READERS THEATRE: ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN IMPROVING READING FLUENCY, STUDENT MOTIVATION, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD READING AMONG SECOND-GRADE STUDENTS

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by
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Abstract

This study examined Readers Theatre as an instructional and motivational tool in comparison to repeated reading. Using a quasi-experimental design, second-grade students (N = 85) in four classrooms from a small suburban school district in Pennsylvania participated in the study. Statistically significant improvement in oral reading fluency was observed for both the treatment and alternative treatment groups after 10 weeks. In addition, neither the treatment nor alternative treatment group demonstrated improvement in reading motivation or reading attitude. These results suggest that Readers Theatre may be an effective supplemental instructional tool in the classroom to improve oral reading fluency.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Both reading to and listening to your child read are great ways to bond and spend quality time with your children at home (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHHD], 2001). At school, educational benefits are also observed when children read aloud. Oral reading ability, the skill involved with reading aloud, has demonstrated a significant relationship with overall reading achievement (Pinnell et al., 1995). Also, improvements in oral reading fluency have been positively linked to increases in reading comprehension (Jenkins, Fuchs, van den Broek, Espin, & Deno, 2003).

Readers Theatre is an instructional technique that requires children to read text as a script, allowing them to perform in front of others while developing their oral reading skills. While the use and popularity of Readers Theatre as an academic activity has increased, it has been in existence as an instructional strategy for many years. In 1967, Coger and White noted that Readers Theatre was increasingly being used in both schools and colleges. Today, there are Readers Theatre clubs, competitions, classes and it is also included in some elementary textbooks as part of their weekly reading series (Beck, Farr, & Strickland, 2008).
While it has been stated that Readers Theatre is effective in promoting both reading fluency and motivation (Keehn, 2003; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999; Millin & Rinehart, 1999; Worthy & Prater, 2002), very little empirical support exists for this claim in the classroom.

The goal of this study is to further investigate Readers Theatre as an instructional and motivational tool in reading. Specifically, this study will examine the implementation and outcomes of Readers Theatre in two second-grade classrooms in comparison to two other second-grade classrooms where Readers Theatre is not employed. Given today’s economic climate and the attention directed at the overall education system, an instructional technique with empirical support for improving reading and reading motivation that can be applied to almost any text without charge is noteworthy.

**Literature Review**

On January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. Under NCLB accountability provisions, states are required to set clear timelines for improving student achievement, with particular emphasis on closing academic achievement gaps between low-income and minority students and their majority peers. Moreover, schools must produce annual state and school
district report cards that inform parents and communities about state and school progress, allowing parents and the public to monitor school performance. Consequently, the instructional strategies used to improve student academic achievement are vital to evaluating and monitoring the academic performance of every classroom, school, school district, county, and state.

Chall (1983) proposed six stages of reading development: (a) pre-reading, (b) initial reading, (c) confirmation and fluency, (d) reading for learning the new, (e) multiple viewpoints, and (f) construction and reconstruction. The pre-reading stage is referred to as stage zero because it is where children acquire the understanding of the sound structures of words. Both phonemic awareness and phonological awareness occur during this stage. While phonological awareness encompasses a child’s ability to recognize the many ways sounds function in words, phonemic awareness is only the understanding of the most minute sound unit, or phoneme (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998). Early word identification and the ability to synthesize the sounds of spoken language are critical for early literacy development (Pearson, 1993). Most children acquire knowledge of print at this stage and learn the names of the letters and learn to
print their names (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004).

Initial reading is when children learn the correspondence between letters and sounds and obtain an understanding of the spelling-sound system (Carnine et al., 2004). In confirmation and fluency, children learn to apply the knowledge gained in the initial reading stage to read words and stories (Chall, 1983). Together, the stages constitute the learning to read stages, at the end of which children recognize most words automatically and read passages with ease and expression (Carnine et al., 2004). The later stages are reading for learning the new, multiple viewpoints, and construction and reconstruction. They address how children interpret text and process what they have read. Because reading is the fundamental skill that all formal education requires, any child who does not learn to read early will have difficulty mastering other skills and knowledge (Chall, 1983). Therefore, reading instruction should address those children who still struggle with reading, even when provided with the same reading instruction that was successful for most of their peers (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002).

Research has clearly identified the need to provide intensive reading instruction to students at risk of reading
difficulty as soon as possible (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). For example, Good, Simmons, and Kame’enui (2001) examined the utility of reading fluency indicators to predict reading outcomes, to inform educational decisions, and to change reading outcomes for students at risk of reading difficulty. They found that 96% of children who met the third grade oral reading fluency benchmark goal also met or exceeded expectations on the Oregon Statewide Assessment. While this example provides evidence for data-driven instruction, it also supports the claim that oral reading rate is strongly correlated with students' ability to comprehend text (Torgesen & Hudson, 2006). Data regarding reading performance should address the needs of children who do not do well in existing reading programs and guide reading instruction (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2002). Unfortunately, most statewide tests are often used to evaluate teaching and accountability rather than placing emphasis on effective instruction (Marx, 2007).

Under NCLB, the importance of testing and academic improvement has become paramount, especially in the area of reading. For example, increasing the rate of reading fluency and using guided oral reading instruction were specifically identified as targeted outcomes by the Reading First initiative, a component of NCLB (2002). In addition, a
primary focus of NCLB is the requirement that schools use research-based reading approaches and programs so all children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade. As school districts examine different methods for improving school-wide performance in reading to address NCLB, many options and programs are available for selection, such as Fast ForWord (Scientific Learning, 2010) or READ 180 (Scholastic, 2010).

Fast ForWord is an example of a computer application that was originally designed to improve language-learning impaired children through adaptive training exercises and costs approximately $30,000 for a one-year license for 30 computers (Rouse & Krueger, 2003). Students in this program are required to spend 100 minutes daily for up to 16 weeks on the computer program. Utilizing data from 1,200 K-6th grade students, Tallal et al. (1996) used the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF-3; Semel, Wiig, & Secord, 1995) and the Test of Language Development (TOLD; Newcomer & Hammill, 1997) to determine progress in language skills. Overall, students using Fast ForWord showed substantial gains in language skills with an effect size of 0.8. In addition, improvements in reading skills were noted on the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery, Revised (WJ-R) with an effect size of 0.2. While this program appears justified and
has demonstrated empirical support, in practice it can be very expensive and time consuming. In addition, if the program is not implemented properly the schools might waste thousands of dollars.

Scholastic’s READ 180 is a nationally recognized reading program and has been associated with meaningful benefits, especially in the area of reading proficiency (White, Haslam, & Hughes, 2006). In Florida, the program was implemented in 32 school districts with positive results reported (Smith, Rissman, & Grek, 2004); however, one Florida school district adopted but did not properly execute the READ 180 program and for 7 years it failed to recognize the program’s full potential (Tobin, 2006). Unfortunately, the district concluded that its failure to properly implement the program and the money spent on salaries for READ 180 teachers, computers, supplies, software and training, ultimately wasted millions of dollars. In other words, the money spent on the READ 180 program did not provide a significant return and could have been spent elsewhere.

In this example, a costly empirically supported reading program was not implemented properly. While it is true that any program that is not applied adequately has a greater potential for failure, not all instructional strategies have monetary costs associated with them. The READ 180 program
requires specific books, materials, trainings, and staff in order for the program to be instituted properly and is estimated to cost approximately $400 per classroom (White et al., 2006). The Fast ForWord program requires computers, licenses, professional development seminars, and training programs that are estimated to cost $38,250 for every 50 students (Schacter, 1999). Rather than utilize costly programs, teachers can employ proven strategies into their existing curriculum, and these often require little or no training (Martinez et al., 1999).

Reading Strategies. According to Stanovich and Stanovich (2003), there are significant consequences when the empirically supported literature is ignored. Much of the scientifically validated literature remains unknown to many teachers, contributing to the frustration. In addition, education is vulnerable to unsupported practices because of endorsements that claim to be knowledge based (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). Because teachers’ success appears strongly related to the training they receive, emphasis must be placed on providing teachers with scientifically supported instructional strategies (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005). Some of the more common empirically supported strategies include shared reading (Fisher & Medvic, 2000), read-aloud (Trelease, 1989), guided reading (Fountas &
Pinnell, 1996), and literature circles (Daniels, 2002). The reading strategies applied by teachers are dependent upon the needs of the students and their level of shared reading is a strategy in which the teacher reads aloud and the students will participate in the reading by taking turns or reading in unison (Fisher & Medvic, 2000). Shared reading involves a daily time set aside for the reading of favorite rhymes, songs, and stories to and with children in order to demonstrate that reading is a pleasurable and meaningful experience (Butler & Turbill, 1987). In the younger grades, shared reading is often characterized as the teacher reading a big book to the class and the students follow along by looking at the pictures. Eventually, student participation in reading will increase as they become more familiar with the text.

During a read aloud, the teacher reads the story to the class as the students follow along in the text (Trelease, 1989). The read aloud is an effective strategy because it models proper oral reading fluency, introduces new vocabulary, and demonstrates the importance of intonation and expression when reading (Campbell, 2001). This strategy can be employed across all grade levels and is a useful approach to expose students to literature.
In guided reading, the students and the teacher read the text together, but the teacher may ask students to make predictions and inferences based on the text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). The teachers will have the students read a portion of the text, make a prediction, discuss the text, and repeat the process as they read another section of the text (Schulman & Payne, 2001). As the students share their thoughts about the text, the teacher can also gauge comprehension. According to Fountas and Pinnell, texts selected for guided reading should permit children to read the text with at least 90% accuracy. This enables children to draw on their knowledge of visual as well as meaning and structure cues, without spending a considerable amount of effort decoding words.

In literature circles, students read aloud or silently and then discuss the material in small teacher- or student-led groups (Daniels, 2002). Because literature circles require independent readers, it is most often used with students in the third or fourth grades and higher (Hill, Noe, & Johnson, 2001). For each of these strategies, the goal is to engage students in the activity of reading and provide different ways of introducing materials. While a first-grade class might not use a literature circle, the teacher might
use a combination of shared reading and read aloud during the day to develop reading skills and foster independent reading.

**Reading Outcomes.** Considering the decline in recreational reading in the U.S. over the past 20 years (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004), the importance of improving both reading instruction and performance has become politically, academically and socially significant. While a slight increase in reading performance was found between 1992 and 2005 on the national results of a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005), a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA, 2004) survey asked, 17,135 adults, age 18 and older, about their arts participation activities in the prior 12 months. According to the survey, young adults (ages 18-34) have declined from being those most likely to read literature to those least likely. Although overall reading in America has dropped in all groups studied, the steepest rate of decline occurred in the youngest age groups where 59.8% reported to read literature in 1982 and only 42.8% read literature in 2002.

The NAEP also conducted a large study that examined reading fluency among a nationally representative sample of fourth graders and found 44% to be dysfluent with grade-level stories (Pinnell et al., 1995). In addition, the study
confirmed the strong positive relationship between fluency and reading comprehension that has been well researched (Jenkins, Fuchs, van den Broek, Espin, & Deno, 2003; NICHHD, 2000). In other words, students with poor fluency had greater difficulty understanding the meaning of what they read and students with a higher rate of reading fluency were better able to comprehend text.

**Fluency**

The varied beliefs held by researchers regarding what best promotes reading have led to several different instructional strategies (Keehn, 2003). For example, the controversy over whole-language versus phonics reading instruction was first referenced by Chall (1967) in her book titled *Learning to read: The great debate*. Phonics instruction is described as a systematic approach to learning where teachers provide direct instruction and students are presented with materials that reinforce phonics concepts (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, & Willows, 2001) and whole language is a less systematic approach with emphasis on function and the student’s experience (Goodman, 1989). While most research has supported the systematic phonics approach to reading instruction (Adams, 1990), both whole-language followers and phonics supporters promote some similar elements with regards
to the importance of increasing fluency in reading to improve comprehension (Pressley & McCormick, 1995).

According to Rasinski (2003), fluency involves the ability of readers to decode text accurately. Fluency also implies automaticity, which is the speed at which readers decode words. Together, accuracy and automaticity provide a measure of oral reading fluency (ORF). Specifically, accuracy is determined by the percentage of words read correctly and represents a valid measure of reading proficiency (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Deno, 1982). Automaticity examines the number of words read correctly in a fixed interval of time, generally one minute, and provides an estimate of an individual’s reading rate. According to Wolf and Katzir-Cohen (2001), reading fluency begins with the development of accuracy and progresses toward automaticity. Once developed, fluency involves accuracy and speed with little effort given toward decoding. Their theory suggests that more time can be spent toward comprehension when less effort is given toward decoding. This theory is further supported by Carver and Hug’s (2001) investigation of the causal relationship of reading achievement. Their findings suggest that increases in verbal knowledge and word identification are likely to influence reading level, which can lead to increases in reading achievement and text comprehension.
In addition to accuracy and automaticity, the prosodic features of oral reading must also be considered. Prosody is the feature of oral reading that addresses tonal quality, pace, and the rhythmic aspects of language that should be present when reading (Dowhower, 1991). In a review of research by Kuhn and Stahl (2000), researchers were interested in the development of fluency and its relationship to comprehension. According to their review, increased recognition of isolated words did not improve learners’ comprehension. Given the role prosody plays in the development and acquisition of language, they concluded that prosody might also play a significant role in reading. Therefore, they concluded that prosody should be included as a component of oral reading fluency, not just accuracy and automaticity, because of its role in comprehension.

Through the examination of students’ accuracy and automaticity, materials are assigned to three categories: frustration, instructional, or independent level. For the independent reader, the material can easily be read without assistance from the teacher and scores are in the 97-100% range for accuracy (Rasinski, 2003). The instructional level is characterized by few errors when reading and may include assistance from a teacher and scores are within the 90-96% range for accuracy (Rasinski, 2003). The frustrational level
reader, as the name implies, has tremendous difficulty with the material and the text is considered too hard and scores are below 90% in word accuracy (Rasinski, 2003). In the National Reading Panel (NRP) report (NICHHD, 2000), researchers identified reading fluency as an important component of reading and analyzed the effectiveness of two major approaches of fluency development: repeated oral reading and efforts to increase independent reading. The most commonly used approach to facilitate and develop fluency is repeated reading instruction (Stahl, Heubach, & Cramond, 1997).

Repeated Oral Reading

Repeated oral reading, or repeated reading, is an empirically supported instructional strategy that requires students to read passages aloud while receiving feedback and guidance (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). According to researchers, students who read and reread passages orally while receiving immediate and corrective feedback improve in word recognition, accuracy, fluency, and also comprehension (NICHHD, 2000). Repeated oral reading is based upon a basic premise that fluency will improve with practice; however, the NRP report was unable to specify which practice technique is the most effective.
Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) encourages students to read silently on their own, without teacher feedback. In 1986, the Commission on Reading (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1986) report recommended that SSR be implemented in all classrooms across the United States and many schools still schedule periods of time where students can engage in SSR. Unfortunately, the NRP report (NICHHD, 2000) found no research evidence to confirm that time spent on silent independent reading improves reading fluency or overall reading achievement and independent silent reading with minimal guidance or feedback has not been shown to improve reading achievement and fluency.

In contrast, the NRP reported a weighted effect size of .41 for guided repeated oral reading, suggesting “moderate impact upon reading achievement” (NICHHD, 2000, p. 3-3). All repeated oral reading techniques were associated with positive effect sizes; however, relative impact of various techniques could not be determined due to inadequate sample sizes. While repeated oral reading yielded positive results, little evidence has emerged supporting the idea that schools can successfully motivate students to read more and increase independent reading. With the increasing national concern about reading performance and students’ growing apathy for literature, political steps have been taken to promote
evaluation of instruction and motivational practices in reading (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004).

Reading Attitude

According to the NRP (NICHD, 2000), inadequate evidence exists to sustain the claim that schools that attempt to increase independent reading will obtain higher levels of reading fluency and overall reading achievement for their students. In essence, requiring students to read silently for sustained periods of time does not necessarily increase students’ desire to read independently (NICHD, 2000). In addition, the level of material may influence the student’s overall attitude and cause frustration with reading. In contrast, students who are motivated and want to read are more likely to engage in the activity (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006).

While most information gathered regarding reading involves skill and ability, it is somewhat uncommon for teachers to examine the contributions of setting and methods and their affect on performance and attitude (Lipson, 1990). Most teachers rarely assess teaching methods and their influence upon students’ attitude; rather, only the students’ performances on reading tests are analyzed. Measuring an individual’s attitude toward a specific behavior can predict how a person will respond if presented the option of engaging
in the targeted activity (Azjen, Timko, & White, 1982). Often, the influence of children’s attitude toward reading is overshadowed by the emphasis placed on improving reading performance (McKenna & Keer, 1990). While some researchers have suggested that reading performance is related to a student’s attitude toward reading (Swanson, 1982), the causality of the relationship and whether attitude affects reading or reading affects attitude is still debated (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2003; Quinn & Jadav, 1987). Regardless, there appears to be a reciprocal relationship between reading ability and an individual’s attitude toward reading.

The difficulty level of a text, or readability level, is often determined by the sentence and word difficulty of a passage (Rasinski, 2003). The Spache formula calculates the difficulty of a passage by first computing two different values from the text (Spache, 1953). The first measure is the average number of words per sentence and the second measure used by the Spache is the percent of words in the passage not found on the Spache Revised Word List. Similarly, the Dale-Chall Formula (Dale & Chall, 1948) does not use word-length to assess word difficulty. Instead, the Dale-Chall Formula uses a count of words that do not appear on a specially designed list of common words familiar to most 4th-grade
students. In contrast, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability Score (FKRS; Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers, & Chissom, 1975) defines word difficulty by the number of syllables. The FKRS formula is based on the average number of syllables per word (ASL) and the average words per sentence (ASW) and produces a score based on grade level. For example, a score of 4.0 would indicate the material is presented at the fourth grade level. The FKRS readability score formula is: FKRS = (0.39 x ASL) + (11.8 x ASW) - 15.59. For example, the readability of this sentence is approximately twelfth grade based on this formula. The readability of the text has a significant impact on the student’s ability to understand a passage.

Whether a student is reading at an independent, instructional, or frustration level impacts the students’ ability to comprehend and interpret material (Hunt, 1996). The term “frustration” implies that a student is struggling to decode and comprehend the text. When reading attitude is considered, it is often the students who are frustrated with the material who maintain a negative attitude toward reading (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995).

McKenna and Keer (1990) recognized that the focus of assessment was primarily on reading comprehension and most researchers did not consider attitude as a contributor to
overall reading performance. Using their *Elementary Reading Attitude Survey* (ERAS), the researchers sampled 18,138 elementary students on a 20-item survey addressing two areas: recreational reading and academic reading that combine as a total score. The validity of the academic reading subscale was examined using teacher categorizations of the norm-group as low, average, or high readers. Overall, the mean subscale scores of the high readers ($M = 27.7$) were significantly greater than the low readers ($M = 27.0$, $p < .001$). While this examination provided evidence regarding the validity of the academic subscale, it also suggested a relationship between attitude and teacher ratings of reading ability. Additional studies have found empirical evidence concerning the stability of this relationship over time (Kush, Watkins, McAleer, & Edwards, 1995) and across reading level (Worrell, Roth, & Gableko, 2007). While an individual’s attitude toward reading remains somewhat stable, one study noted a general decline in overall reading attitude over an extended period of time, especially among males (Kush & Watkins, 1996).

In a national survey of over 18,000 American children in Grades 1 through 6, negative attitudes toward reading were found to develop gradually throughout the elementary school years and a strong relationship between negative attitudes toward reading and reading ability were reported (McKenna, et
al., 1995). These results suggest that motivation and ability are intertwined, especially when least-able readers are considered. Whereas most research has focused on increasing reading ability (e.g., phonics instruction), some researchers (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006) have questioned whether a similar focus should be placed on student motivation. If attitude is a belief or opinion that predisposes individuals to act in a specific way, motivation examines physiological and psychological factors that cause them to act in a certain way (Plotnik, 1993).

Motivation

Earlier in history, motivation was considered the most dominant area studied in psychology (Weiner, 1990). Theories of motivation and its mechanisms have been conceptualized in various ways. Freud suggested that motivation was driven by the unconscious mind, made up of repressed impulses and sexual drives (Freud, 1961). Piaget proposed that motivation shifts as children pass through cognitive developmental stages, and as they mature their reasoning becomes more abstract and less egocentric (Piaget, 1969). Today, motivation research has placed a greater focus on human behavior and self-regulation (Paris & Paris, 2001). In reading, Metsala, Wigfield, and McCann (1996) suggested that different dimensions of motivation exist and each dimension
contributes to the frequency with which children read. In addition, students who were more motivated to read were also more avid readers.

A study by Pachtman and Wilson (2006) surveyed 22 fifth-grade students about their previous year’s reading program in an effort to identify what was beneficial in motivating them to read. Overall, access to books appeared to be the most important factor that was identified. In addition, the authors noted that, “When given the opportunity to capitalize on their preferences, students read more because they enjoy reading” (Pachtman & Wilson, p. 684). Although the sample size used in this study was small, a relationship can be observed where students who are motivated to read are those students who enjoy reading, and those students who enjoy reading are most often better readers. Edmunds and Tancock (2003) attempted to alter reading motivation by supplying incentives to students. Results were based on the participation of 28 students who received no incentives, 27 students who received books as incentives, and 36 students who received non-reading rewards as incentives. Overall, no significant differences in reading motivation emerged regardless of whether or not incentives were received. Both of these studies suggest that reading motivation is primarily
intrinsic, yet many educators rely on extrinsic rewards to motivate students (Kohn, 1993).

The expectancy-value model of behavior suggests an individual’s expectation for success is affected and modified by beliefs and how much they value the goal (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Eccles and Wigfield (2002) identified four broad categories of motivation that are based on the expectancy-value model of behavior: theories focused on expectancies for success, theories focused on task value, theories that integrate expectancies and values, and theories integrating motivation and cognition.

The first category centers on beliefs about competence and expectancy for success. Both Bandura’s (1997) self-efficacy theory, which suggests motivation is related to a person’s perception of their ability to reach a goal, and locus of control theory fall into this category. According to Eccles and Wigfield (2002), a person with an internal locus of control should anticipate success if they feel they are in control while an individual with an external locus of control would feel less motivated because success does not depend on their beliefs. According to Bandura and the self-efficacy theory, how people interpret the results of their own behavior modifies their environment and the personal factors they possess which can also modify subsequent behavior. This
is the foundation of Bandura's (1986) concept of reciprocal determinism, the view that personal factors influence behavior, which can influence environmental factors, which can then influence personal factors and result in a triadic reciprocal relationship. In motivation, self-beliefs of efficacy play a key role in the self-regulation of motivation.

The second category, according to Eccles and Wigfield (2002), involves the value an individual associates with a task. Theories involving achievement values, interests, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation fall into this category. Extrinsic motivation comes from an external source, like money or good grades. Conversely, intrinsic motivation does not rely on external rewards and the incentive lies in the attainment of the goal for the task at hand (Deckers, 2005). For example, an intrinsically motivated person will read a book because it is enjoyable and not because there is some reward, prize, or grade involved. Intrinsic motivation does not mean that a person will not seek rewards; rather, such external rewards are not enough to keep a person motivated. Some have suggested that a continuum exists such that behaviors begin as externally motivated and develop into intrinsic motivation (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992). Students may read and do their homework to get good grades,
but eventually the student might engage in the behavior for its own sake, recognize the importance of the activity, and gain pleasure from the achievement. However, the belief that motivation lies entirely within the student and cannot be influenced by the motivational structure of the classroom or school is false (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006).

Eccles and Wigfield’s (2002) third category incorporates expectancy and value constructs. Attribution theory falls into this category and focuses on phenomenal causality, or the perceived reasons why a behavior, event, or outcome has occurred. Weiner’s (1985) conception of attribution theory breaks causal ascriptions down into three basic dimensions, each consisting of two opposite alternatives: *locus*, *stability*, and *control*. In the dimension of locus, an outcome can be attributed as either internal or external; in the dimension of stability, an outcome can be attributed as either stable or unstable; and in the dimension of control, an outcome can be attributed as either controllable or uncontrollable. Weiner postulates that people attribute their successes and failures, as well as those of other individuals, according to different combinations of the above six ascriptions. These causal attributions, in turn, lead to emotions and expectations, which motivate or deter behavior (Weiner, 2005).
The fourth category links the motivational and cognitive processes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). In this category, according to Schunk and Zimmerman (1997), self-regulated learning strategies play an important role in students' academic achievement. Zimmerman (2000) defines self-regulation as the self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals. Also, students' self-regulation and its utility in the promotion of academic achievement have received increased attention (Zimmerman, 1990). In a study by Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1988), learners who reported more extensive use of self-regulated learning strategies demonstrated higher academic achievement than learners who used self-regulated learning strategies less often. In addition, students' achievement could be predicted with 93% accuracy from reported use of self-regulated learning strategies. An additional study by Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) examined the predictive ability of self-motivation variables (parental goal setting, students' self-efficacy, and personal goals) and previous grades and found a significant relationship, $r = .56$, with students' final grades. Both studies demonstrate the relationship of motivation through self-regulated thought and its relationship to academic achievement. In these studies,
motivation is measured through self-regulation, but there are other measures of motivation.

**Motivation Measures.** Vallerand et al.’s (1992) Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) is the English translation of the Echelle de Motivation en Education (EME) and is based on Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory, which postulates that people seek intrinsically motivated activities because of their basic need for competence. The scale is a 28-item instrument that is divided into three subscales of extrinsic motivation, three subscales of intrinsic motivation, and a subscale of motivation. According to Vallerand et al., the AMS scores demonstrate acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .81$) and the correlation between scores over a one-month period were satisfactory ($r = .79$). In addition, confirmatory factor analysis suggested a seven-factor structure.

Additional research (Cokley, 2000; Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham, & Motoike (2001); Fairchild, Horst, Finney, & Barron, 2005) found a lack of empirical support for the theoretical construct that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are mutually exclusive and that people must be one or the other. The evidence suggests that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are not anchors along a continuum, which severely limits the utility of this instrument in motivational research.
Wolf and Smith (1995) developed an eight-item *Motivation Scale*, which was revised into a 10-item scale by Sundre (1999) and called the *Student Opinion Survey* (SOS). Currently, a revised version of the SOS (Sundre & Thelk, 2008) consists of a 10-item self-survey that is designed to measure two subscales, Importance and Effort. Specifically, the SOS measures a student’s effort on a test and how important a test is to a student after they completed the test. An investigation of the interval factor structure found that neither the two-factor nor the one-factor model exhibited overall fit (Sundre & Thelk, 2008). Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to examine internal consistency and all measures yielded coefficients >.80 for the first- and second-year students (Sundre & Thelk, 2008). While their scale demonstrates adequate psychometric properties (Sundre & Thelk, 2008), the normative data were derived from responses from students at either a four-year or two-year college. At this time, it is unclear if this measure can be applied to students in secondary or grade school as a measure of motivation because of a lack of representation in the sample. Some other measures of motivation are purposely designed to target elementary school students and specific subject areas.

The *Motivations for Reading Questionnaire* (MRQ) is a 54-item measure that was developed by Wigfield and Guthrie
Wigfield and Guthrie (1995) postulated the existence of 11 theoretical dimensions of reading motivation, a factor analytic study of the MRQ (Wigfield, Wilde, Baker, Fernandez-Fein, & Scher, 1996) only found six areas that were evident. A subsequent study by Watkins and Coffey (2004) found evidence for multiple dimensions of reading motivation on the MRQ, but similarly failed to support the 11-factor structure. It was concluded that further investigation is warranted to identify the specific structures assessed by the MRQ and researchers should not consider the 11 dimensions proposed by the MRQ as distinct measures of reading motivation.

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) was developed to estimate students’ motivation to read (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). The reading survey on the MRP consists of 20 items and identifies two areas of reading motivation, self-concept and value of reading, that are also combined to form a total score. Gambrell et al. (1996) designed the MRP to be used with students in grades 2-6 and suggested it could be group administered several times over the course of an academic year to monitor change. Because the
MRP is group administered, the examiner reads the items aloud and avoids errors due to the examinees inability to read the question. In addition, an entire classroom can be assessed in approximately 15-20 minutes (Gambrell et al., 1996). Because there is no normative data for the MRP, Gambrell et al. (1996) recommend teachers use the individual raw scores of students to create a classroom average. These data can be useful in measuring the classroom level of reading motivation throughout the school year. Also, individual scores can be calculated and compared to either the group average or through an ipsative analysis, where the student is compared to him/herself.

Research by Gambrell (1996) identified several additional factors in the classroom that can encourage reading motivation. According to Gambrell (1996), access to books, social interactions regarding books, exposure to books, and book choice are all significant factors when considering reading motivation. These findings were consistent with the Pachtman and Wilson (2006) study, which suggested access to books as an important factor in reading motivation. While access to books is an important variable, the instructional strategy employed by the teacher should also be considered. One instructional strategy, Readers Theatre, claims to increase motivation, engagement, “and

**Readers Theatre**

Flynn (2004) notes that Readers Theatre is not a new technique, although its inclusion as an instructional strategy in reading is relatively novel. Poems written by Homer and stories from ancient Greek mythology were often told as readers presented them orally and students memorized them in unison (Beck, 1984). Although its format is similar to a play, Readers Theatre is distinct from acting. According to Brooks (1962), Readers Theatre’s emphasis is placed on the literature, whereas acting places its focus on the actors’ interpretation of the literature. Requiring students to take on character roles helps them understand literary elements and also promotes listening skills as students follow along silently and listen for spoken cues (Rasinski, 2003).

As discussed earlier, the choice to use any reading instruction strategy, including Readers Theatre, should carefully consider the students’ ability. Readers Theatre should not be used with emergent readers who are learning sound-symbol relationships; however, for more independent readers, Readers Theatre does offer a more meaningful way to interpret text (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999).
In Readers Theatre, students rehearse and perform a play for peers or others through oral reading from scripts derived from books rich in dialogue. Prescott (2003) briefly described the five steps involved in developing a Readers Theatre script: (1) choosing the book or script (2) read the story, (3) build a script from the story, (4) practice and refine the performance, and (5) perform for an audience.

Five Step Process for Readers Theatre

Choosing the Book or Script. Dixon, Davies, and Politano (1996) suggested three sources that could be used in the development of script for Readers Theatre: (1) prepared scripts, (2) student-written scripts, and (3) adapted literature. Prepared scripts refer to those stories that were developed for plays where roles and reading lines are already prepared. Student-written scripts are developed through personal experiences, brainstorming, and collaboration. Students can write a story together or break off into smaller groups, creating several scripts. Scripts based on adapted literature require the teacher to analyze a story based on the number of characters, amount of dialogue, and amount of narration. Analyzing these areas prior to developing a script can make the process much easier.

Read the Story. When the teacher reads and considers the story, the reading level and maturity of each student must be
considered. Teachers must match students’ ability to the reading level of the material. While a story by Shakespeare might be easy to develop into a script, it might not be developmentally suitable for a second-grade class to read. Also, teachers must consider the appropriateness of the story and the maturity of the students. For example, while older students may enjoy a comedy skit by Abbott and Costello (Dixon et al., 1996), younger students may not comprehend the humor even if the reading level of the material is acceptable.

**Build a Script from the Story.** Building the script should similarly take into account students’ reading ability and their experience. In addition, a balance of lines and corresponding roles should be considered. Scripts are written such that students play characters that speak lines or perform as a narrator who shares necessary background information (Prescott, 2003). In some cases, adjustments are necessary in order to provide an equal balance. For example, a story might necessitate two narrators because the narration portion of the story is extensive or the lines of one character might be shifted to other characters in order to maintain a level of equality among readers.

**Practice and Refine the Performance.** During this step, roles are assigned and students are actively engaged with the
stories. Throughout this phase, students benefit from repetition and rehearsal of the script. In some studies, the act of rereading stories has been found to improve comprehension (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993) as well as fluency and accuracy (Sindelar, Monda, & O’Shea, 1990). Weinstein and Mayer (1986) acknowledged the reciting and repeating of text as an effective basic rehearsal learning strategy. Emphasis is also placed on students’ ability to tell the story using tempo and vocal expression and not just read the words (Dixon et al., 1996).

**Perform for an Audience.** Performing for an audience is one way to consolidate student learning and take pride in an activity, but it is actually secondary to practicing and refining the performance. When performing, creation of costumes or scenery is unnecessary; rather, the performance is usually simple and often is performed at the front of the class with the students standing. Again, unlike a play where the focus is on the performance, Readers Theatre places the focus on reading. Readers Theatre has been theorized to provide students with a motivating reason to reread text and to practice fluency, without the need of an elaborate production (Dixon et al., 1996).
Previous Research

Wolf (1993) argued that one of the benefits of Readers Theatre is children’s engagement in the process of reading, which could assist those children labeled “at risk”. She suggested that this approach to reading, when compared to the teacher-directed approach to instruction, would motivate all students to be more involved in their own education. According to the study by Wolf, “In this Readers Theatre classroom, children formally labeled at risk became experts in interpretation, direction, set design, and costuming” (p. 545). In other words, students were observed to be more involved and more motivated to participate in all aspects of the interpretation of literature, and less concerned about what they were less capable of doing. While this study attempted to demonstrate how Readers Theatre can motivate students who were previously uninterested in printed material, it only involved the observation of three students in the classroom and failed to provide evidence regarding any quantifiable improvement in reading.

In a study by Martinez et al. (1999), 23 second-grade students were provided with a daily instructional model for Readers Theatre, and 28 other second-grade students served as an alternative treatment group. Students receiving Readers Theatre instruction were provided with various stories from
several different texts based on their instructional level. Therefore, unlike the alternative treatment group, students were not provided with the same series of books. Pre- and post-assessments of students’ oral reading fluency (ORF) were measured during this 10-week study and suggested an average increase of 17 words per minute for the Readers Theatre group and an increase of 6.9 for the alternative treatment group. Unfortunately, neither between nor within group differences was analyzed for statistical significance in this study. In addition, it is unclear if the improvement was the result of the instruction or the utilization of individualized texts based on the instructional level of each student.

Keehn (2003) examined the effectiveness of Readers Theatre using second-grade students (N = 66) with various levels of reading ability. Two classrooms were selected to receive Readers Theatre instruction and the other two classrooms received Readers Theatre instruction and additional fluency instruction. The results indicated statistically significant improvement in ORF for both the Readers Theatre group (+22 wpm, p = .0014) and the alternative treatment group (+26 wpm, p = .0078) on the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT) over a nine-week period, but no significant differences were found between treatment groups (Keehn, 2003). Similarly, no significant differences emerged
between treatment groups regarding growth in any of the other areas assessed (accuracy, retelling, phrasing, expressiveness, word identification, and overall reading ability). While this study demonstrates the benefits of Readers Theatre in improving ORF, the improvement was no different than for the alternative treatment group. These findings were similar to a study by Millin and Rinehart (1999) that used Readers Theatre as a strategy during Title I reading instruction. Children who participated in the Readers Theatre program made relatively greater gains than the alternative treatment group, but the between group differences were not found to be significantly different.

Gummere (2004) compared two first-grade classrooms from middle- to upper-class backgrounds in the quasi-experimental research project. One classroom served as the experimental group \((N = 20)\) and received seven weeks of Readers Theatre instruction, the other classroom served as the control group \((N = 19)\). According to the results, students identified as above-level readers improved significantly in ORF over the seven-week period on the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (MFS; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). The MFS is a 4-point Likert scale and instructs the teachers to rate the students reading ability in 3 categories: phrasing, smoothness, and pace. While it was reported that the experimental teacher’s
students were motivated to bring their scripts home at night, Readers Theatre did not significantly impact the students’ performance on the Motivation to Read Profile ($M_{\text{Readers Theatre}} = 66.30, SD = 6.07$; $M_{\text{Alternative}} = 66.47, SD = 8.52$; Gambrell et al., 1996). Because the duration of treatment was 7 weeks and the sample size was small ($N = 39$), Gummere theorized that these factors may have impacted the overall results of this study and the findings could not be generalized to the larger population.

Potential positive benefits of Readers Theatre include improved reading fluency and motivation young students to read (Moran, 2006; Prescott, 2003; Wolf, 1993). While a few researchers have noted improvements in oral reading fluency as a result of Readers Theatre (Gummere, 2004; Keehn, 2003), inadequate sample sizes and flawed research design have provided limited empirical support. The goal of this study was to address these deficiencies in sample size and design while examining the utility of Readers Theatre in the classroom.

Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to further examine Readers Theatre as an instructional and motivational tool in reading. Specifically, this study examined the outcomes for Readers Theatre employed in two second-grade classrooms over a 10-
week period in comparison to two other second-grade classrooms where Readers Theatre was not employed. Instead, these comparison classrooms implemented repeated readings as a teaching strategy, as it has previously has yielded positive results in improving oral reading fluency (NICHHD, 2000).

Utilizing Readers Theatre as an instructional strategy within the existing curriculum, this study attempted to answer four questions: (1) Does Readers Theatre improve oral reading fluency?; (2) Does Readers Theatre improve students’ motivation toward reading?; (3) Does Readers Theatre improve students’ attitude toward reading?; and (4) Does Readers Theatre improve oral reading fluency, motivation, and student attitude toward reading in comparison to an empirically supported method of instruction, repeated reading?

Previous studies involving Readers Theatre have demonstrated positive results in both the improvement of oral reading fluency and motivation (Keehn, 2003; Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999; Millin & Rinehart, 1999; Worthy & Prater, 2002). Therefore, it was expected that this study would also find that Readers Theatre significantly improved students’ oral reading fluency, motivation, and attitude toward reading. In addition, it was anticipated that Readers Theatre would significantly improve reading motivation and attitude.
when compared to students receiving repeated reading instruction. Given that repeated readings, as a teaching strategy, has demonstrated empirical support (NICHHD, 2000), it was anticipated that both the experimental and alternative treatment groups would significantly improve oral reading fluency.
Chapter 2

Method

Participants

Second-grade students \((N = 85)\) in four classrooms from a small suburban school district in Pennsylvania participated in this study. Two classrooms \((n = 43)\) served as the treatment group and the other two classrooms \((n = 42)\) served as the alternative treatment group. The treatment group included 25 males and 18 females while 23 males and 19 females comprised the alternative treatment group. Two students moved during the school year and data were not recorded for those students. In addition, students receiving reading instruction in the special education classroom were not included in the results of this study.

To further assess comparability between the treatment and alternative treatment groups, data were gathered regarding gender, ethnicity, and the proportion of students that received free or reduced lunch (see Table 2). Chi-square analyses yielded non-significant results across all areas, suggesting comparable demographics for both the treatment and alternative treatment groups.
Table 1

*Participant Demographic Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Readers</th>
<th>Repeated</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 85.$
Design

A quasi-experimental pretest posttest design was selected because true random assignment of the students was not possible. Therefore, two intact classrooms were randomly selected to serve as the treatment group and the other two classrooms were assigned to be the alternative treatment group. For this study, the Director of Title I Programs, who already maintains access to the data for the school district, linked the data to a random code and then stripped the identifying information from the data. The assignment of the code to the accompanying student was not shared with the principal investigator. The following power analysis was based on the current number of available students enrolled.

A power analysis was performed in order to determine if adequate sample size requirements were met given the parameters of the design. Basically, power is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false, or a Type II error. Conversely, alpha (\(\alpha\)) is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true, or a Type I error. Because there are unequal sample sizes between groups, a harmonic mean was calculated and produced a mean of \(M = 42.49\).

Since the magnitude of the expected effect size is unclear, effect sizes (\(d\)) were estimated following the
recommendation of Cohen (1988). Separate calculations were conducted for a large effect size \((d = .80)\), medium effect size \((d = .50)\), and small effect size \((d = .20)\). Levels of power were calculated based on the large, medium, small effect sizes and the corresponding \(\delta\). In addition, various alpha \((\alpha)\) levels were posited to analyze the effects of increasing or decreasing the probability of making a Type I error. Beta \((\beta)\) estimates were calculated and represent the chances of making a Type II error (see Table 2).

Table 2
Calculation of Delta, Levels of Power, and Levels of Type II \((\beta)\) Error

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>(\delta^a)</th>
<th>.10</th>
<th>.05</th>
<th>.01</th>
<th>.10</th>
<th>.05</th>
<th>.01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\delta^a = 42.49/2 \times .80, .50, \& .20\) respectively
The desired power is somewhere between .50 and .90 (Keppel & Wickens, 2004), but Cohen (1988) recommends that the .80 value be used. The current sample size has sufficient power to detect a medium to large effect size; however, it is insufficient to detect a small effect. Regardless, most educational researchers consider an effect size of .33 as the minimum to establish practical significance (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). More specifically, delta $\delta$ must be 2.8 if the .80 power is desired. Using the formula, $d = \delta / N_h$, the corresponding effect size $d$ can be calculated in order to achieve the desired level of power, $.60 = 2.8 / 4.66$. In a meta-analysis of several reading strategies on fluency (NICHHD, 2000), effect sizes ranged from 0.05 to 1.48 with an average of 0.48. Considering all of this information, it appears that the current sample size is adequate to detect a medium to large effect.

To assess the sample participants’ comparability prior to the introduction of the treatment, DIBELS data for Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), recorded in September of 2008, were analyzed. The mean scores for the treatment group (49.9 wpm) and the alternative treatment group (47.7 wpm) were found to be similar and not significantly discrepant ($p = .74$). Table
5 provides mean scores, variance, and standard deviations for both the treatment and alternative treatment groups.

Table 3

*DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alternative Treatment Group</th>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>50.0 wpm</td>
<td>47.7 wpm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>1097.02</td>
<td>845.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>33.12</td>
<td>29.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* wpm = words per minute.

Consistent with the pretest posttest design, evaluations of students’ oral reading fluency, motivation, and attitude toward reading were assessed prior to the implementation of the treatment. After 10 weeks of the treatment, a posttest evaluation was conducted utilizing the same materials from the pretest. A visual representation of the research design can be seen in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Quasi Experimental Pretest Posttest Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O₁</th>
<th>X₁</th>
<th>O₃</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O₂</td>
<td>X₂</td>
<td>O₄</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X₁ = Treatment Group  
X₂ = Alternative Treatment Group  
O₁,₂ = Pretest  
O₃,₄ = Posttest  
O₁ v. O₃ & O₂ v. O₄ = Within Group  
O₁ v. O₂ & O₃ v. O₄ = Between Group

**Treatment**

Participants in the treatment group received their existing second-grade curriculum and the intervention, Readers Theatre. The school district utilizes the Storytown reading series published by Harcourt, Inc. (Beck et al., 2008). Embedded in the Storytown reading series is a Readers Theatre component. In a typical instructional week, a new story is presented to the class on Monday. Both treatment and alternative treatment classrooms were presented with the same stories at the same time. In other words, both treatment and alternative treatment classrooms were instructed and learned the same areas on the same days, as instructed in the manual; however, each story was also accompanied by various activities that are designed to further develop reading
skills. Activities designed to improve reading fluency include Choral Reading, Repeated Reading, Echo Reading, Partner Reading, Tape-Assisted Reading, and Readers Theatre. Teachers in the treatment group supplemented their curriculum by selecting the Readers Theatre activity. If a Readers Theatre activity was not available, the current story was reformatted into a Readers Theatre layout. Again, this ensured that all teachers presented the same story each week. The teachers in the alternative treatment group supplemented their instruction by utilizing Repeated Reading as an instructional strategy. If a story was presented in a Readers Theatre format, the alternative treatment group would continue to provide instruction with Repeated Reading as their instructional approach.

Readers Theatre. According to the guidelines established in the Storytown series (Beck et al., 2008), day 1 consisted of the teacher modeling fluent and accurate reading. In day 2, the teacher instructed the students to read the story on their own for the first time. On day 3, the teacher distributed scripts of the story and the students practiced various roles. All scripts were either developed and provided by the authors (Beck, et al., 2008) or were based on the current story (see Appendices A and B). Day 4 consisted of
groups of students rehearsing their stories. On day 5, each group performed a scene in front of the classroom.

Repeated Reading. For the alternative treatment group, days 1 and 2 required the teacher to model fluent and accurate reading and the students would then read the story on their own. On days 3, 4, and 5, students were paired and instructed to read aloud while another student provided feedback. The teachers monitored groups and provided additional corrective feedback to students. Pairings were switched from day to day and students were not required to have the same partner all week.

Teachers for both the treatment and alternative treatment classrooms previously received instruction on Readers Theatre as part of the Title I Reading initiative. In addition to their previous instruction, the researcher provided additional resources and reviewed the anticipated adaptations with the teachers. The teachers in the alternative treatment group received the same information, but did not implement the Readers Theatre program in their classroom.
Measures

Three measures were used to assess students’ reading fluency skills, reading motivation, and attitude toward reading. The *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) was used to evaluate ORF and was administered as a pre- and posttest measure of reading ability. Similarly, the reading survey portion of the *Motivation to Read Profile* (MRP; Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) was administered as a pre- and post-assessment of students’ motivation to read. Finally, the *Elementary Reading Attitude Scale* (ERAS; McKenna & Kear, 1990) was used as a pre- and posttest measure to evaluate students’ attitude toward reading.

**Oral Reading Fluency.** The *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) is an individually administered measure of reading development designed to monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills. The DIBELS measures were specifically designed to assess three areas of early literacy: phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and fluency. With regards to fluency, passages are determined by grade level and all students in the same grade read the same passage. According to Good and Kaminski (2002), the Spache readability formula (Spache, 1953) was used in the creation...
and revision of the passages. According to DIBELS, fluency is then measured by calculating the number of correct words read during a 1-minute time interval.

**Inter-Rater Reliability.** All teachers were trained in the administration of the DIBELS and DIBELS’ oral reading fluency. To determine whether teachers assessing the same student on oral reading fluency would produce similar results, the inter-rater reliability of ORF scores were assessed. To do so, all teachers individually assessed ORF on four students from each classroom. One teacher assumed the lead role and performed the assessment while three teachers observed the administration and recorded the student’s performance. Each teacher then scored the administration independently. The teachers rotated the responsibility of the lead role and this process was repeated. In total, 16 (18.8%) of the 85 students participating in this study were assessed to establish inter-rater reliability. Teachers’ scores were analyzed for statistical significance in order to determine the level of scoring agreement. Using percentage of agreement and Cohen’s Kappa ($\kappa$), the percentage of agreement was found to be high (97.5%) and $\kappa = .95$ indicating an acceptable level of agreement for ORF scores.

**Reading Motivation.** The reading survey portion of the *Motivation to Read Profile (MRP; Gambrell et al., 1996)* was
utilized to estimate students’ motivation to read. The reading survey on the MRP consists of 20 items and employs a 4-point Likert scale (Appendix C). An example of an item includes: “I think reading is (a) a boring way to spend time, (b) an OK way to spend time, (c) an interesting way to spend time, or (d) a great way to spend time”. The survey purports to identify two areas of reading motivation: self-concept and value of reading. These two areas are also combined to form a total survey score. Raw scores are converted into a percentile scores, but only raw scores will be calculated and used for this study.

The authors estimated MRP score reliability using Cronbach’s alpha (1951) to calculate the internal consistency for both third- (.70) and fifth-grade students (.76) in their sample. Two raters, with an interrater agreement of .87, estimated that 70% of the information from the conversational interview supported the reading survey. Validity was estimated through the examination of consistency between both the reading survey and the conversational interview portion of the MRP. In a thesis study by Neuhard (2004), evidence was found for the 2-factor structure through an exploratory factor analysis of 260 second - fifth grade students in central Pennsylvania, supporting the original structure proposed by Gambrell et al. (1996).
**Reading Attitude.** In order to assess students’ attitude toward reading, the *Elementary Reading Attitude Scale (ERAS; McKenna & Kear, 1990)* was used. The ERAS consists of 20 items with brief statements regarding reading (Appendix D). Students are directed to indicate the picture of Garfield that best represents their feelings toward the question. The following is an example of a question: How do you feel when you read a book in school? Students can then select from a “very happy” Garfield, a “little happy” Garfield, a “little upset” Garfield, or a “very upset” Garfield. When the students are finished circling all of the appropriate Garfields, the scales are collected and scored. Each student’s score is then converted to a percentile rank for both the academic and recreational subscales and the overall full scale scores based on the normative data provided by McKenna and Kear (1990).

The ERAS was normed using 95 school districts in 38 states (18,138 students) from grades 1-6 in January, 1989 (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Cronbach’s alpha (1951) was used to calculate the internal consistency of the ERAS scales and ranged from .74 to .89. For second-grade students, a coefficient of .88 was calculated for the total score. With regards to validity, factor analyses were conducted. The first analysis allowed for an open interpretation of the data
to identify factors and three were identified. The second analysis specifically identified the two recreational and academic subscale factors. With the exception of one item, which loaded more heavily on the recreational factor and not the academic, all items loaded cleanly. For the purpose of this study, raw scores will be reported.

Procedure

Setting. At a small school district in eastern Pennsylvania with less than 1,500 students, DIBELS data have been collected for several years at the beginning, middle and end of each academic year. In addition, ERAS and MRP data were collected periodically to monitor student interest and motivation in reading. Traditionally, the data had been collected at the K-6 elementary school and used in the identification of individual students who might be in need of additional instructional support through Title I. For the purpose of this study, the DIBELS data, coupled with an evaluation of student motivation and attitude toward reading, served as measures in the evaluation of Readers Theatre.

General Procedures. Students from four second-grade classrooms served as participants in the study. All four existing classrooms were instructed in the same academic areas and follow the same schedule throughout the day. Each classroom devotes 90 minutes of instruction to reading every
day. The only schedule variation is the “Specials” subject (Art, Music, Physical Education, and Computers/Library), which follow a rotating schedule and alternate daily.

For the purpose of this study, the DIBELS, MRP, and ERAS administered in the fall of 2008 were pretest measures of oral reading fluency, motivation, and reading attitude. Teachers in the treatment group utilized Readers Theatre as a supplement to their existing reading curriculum for 6 lessons, covering a 10-week period. Teachers in the alternative treatment group instructed their classrooms using the repeated reading strategy, and did not employ Readers Theatre, over the same 10-week period. During this time, the researcher held bi-weekly meetings with the teachers in order to address any issues or concerns. In addition, several observations were conducted, in both the treatment and alternative treatment group classrooms, by the researcher in order to ensure treatment fidelity. In this case, the researcher checked to see if the treatment classrooms were utilizing Readers Theatre and the alternative treatment classrooms were using repeated reading. Already trained in the administration of the DIBELS, teachers administered and collected information on the students in the classroom as part of a quarterly reading assessment required by the Title I Program. All teachers were trained in the administration of
the DIBELS through the Title I Program and a reliability checks are performed annually. The assessment of reading motivation (MRP) and reading attitude (ERAS) was group administered by the investigator as part of a quarterly reading assessment required by the Title I Program. The principal investigator followed standardized procedures when administering these evaluations. After approximately 10 weeks, the DIBELS, MRP, and ERAS were re-administered.

The Director of Title I Programs is responsible for storing and securing all the data at the school in a locked file. The Director of Title I Programs agreed to link the data to a random code and then strip the identifying information from the data. Therefore, the data used in this study were from an existing data source, already collected as part of the Title I program at the school and then de-identified, suggesting minimal risk to participants.

Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were calculated for pre-post test comparisons as an estimate of test/re-test comparison and to analyze the relationships across variables. In order to prevent volunteer bias, classrooms were randomly assigned to the treatment or alternative groups by writing each teacher’s name on separate pieces of paper and randomly selecting two classrooms for the treatment group and the other two classrooms were assigned to
the alternative treatment group. While the classrooms were randomly assigned, true random assignment of the students to groups was not possible.

**Data Analyses.** Independent variables included method of reading instruction (Readers Theatre or Repeated Reading) and time (pre- and posttest). Dependent variables were reading fluency, motivation, and reading attitude as estimated by the DIBELS, MRP, and ERAS respectively. Participants’ scores from the DIBELS, MRP, and ERAS were entered into SPSS PASW 18.0. Statistical analysis included an analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable with a 2 x 2 mixed factorial design where method of reading instruction is a between-subjects factor and pre/post is a within-subjects factor (see Figure 2). Pre/post test comparisons were further analyzed using dependent t-tests. As more attributes are compared, it becomes more likely that groups will appear to differ on at least one attribute, the Bonferroni correction will be applied to account for multiple comparisons.
It was hypothesized that participants would improve significantly when comparing pre/post measures for both Readers Theatre and Repeated Readings groups. In addition, it was anticipated that Readers Theatre would have significantly higher scores in motivation and attitude toward reading both within-subjects (pre- and posttest) and between-subjects (Readers Theatre higher than Repeated Readings).
Chapter 3

Results

To estimate whether the data were normally distributed, the skewness and kurtosis were examined. In both cases, it is ideal to have a skewness and kurtosis close to zero and between $-2$ and $+2$ (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985) and distribution statistics confirmed this to be the case (Table 5).

Table 5

*Skewness and Kurtosis Estimates of the DIBELS, MRP, and ERAS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS)</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>1.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation (MRP)</td>
<td>-.437</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude (ERAS)</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>-1.050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 85.$

In order to examine the homoscedasticity of the sample, Levene’s test was used to assess the homogeneity of variance. Levene’s test indicated equality among variances for Oral Reading Fluency ($F = 1.798, p = .184$), Reading Motivation ($F = .317, p = .575$), and Reading Attitude ($F = .000, p = .997$). Given the homogeneity of the variances and normal
distribution of the data, it appears that the assumptions of normality are met.

Reliability of the MRP and ERAS scores for the sample were calculated using Cronbach’s alpha. These internal consistency estimates are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Estimates for the MRP and ERAS Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Motivation (MRP)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as Reader</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Attitude (ERAS)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Reading</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 85.*

Data regarding the internal consistency of the MRP and ERAS with the sample data were consistent with previously reported reliability estimates. George and Mallery (2003)
provide the following rules of thumb when interpreting Cronbach’s alpha: \( \geq .9 \) is excellent, \( \geq .8 \) is good, \( \geq .7 \) is acceptable, \( \geq .6 \) is questionable, \( \geq .5 \) is poor, and \(< .5 \) is unacceptable. Although the Self-Concept as Reader construct was within the questionable range, all other areas measured were considered acceptable or above and the Total score for the MRP was considered good.

Initial pretest data were analyzed to determine comparability between the treatment and alternative treatment groups. Impact of the interventions was examined within group (pretest/posttest) and between group (treatment/alternative treatment) differences. Descriptive statistics are presented for all three measures at pretest and posttest for both treatment and alternative treatment groups in Table 7.
Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Readers Theatre and Repeated Reading Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Readers Theatre $(n = 43)$</th>
<th>Repeated Reading $(n = 42)$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>50.0 (33.1)</td>
<td>47.7 (29.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>78.3 (38.8)</td>
<td>79.1 (34.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation (MRP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as Reader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>31.8 (4.8)</td>
<td>31.0 (5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>32.3 (5.3)</td>
<td>32.5 (5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>30.7 (6.0)</td>
<td>30.1 (6.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>30.2 (6.7)</td>
<td>30.5 (6.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>62.6 (9.1)</td>
<td>61.1 (10.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>62.4 (10.3)</td>
<td>62.8 (10.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude (ERAS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>20.2 (8.5)</td>
<td>22.4 (8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>22.7 (8.7)</td>
<td>21.1 (7.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>20.4 (8.4)</td>
<td>23.9 (8.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>20.4 (7.0)</td>
<td>22.3 (7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>40.6 (16.2)</td>
<td>46.3 (16.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>43.1 (14.5)</td>
<td>43.4 (14.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 85$. 
As shown in Table 8, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine comparability between the treatment and alternative treatment groups prior to the intervention. With a Bonferroni corrected alpha level of .05, it was determined that there were no statistically significant differences between the treatment and alternative treatment groups for any area measured.

Table 8

*Analysis of Variance with Pretest Variables Between Treatment and Alternative Treatment Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>106.841</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as Reader</td>
<td>14.892</td>
<td>.564</td>
<td>.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
<td>9.632</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>48.479</td>
<td>.492</td>
<td>.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Reading</td>
<td>104.645</td>
<td>1.535</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading</td>
<td>261.596</td>
<td>3.676</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>697.147</td>
<td>2.691</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 85.
As indicated in Table 8, no significant differences were found between treatment and alternative treatment groups during the pretest.

Table 9

**Analysis of Variance with Postest Variables Between Treatment and Alternative Treatment Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>15.833</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as Reader</td>
<td>0.821</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3.256</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Reading</td>
<td>56.115</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading</td>
<td>81.680</td>
<td>1.639</td>
<td>.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2.392</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>.915</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 85.*

Similarly, Table 9 shows no statistically significant differences were observed between treatment and alternative treatment groups on any posttest variables.
Table 10

Paired Samples t-tests Between Pretest and Postest for Treatment Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>ES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>13.36</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as Reader</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.500</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
<td>-0.662</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.512</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Reading</td>
<td>2.563</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1.505</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 85. ES = effect size.

*p < .05 with Bonferroni correction.

The Bonferroni correction technique was applied to adjust the alpha level and reduce the probability of a Type-1 error due to multiple comparisons. As anticipated, a statistically significant improvement in ORF was observed for the Readers Theatre group, $t (1,42) = 13.336, p < .001.$
Table 11

*Paired Samples t-tests Between Pretest and Postest for Alternative Treatment Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>ES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>17.143</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept as Reader</td>
<td>2.004</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Reading</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.725</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1.249</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Reading</td>
<td>-1.116</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading</td>
<td>-1.600</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>-1.434</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 85. ES = effect size.

*p < .05 with Bonferroni correction.

Effect sizes were calculated for both treatment and alternative treatment groups (see tables 10 and 11) using Cohen’s d. According to these data, an improvement was observed for the treatment group and the alternative treatment group in Oral Reading Fluency. An effect size for Recreational Reading was also observed for the treatment group. No other practically relevant findings were noted.
Similar to the treatment group, a statistically significant improvement in Oral Reading Fluency was observed, $t (1,41) = 17.143, p < .001$.

To determine if a difference in improvement was observed between the treatment and alternative treatment groups in ORF, an analysis using the (ORF) posttest as the dependent variable and the treatment as the independent variable with the ORF prettest score as the covariate was performed. A one-way ANCOVA, $F(1, 84) = 1.48, p = .227$, revealed no significant difference between the treatment and alternative treatment groups in ORF.

Using Pearson product moment correlation coefficients, an analysis of paired samples correlations demonstrated a statistically significant relationship for both treatment and alternative treatment groups across all variables suggesting an association between the scores was recorded for students at pre- and posttest. In addition, significant relationships were noted for pre- and posttest measures in reading motivation and reading attitude. A significant relationship was not found between oral reading fluency and either reading motivation or reading attitude (see Table 12).
Table 12

*Pearson Product Moment Correlations Oral Reading Fluency, Reading Motivation, and Reading Attitude*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oral Reading Fluency</th>
<th>Reading Motivation Total</th>
<th>Reading Attitude Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Pretest</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Posttest</td>
<td>.940*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Pretest</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Posttest</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.643*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Pretest</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.512*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Posttest</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 85.*

*p < .001.*

While not one of the initial questions, the possibility of gender differences was explored as a supplemental analysis. Boys were compared to girls in the treatment (Table 13) and the alternative treatment groups (Table 14).
Table 13

*Analysis of Variance Between Boys and Girls in the Treatment Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pretest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>7354.059</td>
<td>7.787</td>
<td>.008*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation TOTAL</td>
<td>343.467</td>
<td>4.480</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude TOTAL</td>
<td>907.725</td>
<td>3.678</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Posttest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>9385.146</td>
<td>7.145</td>
<td>.011*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation TOTAL</td>
<td>416.827</td>
<td>4.205</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude TOTAL</td>
<td>532.843</td>
<td>2.639</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 85.*

*p < .05 with Bonferroni correction.*

A significant difference in oral reading fluency between boys and girls was noted for the treatment group. This difference was found in both the pretest ($M_{girls} = 65.39$, $SD_{girls} = 35.84$; $M_{boys} = 38.88$, $SD_{boys} = 26.52$) and posttest ($M_{girls} = 95.67$, $SD_{girls} = 41.34$; $M_{boys} = 65.72$, $SD_{boys} = 32.14$).
Table 14

Analysis of Variance Between Boys and Girls in the Alternative Treatment Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pretest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>4864.531</td>
<td>6.531</td>
<td>.015*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation TOTAL</td>
<td>335.639</td>
<td>3.083</td>
<td>.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude TOTAL</td>
<td>289.475</td>
<td>1.137</td>
<td>.293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Posttest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>7413.764</td>
<td>7.315</td>
<td>.010*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Motivation TOTAL</td>
<td>3.655</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Attitude TOTAL</td>
<td>241.650</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 85.*

*p < .05 with Bonferroni correction.

Similar to the treatment group, a significant difference was noted in oral reading fluency between boys and girls in the alternative treatment group for both the pretest ($M_{girls} = 59.58$, $SD_{girls} = 34.54$; $M_{boys} = 37.96$, $SD_{boys} = 19.44$) and posttest measurements ($M_{girls} = 93.74$, $SD_{girls} = 34.68$; $M_{boys} = 67.04$, $SD_{boys} = 29.30$).
Chapter 4

Discussion

This study examined Readers Theatre as an instructional tool in the classroom as compared to another empirically supported reading strategy, repeated reading. As anticipated, both groups of students who engaged in Readers Theatre and those who did repeated reading, improved in their oral reading fluency. Statistically significant improvement in oral reading fluency was observed for both the treatment group and the alternative treatment groups. This improvement in oral reading fluency was both statistically and practically significant for both the treatment and alternative treatment groups.

The first question this study attempted to address was “Does Readers Theatre improve oral reading fluency?” These findings suggest that using Readers Theatre in the classroom can improve oral reading fluency at a comparable level to repeated reading practice. These data also support the claim by previous researchers (Keehn, 2003; Martinez et al., 1999; Millin & Rinehart, 1999) that Readers Theatre improves oral reading fluency and is useful tool for instructing reading. In addition, this study used the existing textbooks and converted the stories into a Readers Theatre format at no cost to the district, suggesting minimal pecuniary expense.
Regarding the second research question, “Does Readers Theatre improve students’ motivation toward reading?”, this study found little support to the claim that Readers Theatre makes students more motivated to read. Previous researchers (Moran, 2006; Prescott, 2003; Wolf, 1993) suggested that students were more motivated to read when introduced to Readers Theatre. Neither the Readers Theatre nor repeated reading groups achieved significant gains in motivation as self-rated on the MRP. These results suggest that Readers Theatre had little impact on improving motivation when analyzed within groups and between groups. These outcomes were similar to the study by Gummere (2004), which found that Readers Theatre did not significantly impact the students’ performance on the MRP (Gambrell et al., 1996) and contradicted claims by Wolf (1993) that Readers Theatre improves student motivation.

The third question was, “Does Readers Theatre improve students’ attitude toward reading?” Students’ reading attitude scores were equivocal between the Readers Theatre and the Repeated Reading groups as well as across pre-post comparisons. These results indicated that Readers Theatre does not improve students’ attitude toward reading.

The final question was, “Does Readers Theatre improve oral reading fluency, motivation, and student attitude toward
reading when compared to an empirically supported method of instruction, repeated reading?” Results revealed no significant differences between the students who participated in the Readers Theatre group and those who participated in repeated reading in any area measured.

Overall, these findings support previous claims that Readers Theatre can be a useful tool in improving student oral reading fluency (Keehn, 2003; Martinez et al., 1999). In this study, the investigator was able to create scripts out of stories in the Storytown reading series (Beck et al., 2008) and the students easily read the scripts. When teachers are in search of an option for read alouds, repeated reading, or guided reading, this study suggests creating scripts out of existing stories and implementing Readers Theatre is a beneficial alternative.

Supplemental analyses revealed interesting gender differences. When boys and girls were compared, it was found that girls performed significantly better on oral reading fluency in both the Readers Theatre and Repeated Reading groups. Girls scored higher on both the pretest and posttest measurements, suggesting that the interventions did not contribute to the differences. In reading attitude and reading motivation, no significant differences were present between boys and girls. These data are consistent with
findings by Klecker (2006), which identified a significant gender difference in reading scores. Similar results were also reported in a study by Below, Skinner, Fearrington, & Sorrell (2010). Although the Below et al. study did not find a statistical significant advantage for girls in oral reading fluency until Grade 4, their findings did suggest that girls score consistently higher than boys on oral reading fluency.

**Limitations**

All data for this study were collected from four second-grade classrooms in a single elementary school in a small suburban school district in Pennsylvania, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Further, because true random assignment of students was not possible, classrooms were randomly selected and students received the intervention based on their assigned classrooms. When parents, bussing, administration, and the school board become involved, it is almost impossible to achieve true random assignment in the schools. In educational research, most studies employ a quasi-experimental design because of these difficulties and the hesitation by the schools to allow a researcher to assign students to classrooms (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorenson, 2009). While the pretest and outcome scores suggested comparability between the treatment and alternative treatment
Another limitation could be the maturity of the students was not considered. While both treatment and alternative treatment groups improved in ORF over the 10-week period, it is unclear how much they would have improved over the 10-week period through maturation alone. Although, approval of a study from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) where one group is without instruction for an extended period of time while another group receives instruction would be difficult to obtain and potentially unethical or illegal.

An additional limitation is the reading levels of the students’ were not examined in comparison to the readability level of the text. Although second grade passages were selected from DIBELS and the stories were from their second grade textbook, a separate analysis was not conducted to determine each student’s reading level. Whether a student is reading at an independent, instructional, or frustration level impacts the student’s ability to comprehend and interpret material (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001) and could potentially provide additional information.

Another limitation is the minimal amount of teacher input in the study. The teachers in the treatment group anecdotally indicated they observed a significant improvement
in the collective attitudes of their students toward reading, but a formal analysis was not conducted. While only four teachers were used in this study, data regarding teachers’ perceptions of their students’ reading attitudes and motivation could have also been collected. While assessing the students’ attitude and motivation through self-report provides a more accurate estimation of their true beliefs, additional data regarding the teachers’ perception of students’ attitude and motivation may also yield interesting results. In addition, these data could be used as a check of the reliability and validity of student responses.

Also, the precise amount of time that teachers provided instruction through either Readers Theatre or Repeated Reading was not recorded. While all teachers had the same 90-minute block of time for reading instruction, the exact amount of time within the 90-minute block was not indicated. Future studies may want to consider the use of a logbook for teachers to record the amount of time the treatment or alternative treatment was delivered. In addition, teachers only used one method of instruction at a time and did not use Readers Theatre and repeated reading. Future studies may want to have the teachers’ instruct with multiple strategies in order to account for possible teacher effects. In addition, future studies may want to examine the interaction of
multiple strategies, to see if the combination of strategies yields different results.

**Implications**

Interestingly, the teachers who utilized Readers Theatre indicated that they noticed a change in the behavior of their students. Although anecdotal, they suggested that their students were more excited about reading and the students were very engaged in the activity. When the Readers Theatre study concluded, the teachers stated that their students were disappointed that their next story did not include a Readers Theatre component. In this study, student motivation and attitude toward reading was measured from the perspective of the student. Future research might consider the teacher’s perception of student motivation and student attitude toward reading when Readers Theatre is utilized in the classroom.

While some researchers have suggested that most teachers recognize the benefits of Readers Theatre (Moran, 2006; Prescott, 2003), an empirical study that examines teachers’ perception of Readers Theatre appears warranted.

Also, while reading motivation and reading attitude were correlated, a significant relationship was not identified between oral reading fluency and either reading motivation or reading attitude. These results suggest that reading attitude and motivation are not dependent on reading skills. In other
words, a fluent reader is not necessarily a motivated reader nor do they maintain a more positive attitude toward reading. These data conflict with Morgan and Fuchs (2007) conclusion that children’s reading skills correlate with their motivation to read; however, this study only measured one aspect of reading skill, oral reading fluency. The analysis by Morgan and Fuchs (2007) used the results from six studies, which examined various aspects of reading skill and not just oral reading fluency.

Conclusions

Previous studies involving Readers Theatre have suggested improvement in both oral reading fluency and motivation (Keehn, 2003; Millin & Rinehart, 1999; Worthy & Prater, 2002). This study echoed previous research and found similar evidence for Readers Theatre as a useful tool in improving oral reading fluency; however, there was no evidence that suggested Readers Theatre improved reading motivation and attitude. This contradicts previous claims that Readers Theatre can improve student motivation (Martinez et al., 1999; Prescott, 2003). In addition, posttest analysis yielded similar results to the alternative treatment strategy, repeated reading.

These findings suggest that Readers Theatre can be employed as a useful alternative or as a supplement to other
empirically supported reading strategies in the classroom to improve oral reading fluency. Although students’ motivation to read and reading attitude does not appear to be impacted, this should not preclude teachers from utilizing this strategy because it is an inexpensive way to alter an existing curriculum, without sacrificing instructional integrity.
References


Appendix A

Example of Readers Theatre

A Trip to the Fire Station

Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrator 1</th>
<th>Fire Chief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrator 2</td>
<td>Firefighter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatcher</td>
<td>Firefighter 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrator 1: The dispatch room of the fire station is where calls come in when there is a fire.

Narrator 2: The dispatcher answers the phone and gathers information.

Dispatcher: When a call comes in, I first find out where the fire is.

Narrator 1: The dispatcher passes along this information to the firefighters.

Dispatcher: I ask the caller to tell me about the fire and what may have caused it. Firefighters fight different kinds of fires in different ways.

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Appendix B

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
9400 South Park Center Loop
Orlando, Florida 32819
October 21, 2010

Mr. Damon Smith
255 Burgundy Lane
Newtown, PA 18940

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for your inquiry requesting permission to include excerpt of select pages 304-315 “A Trip to the Fire Station” from ROLLING ALONG, Student Edition to be used as an appendix in your reader’s theaters project for your dissertation for Pennsylvania State University.

We are pleased to grant your request as stated on a one-time basis. We understand that the material will be distributed free-of-charge. You must contact Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for authorization prior to publication of your thesis. Please include the following notice on each page:

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You must reapply for permission to use this adapted material in any future classroom activity. No further use of the script authorized without our prior written approval.

We appreciate your interest in Houghton Mifflin Harcourt programs. Please contact me if you require further assistance.

Sincerely,

Mary Rodriguez
Contracts Associate
Appendix C
MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE

[READING SURVEY]

Name ___________________________            Date ___________________

Sample #1: I am in _______________________

O 1st grade          O 4th grade
O 2nd grade          O 5th grade
O 3rd grade          O 6th grade

Sample #2: I am a _______________________

O boy
O girl

1. My friends think I am ________________________

O a very good reader
O a good reader
O an OK reader
O a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

O Never
O Not very often
O Sometimes
O Often

3. I read ________________________

O not as well as my friends
O about the same as my friends
O a little better than my friends
O a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is ________________.
   - O really fun
   - O fun
   - O OK to do
   - O no fun at all

5. When it comes to a word I don’t know, I can ________________.
   - O almost always figure it out
   - O sometimes figure it out
   - O almost never figure it out
   - O never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.
   - O I never do this
   - O I almost never do this
   - O I do this some of the time
   - O I do this a lot

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand ________________.
   - O almost everything I read
   - O some of what I read
   - O almost none of what I read
   - O none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are ________________.
   - O very interesting
   - O interesting
   - O not very interesting
   - O boring
9. I am ____________________________.
   O a poor reader
   O an OK reader
   O a good reader
   O a very good reader

10. I think libraries are ________________________.
    O a great place to spend time
    O an interesting place to spend time
    O an OK place to spend time
    O a boring place to spend time

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading ____________________.
    O every day
    O almost every day
    O once in a while
    O never

12. Knowing how to read well is ____________________________.
    O not very important
    O sort of important
    O important
    O very important

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I ____________.
    O can never think of an answer
    O have trouble thinking of an answer
    O sometimes think of an answer
    O always think of an answer
14. I think reading is _________________.
   O a boring way to spend time
   O an OK way to spend time
   O an interesting way to spend time
   O a great way to spend time

15. Reading is _________________.
   O very easy for me
   O kind of easy for me
   O kind of hard for me
   O very hard for me

16. When I grow up I will spend _________________.
   O none of my time reading
   O very little of my time reading
   O some of my time reading
   O a lot of my time reading

17. When I am in a group talking about stories, I _________________.
   O almost never talk about my ideas
   O sometimes talk about my ideas
   O almost always talk about my ideas
   O always talk about my ideas

18. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class _______________.
   O every day
   O almost every day
   O once in a while
   O never
19. When I read out loud I am a _________________.
   O poor reader
   O OK reader
   O good reader
   O very good reader

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _________________.
   O very happy
   O sort of happy
   O sort of unhappy
   O unhappy
MRP READING SURVEY
SCORING SURVEY

Student Name ___________________________________________________________
Grade ___________________________ Teacher ___________________________________
Administration Date ______________________________________________________

recoding scale
1 = 4
2 = 3
3 = 2
4 = 1

Self-Concept as Reader
*recode 1. ___
3. ___
*recode 5. ___
*recode 7. ___
9. ___
*recode 11. ___
13. ___
*recode 15. ___
17. ___
19. ___

Value of Reading
2. ___
*recode 4. ___
6. ___
*recode 8. ___
*recode 10. ___
12. ___
14. ___
*recode 18. ___
*recode 20. ___

SC Raw Score: ___/40
V Raw Score: ___/40

Full survey raw score (Self-Concept & Value): ___/80

Percentage Scores
Self-Concept
Value
Full survey

Comments: ________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D

ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

School___ Grade___ Name___

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?

3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?

8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?
9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?

10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?

11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?

12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?
13. How do you feel about reading in school?

14. How do you feel about reading your school books?

15. How do you feel about learning from a book?

16. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?
17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?

18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?

19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?

20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?
### Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

**Scoring sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student name</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Administration date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Scoring guide

- 4 points / Happiest Garfield
- 3 points / Slightly smiling Garfield
- 2 points / Mildly upset Garfield
- 1 point / Very upset Garfield

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recreational reading</th>
<th>Academic reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>20.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raw score: ______

Full scale raw score (Recreational + Academic): ______

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentile ranks</th>
<th>Recreational</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Full scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Measuring attitude toward reading  635
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