

How do students' perceptions of their own fluent reading change after receiving direct fluency instruction?

By

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HOW DO STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FLUENT READING CHANGE AFTER DIRECT FLUENCY INSTRUCTION?

Lisa Pickard, Candidate for the Masters of Education Degree

SUNY Brockport, 2007

The purpose of my research is to see how students' perceptions of their fluency changes before and after direct fluency instruction.

4 male elementary students and 1 female elementary student provided the data for this study. The purpose of this study is to see how students thinking about their fluent reading changes after they participate in Reader's Theater. The researcher had the students read a book and their reading was tape recorded and then the students listened to their reading. They then filled out a self assessment after reading the text. The teacher filled out the same assessment on the students. After both teacher and student filled out the assessment they talked about their thinking and why they assessed themselves the way that they did.

Once all students completed the initial self assessment, the researcher had the students participate in Reader's Theater. They participated in Reader's Theater for three weeks. During this time the students spent one week at a time on a skit. During this week the students explored the feelings of the characters, proper phrasing, and paid close attention to punctuation marks so that they can read the skit with proper expression. The students practiced the skit several times everyday.

After three weeks of Reader's Theater, the students then read another text to the researcher and this again was tape recorded. The students listened to their reading and filled out another self assessment. The researcher also filled out the same assessment as the students did.

The researcher went through the pre and post self assessments that both the participants and researcher filled out and compiled the data. Four out of the five students' perceptions changed in some way after the three weeks of direct fluency instruction.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Introduction

I would like you to stop and think for a moment about how important it is to ask students what they think they have learned. Have you ever sat with a student and asked him or her to think about what they know before you directly taught them something? Then have you asked the student how his/her knowledge changed after your teaching? Most of the time, we as teachers just introduce new topics and expect our students to learn or perform what is expected of them. We rarely get their feedback, allow them to see how they have grown, or even ask them to think about what they have learned after they are taught new information. I believe that it is important to take the time and allow students to think about and assess their own learning.

Problem Statement

The objective of my research is to determine what students' perceptions of their own fluent reading are before and after direct fluency instruction. I am also looking to see how the students' perceptions change from pre-fluency instruction and post-fluency instruction. The goal of this study is to look at how students' self-perceptions of their fluent reading changes after they complete three weeks of readers theater, a strategy to teach fluent reading. I will be able to see the changes that are made by comparing the students' pre- and post-self assessments.

Significance of Problem

All too often once material is taught to students, teachers quickly move on to the next topic that needs to be covered without having the students assess their own learning. It is not often that students are asked to stop and think about their own learning and how their thinking has or has not changed in the process. In my own teaching, I have found that it can be beneficial to both the teacher and the students to allow the students to self-assess their own learning that has taken place. Allowing students to think about their learning can help students continue to learn as well as have the desire to continue to evaluate their own learning. By taking a look at what the student thinks about his or her learning can help the teacher better foster a learning environment. According to Arthur Costa (2004), having students self-assess themselves can lead to students becoming self directed learners. It is often important to have students think about their own learning and to reflect on how they have changed in the process.

I am using fluency as the skill that is going to be assessed because according to the National Reading Panel who released a summary report in the year 2000, there are five facets of reading which help to create a reader. The five facets include phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, teacher education and reading instruction. These five facets, according to the Reading Panel, are all intertwined and they all build off of one another. The panel found that fluency has a great impact on comprehension and that fluency is often not taught as it should be. Therefore, this

study could add to the current knowledge about building fluency in young readers and shed some light on how students perceive their own fluency.

Rationale

I have often wondered why I don't see more students assessing their own learning when I am out in different schools. I think that not only is it important to have teachers evaluate their students' learning but that it is just as important for students to think about what they have learned and how their thinking has changed throughout the process. I believe that we can learn a lot about our teaching and how our students perceive their own learning. By having our students think about their learning, we are challenging them to really reflect on what they have done. By challenging them, we are in turn challenging ourselves to stop and take our students' thoughts into consideration and to think about how we can best help them to continue to gain new knowledge.

I am conducting this research to see how my students' thinking changes about their reading fluency before and after they have direct instruction. The students that I work with on a daily basis are struggling readers. I have seen through my work with them that they would really benefit from fluency instruction. This will not only help them to become better readers but it will also help them with their comprehension skills as well. According to Timothy Rasinski (2003), when students are able to read more fluently, this frees them from having to spend a great deal of time decoding unknown words and allows them to spend more time thinking about and understanding what they read. His research shows that by helping students become

more fluent, their comprehension also is strengthened. I also want my students to take ownership in their reading and this may happen by having them assess their fluency before they participate in fluency instruction and following fluency instruction. I hope to see how students' perceptions of their reading helps to promote a change in their fluency. I hope that by conducting this research on students' perceptions I will be able to see how if having students self assess their own learning or reading that in fact it can have an impact on their learning and performance. This study will help to inform my future teaching and other teachers' future teaching of fluency. This study will give teachers that are beginning to teach fluency and having students self assess along the way a starting or jumping off point. They can look at this study to see not only the results but what worked and what changed may need to be made in order to help them decided how they want to proceed in their own teaching of fluency and self assessment.

Definition of Terms

Expression- Using voice differences to convey an intended meaning.

Fluency- The ability to read with expression, have proper phrasing, and to read smoothly and accurately (Rasinski, 2003).

Independent Level- The reading level at which the child is able to function independently (without support) in reading (Flippo, 2003).

Metacognition- Thinking about thinking.

Oral Reading- Reading out loud.

Phrasing- Chunking or parsing text into syntactically appropriate units (Rasinski, 2003).

Prosody- Phrasing, intonation, pitch, and stress (Casey and Chamberlain, 2006).

Reading Rate- This can be estimated by counting the total number of words read per minute (Flippo, 2003).

Readers' Theater- A minimal theatrical production requiring students to express meaning through fluent and prosodic readings of scripted stories, poems, chants, and rhymes (Casey and Chamberlain, 2006).

Self- Assessment- Self assessment can be in the form of a survey or questionnaire that students fill out about their own performance or understanding.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

What is Fluency?

If you are a reading teacher as well as a classroom teacher, one term you are apt to hear a lot is fluency. Fluency in recent years is a term that has been thrown around often in conversations. It is also a highly researched term. A great majority of the research that is being done in regards to fluency is looking to find why it is so important for readers to read fluently and what the benefits of teaching fluency skills and strategies are. When most people think about the term fluency and what it means for the teaching of reading and for readers, they think of two key terms, rate and word recognition accuracy. When people refer to rate they are talking about the speed that a reader reads. In many cases there are three rates that a reader can read at. The first rate is when a reader reads too slow, the second rate is when a reader reads at the right pace and the third rate is when a reader reads a text too fast. When referring to accuracy many people look at the number of correct words that a reader reads and the number of miscues that a reader makes while reading a passage or text. As fluency becomes more of an important issue in the reading world, we are learning that fluency is much more than rate and accuracy.

Over the years, many researchers and educators have coined different definitions of what fluent reading is. Meribethe Richards (2000) gives one definition of what fluency is. According to Richards, oral reading fluency for successful readers “is the ability to project the natural pitch, stress, and juncture of the spoken word on written text, automatically and at a natural rate” (2000, p. 534). According to Brenda-

Jean Tyler and David J. Chard (2000), cited that the National Assessment of Educational Progress describes fluency as “ the appropriate grouping or chunking of words into phrases that are characterized by correct intonation, stress, and pauses” (Tyler and Chard, 1996, p.163). Two teachers, Shirley Casey and Rachel Chamberlain (2006), offer another version of the definition of fluency. They define fluency “as the accuracy, rate, smoothness, and efficiency of reading” (Casey and Chamberlain, 2006, p. 17). They take this definition to a higher level by defining prosody as a function of fluent reading as well. These two authors define prosody “as the phrasing, intonation, pitch, and stress” (Casey and Chamberlain, 2006, p. 17).

For the purposes of this study, fluency will refer to a participant’s stress, pitch and intonation, pausing, rate, and phrasing or grouping of words. After thinking closely about where the participants are in this study in relation to their fluency and reading levels and their needs in terms of fluency instruction, it seemed that these aspects of fluency would be a good place to start with these struggling readers.

Why is fluency important?

Researchers have found that oral reading fluency is “a critical aspect of reading performance and instruction” (Richards, 2000, p. 534). One reason why it is important to become a fluent reader is because there is a correlation between fluent reading and comprehension. Reading is supposed to be done in order to gain meaning or for comprehension purposes. According to Richards, in order to achieve the goal of having students meaningfully interact with their reading, “they must be competent in word recognition, read at a suitable rate, and understand how to project

the phrasing and expressions of the spoken word upon the written word” (Richards, 2000, p. 534). Another fluency researcher Timothy Rasinski (2003) takes this thinking one step further and makes the link between fluency and comprehension. He explains that readers who are not fluent have to spend a good portion of their time trying to decode words and when they are taking the time to decode unknown words, they are not able to spend time thinking about what they are reading in order to gain meaning from the text. He goes on to explain that fluent readers are able to free their minds and think about the meaning of the text rather than spending a great deal of time decoding unknown words (Rasinski, 2003).

Richards and Rasinski are not the only researchers that believe that fluency and comprehension are related. According to B. J. Tyler and D. J. Chard (2000), the more fluent and proficient a reader is, the better the chances that the student will understand and interpret texts (Tyler and Chard 2000, p. 164). They believe this to be true because of the way that fluency works. According to Tyler and Chard, when a reader reads a text and applies the appropriate pauses while reading to create meaningful phrases this allows the student to comprehend what they have read (Tyler and Chard, 2000).

Some teachers may not teach fluency for several reasons. One reason may be because they may not see the importance of repeated readings. Another reason why they may not teach fluency is because they do not know all of the strategies that teachers can use to help students become more fluent readers. Some strategies that

they could use are paired reading, shared reading, having students listen to books on tape, and phrasing exercises.

In this study, the participants have been determined to need work on their fluent reading skills. One way that will help to solidify some of these skills for these readers is to participate in an engaging fluency activity. They will be participating in Readers' Theater to help foster more fluent reading.

What is Readers' Theater?

Readers' Theater has been a widely used tool in order to help promote fluent reading. It is a fun way to get all students involved in reading while allowing for multiple readings of a particular text. Readers' Theater is not considered putting on a play. It requires students to practice a script over a period of time with the end result being a performance. There are no costumes or props involved in Readers' Theater and the participants do not memorize their lines; they simply read them the way that they rehearsed them. According to Shirley Casey and Rachel Chamberlain (2006) "Readers' Theater is a minimal theatrical production requiring students to express meaning through fluent and prosodic readings of scripted stories, poems, chants, and rhymes (Casey and Chamberlain, 2006, p. 18). Readers' Theater can be incorporated into any classroom setting and can be an enjoyable way for students to participate in reading. Teachers select Readers' Theater texts and then assign parts to different students.

There are several different areas that teachers can go in order to get Readers' Theater texts. There are several books for various grade levels that teachers can buy

and there are different series books that teachers can get from different publishers that even extend into the different content areas. A teacher may also look on the World Wide Web as there are several thousand skits that can be retrieved from the web. If teachers are willing, they can have their students create these skits or turn popular classroom books into skits that can be used for Readers' Theater. Many skits online or purchased through a book store are popular fairy tales or books that have been leveled so that teachers can be sure to find skits that are at their students' appropriate reading level. If a teacher chooses to create a skit using books from the classroom, many of these already have reading levels. For the purposes of this study, the researcher turned leveled books from the reading room into the skits that the students used to help meet the needs of the participants. These skits can be found in the appendix.

How does Reader's Theater promote fluency?

Readers' Theater can be incorporated into any classroom setting and can be an enjoyable way for students to participate in reading. There has been a great deal of research that directly links the use of readers' theater to helping to create more fluent and confident readers. Shirley Casey and Rachel Chamberlain (2006) go to great lengths in discussing how having students participate in Readers' Theater can improve their fluency skills. One reason that they use to explain why they chose to use Readers' Theater in their classrooms is because Readers' Theater allows for sustained reading which gives struggling readers an opportunity to experience successful fluent reading (Casey and Chamberlain, 2006).

Another reason why Readers' Theater promotes fluent reading is because the students do not just read a script once; they have constant re-readings of the scripts before they actually perform them. B. J. Tyler and D.J. Chard (2000) talk about this fact in their article. They express that one way to help students become more fluent readers is by repeated readings. The students become more fluent readers because when a reader spends time rereading the passages that he/she is working on, rate and accuracy scores go up. Jo Worthy and Kathryn Prater (2002) take this notion one step further by saying that through readers theater students have a more authentic reason to participate in repeated readings (Worthy and Prater, 2002,).

Readers' Theater will be used in this study, not only because it has been proven to increase reading fluency, but because it is a fun and engaging activity. The students will benefit from the more authentic repeated readings that they will be doing and hopefully their self confidence will go up as they see the gains in fluency that they are making.

What is Metacognition?

In this study, the participants are asked to think about their own learning and thinking. This involves metacognitive thinking. Many teachers refer to metacognition as "thinking about thinking." Michael Martinez (2006) offers a more in depth definition. He refers to metacognition as "the monitoring and control of thought" (Martinez, 2006, p. 696). Martinez explains in his article that there are three categories of metacognition. The first category is metamemory and metacomprehension. Metamemory is when you 'appraise' or think about your own

knowledge. For instance, Martinez explains that if a person asks you to list the planets in the solar system in order; you may answer yes or no to this question based on thinking about your own knowledge. Metacomprehension is similar to metamemory in that you are thinking about your awareness to whether or not you comprehend while reading. The second and third categories include problem solving and critical thinking. Problem solving is something that depending on the person may be done daily. It means to seek out an answer to something that is unknown to you. Critical thinking according to Martinez is “evaluating ideas for their quality, especially judging whether or not they make sense” (Martinez, 2006, p.697). All of these components are important for metacognitive thinking. For this study, the participants will be using metamemory to examine their own knowledge. In other words, they will be closely thinking about their own thinking by completing self assessments.

Why is Metacognition important?

According to Martinez (2006), “Metacognition is important and consequential for learners of all ages” (Martinez, 2006, p. 699). In this study, metacognition is important because the participants need to be cognitively aware of their own thinking. More importantly, they need to be aware of how their own thinking changed and why. Metacognition is not only important in this study so that students are able to understand the texts that they are reading but it is most important that they are metacognitively aware of their thoughts throughout the self assessment piece of the study. The participants will be using metacognition on two levels. They need to be

able to think critically about their reading and whether or not their reading was fluent as well as monitoring their comprehension when they are reading. It will be interesting to see how the students respond to the Readers' Theater, but in this study, it is the metacognitive thinking that is the heart of the research that will be conducted. The students' thinking about their own thinking will answer the question that is being sought out.

What is self assessment and why is it important?

Self assessment is important for many reasons. One reason is so that students can become self directed learners. One way to help students become self directed learners and to take more control of their own learning is by having them self assess their learning and or projects and assignments that they have completed. For the purposes of this study, the students will be filling out self assessments in the form of a questionnaire. Self assessments can come in many forms. Some forms include having students fill out questionnaires, write reflections, or by filling out the same rubrics as the teachers with the goal being that students take more responsibility in their own learning and begin to understand their own learning. According to Diane Hart (1999) "when students take on increased responsibility for evaluating their own work, they begin to internalize instructional goals and standards and to apply them to future efforts" (Hart, 1999, p. 343). Self assessment is one way that promotes students taking more responsibility.

Also according to Hart (1999) creating evaluative questions are one way that promotes metacognitive thinking on the parts of the students. Hart explains that "the

simplest are evaluative questions that push students to think about their work and growth as learners” (Hart, 1999, p. 343). The self assessment that will be used for this study was created by using evaluative questions that prompt the participants to think about their reading and growth as readers. The goal of this study is to have students see the value in self assessment and thinking about your own learning.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Objective

The objective of my research was to determine what students' perceptions of their own fluent reading are before and after direct fluency instruction. I was looking to see how the students' perceptions change from pre-fluency instruction and post-fluency instruction. I was able to evaluate the changes that were made by comparing the students' self assessments from before the direct instruction and by looking at my own assessments of the students.

Participants

There were 5 students that were used for the purposes of this research. These students received extra reading support on a daily basis. The 5 students were broken up into two small groups that met for a half an hour a day. There were 4 boys and 1 girl that participated in this study. The student's ages ranged from seven to eight years old, and they are all in second grade. The school that I completed my study in is set in a rural area and is a small community. The building that I worked in is a K-3 building. The town is a bedroom community for the larger cities in the area. The population of students in this community is predominantly Caucasian. For this study all but one student was Caucasian with the remaining student being from an African American descent.

Measures

In order to measure the changes in the students' perceptions of their reading the researcher had the students fill out a self assessment about their reading of a

specific book. This self assessment was developed by the researcher. The researcher created this self assessment based on what the needs were of the second grade students that were going to be a part of this study. There are six aspects of fluency that the researcher is interested in and all of these aspects are included on the self assessment. All questions of the self assessment could be answered based on a scale of never, sometimes, or always. The first aspect of fluency that the researcher was interested in was expression. The first question looks solely at whether or not the student raises and lowers their voice while reading. The second aspect of fluency that the researcher included on the self assessment referred to the speed that the reader uses while reading. The third aspect of the self assessment checks to see how well the student watches for punctuation clues to help them read the text more fluently. The fourth aspect that the researcher was looking at was how often the students are 'saying the words like the characters'. The fifth aspect of fluency that the researcher was looking for and included on the self assessment was the scooping of phrases in order to make meaningful phrases and the last aspect of fluency also is an aspect of comprehension and for this aspect the researcher was looking to see whether or not the students were making sure that what they were reading was making sense to them.

All of these aspects were chosen by the researcher to be included on the created self assessment because these areas were going to be focused on during the direct fluency instruction and these were areas that the students were lacking in their reading. All of these aspects are supported by the literature for the teaching of literacy. Chamberlain and Casey (2006) define fluency "as the accuracy, rate,

smoothness, and efficiency of reading” along with prosody being “the phrasing, intonation, pitch, and stress” (Chamberlain and Casey, 2006, p. 17). The researcher filled out the same assessment as the students in order to better measure the students fluent reading and how often the students performed the different aspects of fluency. The researcher and the students filled out this self assessment twice. Once during the pre assessment meeting which took place prior to the direct fluency instruction and the participation in readers’ theater by the participants and then again during the second meeting that took place during after the direct fluency instruction and readers’ theater.

Procedure

The research was completed during small group reading time and during the morning before instruction began. My research started in the mornings before I met with the students for their normal reading instruction time. During this time, the students were still receiving their normal guided reading instruction. Once I completed all of the pre assessments, I started conducting my research during the participants’ regular reading time. During their reading groups is where the students participated in fluency instruction and the rehearsing of the readers’ theater scripts. I met with two small groups and in the first group there were only two students and in the second group there were three students. These groups met daily for 30 minutes at a time.

When I began my research, I took both groups together in the morning before classes began and I modeled fluent reading for them. I read the book Thank You Mr.

Falker by Patricia Polacco to them aloud so that they would have a clear picture of what fluent reading is. After I finished reading the book to the students, as a group we discussed what I did while I was reading to them. We talked about my expression and my pace. I had the students generate an oral list of the different things that I did well while reading. We then discussed what fluency is and why it is important.

After I had modeled fluent reading for the students I took one student every morning and asked each student to read a book out loud at their independent reading level. This level was determined through running reading records that were taken on the students. When reading this level of a book, the students scored a 95% or higher when reading. The book that they read to me was a book that they had already read during their regular reading time. I chose to have them read a book at their independent level so that they could focus on their fluency rather than on problem solving on the text. While the students were reading I tape recorded it so that the student and I could listen to their reading in order to fill out the self-assessment of their reading. Once they completed the reading, the student and I listened to the tape together. After we listened to the tape we looked at the self assessment and both the student and I completed the self-assessment about their fluency during their reading. The self-assessment is included in Appendix. We then talked about things that the student did well during his/her reading and why he/she felt that this went well. The student then thought about one thing that he/she would change about his/her reading or something that he/she would like to work on for the next time that they read.

Once each student had the opportunity to read aloud and self-assess their fluency, both groups came together to participate in Reader's Theatre. Each week for three weeks the researcher chose a different skit for the two groups. During the students' reading group time, the researcher taught the groups a mini lesson based on one of the six aspects of fluency that was identified on the self assessment. These mini lessons lasted for about 10-15 minutes. After the mini lessons, the participants practiced reading through the skits several times. Towards the end of the week, the students began to perform the skits for the researcher as if they were actually performing their skits for a real audience. At the end of each week the students were able to perform their skits. Their first skit was performed for their grandparents and special persons that came to the school for the grandparents' day. The second skit was performed for their classmates and their last skit was performed for the principal of the school.

After taking the time to directly teach fluency through mini lessons and readers' theater, student again read a book out loud at their independent reading level. This was tape recorded so that the students could listen to the second reading in order to fill out the self assessment. The students completed another self-assessment about their fluency during the reading. The researcher and the students talked about the first reading that they did and the pre assessment that they filled out. After we looked at the pre assessment, we discussed how the student's fluency changed or remained the same. The self-assessment was also used to determine whether or not students' perceptions of their fluency changed after direct instruction with fluency. The

researcher was looking to see how the students thinking changed over time in regards to their fluent reading. In order to do this the researcher compared the two self assessments that the students filled out to see whether or not the students thought that they were able to answer always to questions rather than sometimes or never.

Instructions

All of the instructions that were provided to the students were spoken to them. The researcher was trying to keep a conversational flow with the students and wrote these instructions so that this could happen. The directions for the self assessment went as follows:

“This self-assessment that you will be filling out is something that you are completing for yourself and me. This is not something that will be graded. There are no wrong answers and I would like you to really think about the reading that you just completed.”

The researcher set up these instructions this way so that the students wouldn't feel threatened and so that they would be more willing to fill out the self- assessment. The researcher also wanted to stress to the students that there would be no penalty for the answers that they gave during the self assessment. The directions for the interview went as follows:

“I am going to ask you some questions about your thoughts about your reading. This will not be graded and there are no wrong answers. I would like you to think seriously about the questions that I am going to ask you and to answer honestly and to the best of your ability.”

These again were set up so that the students would not feel threatened at all. The directions were open ended so that the students and the researcher could spend time in more of a conversational manner.

Data Analysis

The data that will be analyzed for the purposes of this research includes the self assessments that the students filled out both before and after they participated in Reader's Theater and direct fluency instruction. Individual student's self assessments will be analyzed separately and then the researcher will look at them as a whole. The researcher will analyze both the pre and post self assessments by looking at the students' answers to the six questions. The pre and post assessment answers will be compared to determine how the students' perceptions changed from one assessment to another.

The second piece of data that will be analyzed is the assessments that the researcher took on the students while the students were filling out their assessments. The researcher will look at the before and after assessments in the same fashion that the researcher looked at the students' assessments. The assessments that the researcher completes will be used to look at how accurate the students' assessments were and to see how the students' fluency changes over the three week period.

All of these pieces helped the researcher to determine how students' perceptions, thinking, and fluent reading changed over the course of the three weeks. These pieces will be considered in the triangulation of the research and are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 The Results

The Question

The researcher conducted this research to see how students' perceptions of their own fluent reading changed from before direct fluency instruction to after direct fluency instruction. The participants participated in Readers' Theater. The researcher looked at the pre self assessment and the post self assessment and then by looking at these two self assessments formulated the results. Below the reader can see various charts to make looking at the results easier. The pre assessments were analyzed first and the post assessments were looked at second.

Pre-Self Assessments

The pre-self assessments were filled out by the participants prior to any fluency instruction. The participants read through a text at their independent level and while they were reading the researcher used the voice recorder to tape the participants reading. The pre assessments were given to the participants after they read a text at their independent level and listened to their own reading. All participants filled out the same self assessment. They answered six questions in all that looked at whether or not they raised and lowered their voice while reading, whether they read at a just right pace, watched for punctuation, said the words the way that the characters said them, scooped words together to make meaningful phrases, and were able to understand what they were reading. The researcher completed this same assessment on the participants while the participants completed

their own assessments to see where the consistencies and or inconsistencies lie. All participants went through this same procedure.

Post-Self Assessments

The post assessments were filled out by the participants after three and a half weeks of fluency instruction. During this time, the participants worked on fluency skills and rehearsed three different skits that promoted fluent reading. At the end of each week, the participants presented their skits to a variety of audiences. When the fluency instruction had been concluded, the researcher again met with the participants. During this meeting, the participants and the researcher looked at the pre assessments that the students filled out during their first meeting and then the participants read through a portion of an independent level text. This again was recorded using the voice recorder and the students listened to their own reading in order to fill out the post assessments. The researcher and the participants then filled out the post assessments. All participants went through this same procedure.

Data Analysis

The questions on the pre- and post-self assessment went as follows:

1. When I was reading I raised and lowered my voice to show expression throughout the story.....
2. When I was reading I did not read too fast or too slow but just right....
3. When I was reading I made sure that I watched closely for the commas (,) which show me where to pause and periods (.) which show me when to stop....
4. When I was reading I said the words the way that the character would say them....
5. When I was reading I scooped the words together into meaningful phrases....

6. When I was reading I made sure that what I was reading made sense to me and that I could understand what I was reading....

The participants could answer the questions either never, sometimes, or always.

Table 1
Pre Self Assessment Answers

PARTICIPANTS	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4	QUESTION 5	QUESTION 6
Participant 1	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always
Participant 2	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always
Participant 3	Sometimes	Always	Always	Sometimes	Always	Always
Participant 4	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always
Participant 5	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Always

Table 2
Post Self Assessment Answers

PARTICIPANTS	QUESTION 1	QUESTION 2	QUESTION 3	QUESTION 4	QUESTION 5	QUESTION 6
Participant 1	Sometimes	Always	Always	Always	Sometimes	Always
Participant 2	Sometimes	Always	Always	Sometimes	Always	Always
Participant 3	Sometimes	Always	Always	Sometimes	Always	Always
Participant 4	Sometimes	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Always	Always
Participant 5	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Always	Sometimes	Always

Pre Self Assessment-All Participants

During the first meeting with the participants, the researcher and the participants went through all of the questions on the self assessment in order to ensure that the participants knew exactly what each question was asking them after the participants read through the text. The researcher asked the participants to keep these questions in the back of their mind while the participants listened to their reading of the texts on the voice recorder. After the participants listened to their reading, the researcher read the questions to the participants, waited for their responses, and then circled the responses that the participants gave.

Post Assessments-All Participants

Once all of the participants completed their three and a half weeks of fluency instruction, they met again with the researcher. The same procedure occurred during this meeting that happened during the first meeting with all of the participants. The researcher explained to the participants that they were meeting to see how the participant's assessments of their reading changed after they participated in Readers' Theater. The participants were again asked the six original questions from the self assessment and the researcher and the participants looked at the pre assessment together.

Participant 1

Table 3

Participant 1	Pre Assessment Answers	Post Assessment Answers
Question 1	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 2	Sometimes	Always
Question 3	Sometimes	Always
Question 4	Sometimes	Always
Question 5	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 6	Always	Always

Participant 1 changed questions numbers two, three, and four from sometimes to always after completing three weeks of fluency instruction. His perceptions of his fluent reading only changed for three out of the six questions that the student answered on the post assessment. During the pre assessment, the researcher felt that this participant was accurate in his own self assessment of his reading for this text. The research assessed this participant the same way that the participant assessed himself. As far as the researcher's assessment, the only inconsistency that she had

Participant 3
Table 5

	Pre Assessment Answers	Post Assessment Answers
Question 1	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 2	Always	Always
Question 3	Always	Always
Question 4	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 5	Always	Always
Question 6	Always	Always

Participant number 3 believed that he sometimes completed the components of questions one and four. He felt that he always completed the components of questions two, three, five and six when he filled out the pre assessment. The researcher felt that participant three did not accurately identify the components met for all six questions. The researcher felt that the participant only sometimes completed the components of questions two, three, and five and this is how the researcher assessed the participant. Participant 3 did not answer any of the questions differently on the post self assessment. He answered exactly the same way for these questions. The researcher felt that the participant accurately self assessed this time around and assessed the participant in the same way.

Participant 4
Table 6

	Pre Assessment Answers	Post Assessment Answers
Question 1	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 2	Always	Sometimes
Question 3	Sometimes	Always
Question 4	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 5	Sometimes	Always
Question 6	Always	Always

For questions one, three, four, and five of the self assessment participant number 4 expressed that she had sometimes had done what the question. On questions number two and six this participant believed that she had made sure that she was doing what the questions asked all of the time while reading. After each question that was asked to participant number 4, the researcher went through and filled out their assessment of the participant's reading. In the case of participant number 4, the researcher felt that this participant was accurate in her own self assessment of her reading for this text and so the researcher assessed the participant the same way. During the post assessment meeting with this participant felt that she sometimes did what the question asked of her for questions number one, two, and four. She felt that she always did what the questions numbered three, five, and six. This student felt that for question number 2 on the post assessment that they only performed the aspects of the question sometimes. This was a different answer for this question on the pre assessment. The researcher agreed with this participant's assessment and assessed the participant in the same way.

Participant 5

Table 7

Participant 5 Pre Assessment Post Assessment

	Answers	Answers
Question 1	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 2	Sometimes	Always
Question 3	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 4	Always	Always
Question 5	Sometimes	Sometimes
Question 6	Always	Always

For questions one, two, three, and five of the self assessment the participant number 5 expressed that he had sometimes done what the questions asked. On questions numbers four and six this participant believed that he had made sure that he was doing what the questions asked all of the time while reading. After each question that was asked to participant number 5, the researcher went through and filled out her assessment of the participant's reading. In the case of participant number 5, the researcher felt that this participant was accurate in his own self assessment of his reading for this text and so the researcher assessed the participant the same way. For the post self assessment, participant 5 felt that he sometimes did what the question asked of him for questions number one, three, and five. He felt that he always did what the questions numbered two, four, and six. The researcher agreed with this participant's assessment and assessed the participant in the same way.

Common Threads

There were common threads that occurred when analyzing the data. One common thread was that for both the pre and post self assessment every participant answered the same way for questions one and six. For question one, they all answered that they sometimes raised and lowered their voice to show expression. Question six was asking them if they made sure that they were able to understand everything that they were reading. They all answered always to this question. The famous saying in the reading room is that 'reading must make sense'. Another common thread was that for four out of the five of these participants, the perceptions of their own fluent reading did change after the participation in Readers' Theater and

direct fluency instruction. In two of the participants' cases they answered three questions differently on their post self assessments that they filled out. The first participant changed his answers from sometimes on the pre assessment to always on the post assessment. For the second participant, she changed two of her answers from sometimes to always but for one of the questions she changed an always to a sometimes after listening to her second reading during the post assessment interview.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to see how the participants' perceptions or thinking about their own fluent reading changed after direct fluency instruction and participation in Readers' Theater. As shown in chapter 4, four out of the five participants' perceptions of their own fluent reading changed after direct fluency instruction. There were many common threads between the answers that the participants gave for both the pre and post self assessments and two of the students changed three of their answers from sometimes to always or in one case from always to sometimes. Questions one and six from the self assessment were answered the same from every participant for both assessments.

Before this study began, the participants had not had much instruction in fluency because they spent a lot of time working on decoding strategies. Fluency was something new for them and after we talked about the different aspects of the self assessment and having fluent reading modeled to them, they were able to fill out and answer the self assessment questions fairly accurately. They worked really hard on referring to the self assessment as we worked through the different Readers' Theater skits. Before participants would rehearse their skits they would take out a copy of the self assessment to look at and read through. The participants were aware that the assessment was for their own benefit and not for the researcher's benefit so they took it very seriously.

The research shows that the participants' perceptions did change from before they participated in Readers' Theater and direct fluency instruction to after their participation in both. The research showed that this happened for four out of the five participants. In most cases participants' answers towards their fluent reading changed from only sometimes completing aspects of the questions asked to believing that they always completed the aspects of the questions. This was the result that the researcher was looking for. The hope was that the participants would be able to realize the changes that they were making in their fluent reading.

Some possible reasons for the changes in the students' perceptions of their fluent reading is because they were in fact able to practice the skits several times. They also were able to have mini lessons that were based around the questions that were asked on the self assessment that they filled out twice. Through practicing their Readers' Theater, the participants were able to relay what they had learned and practiced over to their last reading before they filled out the self assessment. There was one participant's perceptions that did not change after he participated in Readers' Theater and direct fluency instruction and that was participant number three. When this participant began this study and time to fill out the pre assessment, the researcher did not agree with the way that this participant assessed his own reading. The researcher felt that his reading did not merit some of the always answers that he gave himself. When he answered the questions on the post assessment, he did so more accurately. When researcher read to the participants before the study began to demonstrate fluent reading to them, she asked them to explain what she was doing

well after she had finished reading. This participant did not answer at all. When asked what he thought before the researcher sent them back to class, he only answered that she did not have to figure out any of the words. I think that this participant really thought that he was reading fluently the first time that he read for the researcher and that is why he answered the questions the way that he did. It was not until after the direct fluency instruction did he come to realize that he had not read the first text the way that he describes through the pre-assessment questions. Once he realizes this, he is able to correctly answer the post-assessment questions in the same manner as the researcher.

The results from this study are consistent with the current literature review for many reasons. As stated previously, repeated readings is one way to help students become more fluent readers. As shown by the students' answers and the assessment filled out by the researcher, the participants were reading more fluently after the three weeks of fluency instruction and the participation in Readers' Theater. Also the participants saw the value of the self assessment and this was evident by the fact that they answered the questions accurately and consistently with the research.

B. J. Tyler and D.J. Chard (2000) talk in great lengths about how through Readers' Theater, students have the opportunity to participate in repeated readings (Tyler and Chard, 2006). For Readers' Theater, students do not just read through a skit once, they have to read through it several times before they are actually able to perform the skit for their audience. Through all of the repeated readings, the students are becoming more fluent readers. The research also shows that self assessment is

also important. According to Hart (1999), in order for students to think about their learning in a productive way, teachers need to ask evaluative questions (Hart, 1999). For the purposes of this study, the participants in fact had to answer evaluative questions when they answered the questions on the self assessment. The participants were able to complete the self assessment. In four out of the five cases, the participants accurately assessed their own reading and the researcher assessed the participants in the same way. There was only one case where the researcher did not feel that a participant accurately answered the questions on the self assessment. In this case, the participant was able to answer the assessment questions but inaccurately rated his fluent reading ability. It was not until he had direct fluency instruction for three weeks and participated in Readers' Theater that he was able to really answer the questions accurately.

Conclusion

Implications of Results

The results of this study show that it is in fact important to have students think about their own thinking and that self assessment can be an asset to student learning and growth. For educators this study shows that students can be an important part of their own learning process and that students can and will assess their own actions accurately. For students this showed the value of self assessment and the value in thinking about what you are learning and taking an active part in your own learning. This study was demonstrating one way that teachers can help students become self starters.

Strengths and Limitations

There were strengths and limitations that came about during the course of this study. The biggest strength of this study was that the participants were able to participate in an engaging activity such as Readers' Theater. The students looked forward to the presentations and to finding out what skit they were going to perform next. The audiences helped tremendously because it forced the students to really think about their own fluent reading and to think about the self assessment that they filled out so that they could perform their best. Another strength of the study was that the researcher also assessed the participants fluency when they were filling out both the pre and post assessment. This way the researcher could have a method for validating each student's self-assessment. The researcher was not just relying on the student's interpretation but validated it against the researcher's interpretation.

There were some limitations to this study along with all of the different strengths. The first limitation was that because there were only two to three participants in each group, it made it hard to find skits that could be used that only had two or three characters. All of the skits that were used with the participants had to be books that were modified to ensure that there was the right number of characters. This made it challenging to find and or create skits for the participants. Another limitation to this study was that right in the middle of the three weeks of direct fluency instruction and Readers' Theater there was a week and a half off of school for break. Some skills that the participants had acquired before the break needed to be revisited after the break ended. Having only five students' results to analyze made it

hard for the researcher to generalize results for implications for future teaching, educators and for students.

If I were to do this all over again, the first thing that I would change would be to have a bigger sample of participants. This would help in finding skits that were more appropriate and that really lend themselves to Readers' Theater. I would also have the participants fill out the self assessment after they perform the skits. This would help the researcher see where the change in thinking takes place and would offer more data to be analyzed. I think that this change is important because it would keep the participants always thinking and assessing their learning and performance.

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Appendix

Appendix A
Created by Lisa Pickard

Fluency Self-Assessment

1. When I was reading I raised and lowered my voice to show expression throughout the story.....

Never

Sometimes

Always

2. When I was reading I did not read too fast or too slow but just right....

Never

Sometimes

Always

3. When I was reading I made sure that I watched closely for the commas (,) which show me where to pause and periods (.) which show me when to stop....

Never

Sometimes

Always

4. When I was reading I said the words the way that the character would say them....

Never

Sometimes

Always

5. When I was reading I scooped the words together into meaningful phrases....

Never

Sometimes

Always

6. When I was reading I made sure that what I was reading made sense to me and that I could understand what I was reading....

Never

Sometimes

Always

Appendix B

Lift The Sky Up: A Snohomish Indian Legend

Adapted from the original text by: Richard Vaughan

Character 1: “Once upon a time, the sky was very low. People bumped their heads on the sky. Animals jumped into the sky to hide.”

Character 2: “People got tired of bumping their heads. People got tired of chasing animals into the sky.”

Character 1: “We must lift the sky up, the people said. We must lift the sky up when it falls asleep.”

Character 2: “The people made long poles to lift the sky up.”

Character 1: “The next day when the sky was falling asleep, three boys chased four deer into the sky.”

Character 2: “The people didn’t see the deer. The people didn’t see the boys. The people lifted the sky up, **up, UP.**”

Character 1: “The sky was so high that the boys and the deer couldn’t get down.”

Character 2: “That night they turned into twinkling stars. We call these stars the Big Dipper.”

Appendix C**Math Test Mix Up**

Adapted from the original text of Dori H. Butler

Narrator: Eric couldn't wait to get his math test back. He had studied hard and knew he had done well. Mrs. Meed handed back all the tests, but Eric didn't get his test. Joe didn't get his either.

Mrs. Meed: I have two tests without names. Do you know which test is yours?

Narrator: Eric and Joe looked at the papers. One had one mistake, but the other had fifteen mistakes. Eric reached for the one paper with one mistake.

Eric: This one is mine.

Joe: No, I think it's mine.

Eric: It looks like my writing.

Joe: It looks like mine too.

Narrator: Eric stamped his feet.

Eric: I know it's mine!

Joe: Your name isn't on it.

Eric: Neither is yours.

Mrs. Meed: There's only one thing to do since you can't decide.

Eric: What's that?

Mrs. Meed: You'll both have to take the test again.

Narrator: Eric and Joe both groaned.

Mrs. Meed: This time, please follow all of the directions.

Narrator: Eric thought the test was easy. He didn't miss any questions. Joe thought it was hard and he missed twelve questions.

Eric: Next time I'll put my name on the paper.

Joe: Next time I'll study for the test.

Eric: I could help you study.

Joe: Would you? Then maybe I'll do as good as you.

Appendix D

The Chase

Adapted by the original text of Cheryl Ryan

Character 1: A dog and a cat got into a spat! Now what do **you** think the cat thought of that?

Character 2: The dog chased the cat through a field of flowers. They **ran** and they **ran** for hours and hours!

Character 1: The dog chased the cat through **deep, deep** mud. His hair and her fur were covered with crud!

Character 2: The cat leapt over a wall with a dash. But over the wall came the dog in a flash. And into the water went the cat with a splash!

Character 1: The cat swam quickly from shore to shore. The dog swam behind, to chase her some more.

Character 2: The cat crawled out and **shook** off the water. The dog kept swimming as fast as an otter.

Character 1: The cat ran through the tall grass of a meadow. The dog that chased her was an angry fellow!

Character 2: She **hid** under a car with her tail sticking out. But the dog found her there, after looking about.

Character 1: From under the car the cat ran like a shot. She ran into a ditch, hoping not to get caught. But the dog followed after. The ditch stopped him not!

Character 2: The chase then finally came to a stop! The cat climbed a tree straight up to the top. The dog just sat beneath her and growled. The cat had escaped. The dog sat there and howled!

Appendix E

The Case of The Missing Snacks

Adapted from the original text of Myka-Lynn Sokoloff

Narrator: Snack time! Mr. Lee's class had just come from gym, and **boy**, were they hungry! Cups of juice were lined up, right where Mr. Lee poured them. Crackers and cheese were...not right where Mr. Lee had left them. The plates were there, but they were empty!

Jason: The cheese and crackers are gone! **Where** did they go?

Narrator: Mr. Lee told them to put on their thinking caps.

John: I'll bet it was the janitor, Mr. Thomas. He's **always** cleaning up everything!

Jason: Maybe the first –graders sneaked in, we **do** have the best snacks.

John: I bet it was the third-graders, they **think** they're so big.

Narrator: Mr. Lee told the students that they needed proof to solve a mystery. So Jason and John put signs in the hallway, asking if anyone saw who took the crackers. They asked the janitor if he had cleaned up the cheese and crackers. He told them no.

John: I brought in cupcakes to share with everyone. I **can't** wait until snack time!

Jason: **OH NO**, look at the cupcakes! They are gone and all that is left is the tray full of crumbs.

Narrator: Mr. Lee did not look the **least** bit happy and neither did John.

Jason: I know it was pirates! I just saw the movie Peter Pan and I know all about pirates!

John: I bet it was clowns! I just went to the circus and I know that they do sneaky things like that.

Narrator: Mr. Lee reminded them that they had never seen pirates and clowns in the school before. The students made a list of clues and suspects. They still had **no** proof! The next morning they went berry picking and left the berries by the window when they went on a nature walk.

John: Hey Jason, usually we see a lot of stellar jays but I haven't seen any today.

Narrator: When they arrived back at school they noticed that someone had been there. Mr. Lee told them that no one came into the classroom.

Jason: Look, the biggest and reddest berries have bite marks in them!

John: The thief came through the window. There's a trail of berries. Let's look outside for more clues.

Jason: Good Idea! Hey look there are bits of cheese and cupcakes and a few berries!

John: It was those stellar jays who took our snacks!

Jason: They should be called **stealer** jays!

Everyone: The case of the missing snacks is closed!

Appendix F

Timothy Turtle: Adapted from the original text of Janie Spaht Gill

Narrator: It was summer time and Timothy Turtle thought to himself,

Timothy: “I’m out of school, and I’d like to visit Mike.”

Narrator: He scratched his head as he thought,

Timothy: “I’m not sure how I’ll travel. I could ride on my bike. But my tire has a flat and I haven’t got a pump.”

Narrator: He began to look around at the things in his room.

Timothy: “I could roll on my roller skates, but the road is full of bumps.”

Narrator: He put the roller skates down and continued to look.

Timothy: “I could skate on my skateboard, but the weather’s very hot.”

Narrator: He went out in the kitchen and looked to the sky and thought,

Timothy: “I could fly in an airplane, but that would cost a lot.”

Narrator: Just then, he heard a bus drive by and thought to himself,

Timothy: “I could ride in a bus, but it makes lots of stops.”

Narrator: He went outside and looked around.

Timothy: “I could drive in my jeep.

Narrator: Just as this thought popped into his head he heard a large crack of thunder and said,

Timothy: “My jeep hasn’t got a top.”

Narrator: Timothy went back inside and sat down on the chair.

Timothy: “I could ride on a train, but it makes a lot of sound.” “Oh dear,”

Narrator: He thought as he looked across the floor.

Timothy: “I guess I’ll walk, because, after all, my friend lives just next door.”

Narrator: He grabbed his umbrella and started out the door.

Appendix G

Mr. Sun and Mr. Sea

Adapted from the original text of Andrea Butler and Lily Toy Hong

Narrator: Long, long ago, Mr. Sun lived by Mr. Sea. Mr. Sun went to visit Mr. Sea every day. But Mr. Sea never, ever went to visit Mr. Sun.

Mr. Sun: Why don't you visit me?

Mr. Sea: I have too many children.

Mr. Sun: My house is very big. I can fit all of you in my house. Please come.

Narrator: The next day, Mr. Sea and his children knocked at Mr. Sun's door.

Mr. Sea: May we come in?

Mr. Sun: Yes, yes.

Narrator: Mr. Sun opened the door. In came the starfish, the crayfish, and some sea water.

Mr. Sun: The water is come up to my knees. It keeps getting higher and higher!

Mr. Sea: Here comes the big fish, the little fish.

Mr. Sun: The water is now up to my chest. It keeps getting higher and higher!

Mr. Sea: Here comes the crabs and the seaweed.

Mr. Sun: The water is now up to my neck. It keeps getting higher and higher.

Narrator: Mr. Sun jumped up on the roof. Soon the water came over the roof.

Mr. Sun: I am going to jump up, **up, up**, into the sky.

Narrator: So Mr. Sun jumped up, **up, up** into the sky and never, ever came down. There he stays to this very day.