her expectations, students stated that they felt nervous and confused. One

student said, "I would have completely no clue; it would make me feel kind of worried if I got something wrong I wouldn't know why." Similarly, when asked why they felt this way, students responded by stating that the directions don't always make sense and sometimes further explanation is needed. For example, one student stated that, "If the directions didn't make any sense, I wouldn't know what to do." In contrast, the students were each asked how they feel when the teacher does model for them. The students said that they feel confident and they really feel like they understand. One student exclaimed, "I feel confident because even though she (the teacher) hasn't read the instructions, I can see what she expects more clearly." Overall, the remainder of the questions asked revealed that the students value teacher modeling of reading and writing strategies. The students said that they feel more confident and likely to succeed when they are given a specific example of what the teacher expects. One student specifically stated that, "I feel like I can be a successful reader if my teacher shows me how."

### **Overall Results**

Teacher modeling is a practice that is more commonly used in classrooms today. These results reveal that teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies does impact students fluency based on the DRA. Students from this study made steady increases in both their DRA scores and their oral reading fluency scores. As their DRA scores increased, their fluency scores increased as well. It is possible for students' DRA scores to increase as their fluency scores decrease or remain the same. One explanation for this is that students score higher on other areas of the DRA

which increases their overall score. There are two additional sections of the DRA in addition to the oral reading fluency section, one of which contains more components. For this reason, students have the opportunity to flourish and excel in other areas which would make their overall DRA score higher. However, in this case, due to the teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies along with the consistent reassessing, students were able to make gains in both their overall DRA scores as well as their oral reading fluency scores.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study was designed to look at how teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies impacts students' fluency. The results revealed conclusively that each of the five students from this study made gains in their oral reading fluency and their overall DRA scores. In addition, the three fluent reading strategies that were modeled contributed to an overall increase in these scores. The research that was conducted from the interview portion of this study shows that students feel more likely to succeed when the teacher models his/her expectations.

There are several possible explanations for why modeling is such a successful strategy. Based on the results of this study, modeling is effective because it targets various learning styles. The five students that participated in this study all have similar strengths and needs, but each learns differently as an individual. Modeling of fluent reading strategies allowed me to teach to the visual and auditory learners. Visual learners were able to see what it looks like to read fluently. They were given the opportunity to learn about and practice techniques, and then apply those techniques independently. The auditory learners had a clear example of what fluent reading sounds like. Similarly, they were also given the opportunity to independently practice what fluent reading sounds like. Both visual and auditory learners were able to strengthen and build upon other learning styles from my modeling.

Teacher modeling is an effective way to show students how to be successful. In this study the students struggled with oral reading fluency and when the teacher modeled specific fluent reading strategies, students were able to look to a proficient role model. When teachers successfully model for their students they are teaching

them how to be efficient and effective. Students learn the difference between doing things right, and doing the right thing. In this study, the modeling that I implemented helped to set up positive expectations for student success, and also helped students to believe in themselves as learners. The positive expectations that were modeled regarding fluency resulted in success and achievement because I made it my personal goal to improve my students' fluency. They were given the opportunity to see how invested I was in their learning and success, as well as to clearly see the expected outcome.

Another reason that I believe the results of this study proved successful is because these students learned how to work at learning. The students in this study put in effort everyday and committed themselves to becoming fluent readers. The strategies that were modeled focused less on lecturing and more on doing. Once a strategy was modeled, students were given the opportunity to immediately practice that strategy. The fluency lessons were student-centered and I was always available to assist students as needed. They were asked several times throughout the study to practice and then show me that they were effectively implementing the fluency strategies. Students spent the majority of our time engaged in practicing fluency, rather than listening to the teacher speak to them about fluency. According to Harry Wong (1998), "the effective teacher has the students spend time working and earning their own achievement and success," (p. 200) and this is why students were so successful in this study.

The results of this study are directly related to those from previous studies that were discussed in chapter two. My research and data that was collected reveals that teacher modeling of fluent reading strategies positively impacts students' fluency. Similar research conducted by Fountas and Pinnell (2001), Lucy Calkins (1994), and Harry Wong (1998) to name a few has concluded such results. They discuss the importance of modeling and the impact that it has on students' growth and success both inside and outside of the classroom. Research shows that modeling is effective in classroom management, teacher expectations, and student completion of higher quality work. My findings that were discussed in chapter two illustrate that students need a positive role model so that they can be set up for success. The research surrounding this study combined with the research discussed in chapter two definitively shows that students are more likely to show positive growth when the teacher acts as a model on a consistent basis.

Other implications from this study disclose the fact that working in a child's ZPD, using the gradual release of responsibility, and scaffolding instruction are used in best practice along with teacher modeling. In order for modeling to be effective the teacher must build upon what the child knows, as believed by Lev Vygotsky (1978) and his theory of ZPD. The teacher modeling that I did throughout this study allowed me to assess the child's strengths and needs, according to the DRA, and then build upon those strengths. I was able to create a plan for instruction and model fluent reading strategies that would help each child grow in his/her oral reading fluency. In addition, modeling lends itself to implementing the gradual release of

responsibility as it is a key component of this process. All of the fluency strategies that were modeled began with maximum teacher support and slowly became independent as students demonstrated that they were able to implement these strategies on their own. Finally, scaffolding instruction was used in compliance with the ZPD and the gradual release of responsibility. As I modeled each fluency strategy, I took note of how the students were applying the skills and modified my instruction based on my observations. Scaffolding instruction, as discussed in chapter two, is a concrete way to differentiate and build upon students' strengths and needs. Throughout this study my instruction was modified on a daily basis as students worked towards becoming fluent readers.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this study reveal many important implications for children and educators. Based on the research that was discussed in chapter two, modeling has been proven to be a successful approach in teaching children of all ages. This study has illustrated how modeling of specific fluency strategies can directly impact students' oral reading fluency scores according to the DRA. This study can help teachers of all grades to see the importance of assessing and reassessing students. It is important to know what your students can and cannot do so that your instruction can be scaffolded. By reviewing this study and its implications, educators can see the direct impact that teaching and modeling fluency strategies can have on their students' fluency. The strategies that were used for the purpose of this study are mainly beneficial to students who are struggling with oral reading fluency but can



also be implemented in guided reading instruction with students who are fluent readers. Because these strategies are designed to be used during guided reading, teachers can modify them and use them with all students so their oral reading fluency can be enhanced. The results from this study can help educators to learn about why fluency is so important and how to teach it in a way that is effective for students who are reading below grade level. In addition, teachers who are not familiar with the DRA will have the opportunity to see its benefits and learn about how to teach specific strategies during guided reading that correspond to the students scores.

This study allowed students to excel in guided reading and oral reading fluency. These five students began the year reading below grade level and exuded very little confidence as readers. As the year progressed and students were given the opportunity to practice and implement specific oral reading strategies, their confidence increased and their oral reading fluency scores improved. This study revealed that with guidance and modeling along with reassuring and reassessing, students are capable of making great gains in the area of oral reading fluency. If students are given the chance to first watch and process new strategies before they begin the independent practice, they can excel and learn how to implement the strategies independently. This study can provide significant insight for educators as to how students learn best and what the direct results are from modeling specific fluency strategies.

## **Strengths and Limitations**

This study contained strengths and limitations that contributed to the overall results. Some of the strengths include the fact that this study was focused to one reading behavior and three specific strategies that could be modeled to improve that behavior, all of the students who participated were reading at approximately the same level and had similar reading behaviors, and the research that was conducted and the strategies that were modeled took place consistently over the course of nine months. These strengths contributed to the reliability of the results as a whole. Conversely, there were limitations to this study as well. This study only focused on the strengths and needs of five students in a third grade classroom. The study did not take in to consideration the remaining 29 students from this classroom nor did it account for students at any other grade level. In addition, there was a time restraint in collecting and analyzing the data for this study. These limitations also contributed to the overall results of this study.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research in this area would be beneficial and would promote a greater awareness to the importance of oral reading fluency. Future research could focus on individual needs and corresponding modeling strategies that can be used to improve fluency. When focusing on students' individual needs and the specific strategies that work for those behaviors, educators would be able to study the relationship between one on one instruction and whole group instruction. In addition, multiple intelligences would also be an area that could be connected to how to improve

students' fluency and reading strategies. Future research in this area could open the door for educators and allow them to see the connections between teaching and modeling during guided reading instruction. In addition, there is a need to research fluency at different grade levels because guided reading looks and is taught differently at each grade level. If research was conducted that tracked a specific group of students across the grade levels, it is possible that some underlying themes and trends would be uncovered allowing for educators to make more connections to their own students and their own teaching. Since modeling is such a highly discussed and researched topic, there is always room for more theories and philosophies to be revealed.

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