

Successful Literacy Interventions: An RtI Case-Study Analysis

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“I think RtI is some sort of reading program for special education students,” replied a teacher when a colleague inquired about Response to Intervention (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003). Most recognize it as another, oft-used, educational acronym. Indeed, Response to Intervention (RtI) can be a difficult concept to grasp (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2009). But through experience, conversations with administrators and teachers, a few meetings with the district director of special populations, and considerable reading, the first author developed a better understanding of the purpose and uses of RtI. Acquiring this level of understanding took considerable time and effort. It would be arduous for every teacher to do the same. Instead, this article tells the story of how the reading coach at a Title 1 school in the southwest, restructured its approach to better implement the RtI model to support struggling readers. The restructuring ultimately led to a school-wide implementation of the coach’s rendition of literature circles, and some empirically successful interventions for at-risk students. The case studies in this article evidence an effort to take the RtI model seriously, and to use it for its primary purpose of ensuring student success (Barnett, Daly, Jones, & Lentz, 2004; Johnston, 2010; Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008).

The Role of This Reading Coach

Initially, the role of the new reading coach (first author) at Eagle Elementary (all school and student names are pseudonyms), was to meet with students who needed extra support in reading. (The term “at-risk” is not used here because not all of the students were labeled at-risk.) The classroom teacher, the reaching coach, and administration chose the students based on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores. Students who had not passed, had to

retake, or had passed by a small margin, were identified as needing extra reading support and included in small groups assigned to the reading coach. Some students without TAKS results were also referred to the reading coach if their scores on district-mandated reading assessment, the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA; Beaver, 1991) did not meet the desired grade-level expectations. At this school, the classroom teacher, administrative team, and reading coach met every six-eight weeks to renegotiate reading groups.

The 2009-2010 school year began with 11 groups targeted for reading support. Each group ranged from three to five students from grades 2nd through 5th. Of the 39 students, 20 (51%) were learning English as a second language. (All of the English language learners spoke Spanish as their first language.) The reading coach used guided reading (Pinnell & Fountas, 2007) to support students in their reading development, especially the second graders. The third, fourth, and fifth graders often received comprehension strategy instruction, and were given more time to practice higher-level skills in literature circles.

Reading Coach Redefined

The initial meeting with the district's special populations coordinator began the negotiations that ultimately redefined the reading coach at Eagle Elementary. This district adhered to RtI's three-tier model (Vaughn et al, 2003), which places students on one of three levels of support and students are moved through the process as needed. The tier 1 curriculum is the existing classroom instruction. If a student does not respond to tier 1 instruction, the classroom teacher intervenes to provide support for the student, in addition to continuing the existing tier 1 curriculum. If there is still insufficient response, the student is officially placed on tier 2, and receives yet another type of intervention. In the case of reading difficulties for this school, if the student had not responded to the regular curriculum and additional classroom

interventions, the reading coach and the school's instructional specialist would check the fidelity of the interventions being used. If the interventions were deemed appropriate, but there was insufficient growth, the student was referred to the reading coach for extended tier 2 and 3 interventions.

Tier 2 interventions Eagle Elementary required student placement in a group of less than three, twice a week for 30 minutes. Students on tier 3 received instruction three days per week for 30 minutes, also in a group of less than three. In this particular situation, the coach had four groups of two, and 18 one-on-one sessions per week. These small groupings are important for two reasons. Firstly, small groups allowed for more targeted instruction and increased the likelihood that interventions were employed properly. For example, a tier-3 student struggling with fluency who did not respond to Readers Theatre (Author, 2009) in a group setting might make considerable growth through the Neurological Impress Method (Heckelman, 1969). The NIM option is not designed for more than one student at a time. Therefore, because of group size, the student might be restricted to slow, moderate progress, rather than the rapid growth as documented in the following case studies.

The second reason for the lighter schedule for the reading coach was flexibility. With support from administrators, this reading coach had long desired to model lessons in classrooms for larger groups of students. Heretofore, the use of the reading coach in classrooms was sporadic at best. Conversely, the new schedule allowed more time to spend instructing whole groups. This coach used the opportunities to begin implementing literature circles school wide. The original purpose of the collaboration between the first and second authors was to describe the implementation of the literature circles implemented by the first author in his transformed role of reading coach. However, a focus on the small-group instruction developed as some

remarkable gains emerged from the targeted RtI interventions. The remainder of this article highlights the literacy transformations of two third-grade students.

Overview of Case Studies

The following case studies describe the assessment methods, assessment-based instructional decisions, implementation and reevaluation of interventions, and exploration of instructional contexts for two students. The first case study is a description of the interventions used with a third grader who chose to call himself Lightning. (His original pseudonym was Emilio, but when the reading coach sought the student's input, he cleverly requested the pseudonym--Lighting.) The next young reader, also a third grader, had no qualms with the pseudonym of Maria. Both cases involved one-on-one literacy instruction in the same classroom with the same reading coach.

Lightning

Towards the end of the school year, basking in the spring light and the glow of some reading success, Lightning sat across from the reading coach clutching his copy of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw* (Kinney, 2009). He hugged the book lovingly, radiating happiness. He was concurrently also reading two other titles. As with other good readers, Lightning also had his next reading target in mind—a nonfiction book about bikes. He would have already checked it out, but according to his library record, he had hit his limit. Apparently, the librarian and Lightning differ in their concepts of “limit.” But, it is important to note that Lightning had not always been an avid reader. In fact, reading had been a thorn in his side.

Lightning was a third-grade student with a history of reading difficulty. A review of his records revealed that he had been reading below grade level his entire elementary school career. His classroom teachers and academic coaches had provided him with reading support since first

grade. When asked about his reading, his former first grade teacher replied solemnly, “Oh, Lightning, poor baby.” In second grade, his demeanor clearly reflected defeat, and unmistakable misery when reading. His oral reading was choppy, laborious, and quite frankly, boring. He had no favorite books, and, according to him, his greatest fear were reading tests because he was certain he would not know the words. He had been assigned to small groups ranging from three to six students. But, his progress was slow in the small-group configurations, and he continued to struggle, falling further behind his peers. It seemed that grade-level reading was far out of reach.

His third-grade school year started similarly to those previous. Lightning was assigned to a group of five students, where he received guided reading instruction (Pinnell & Fountas, 2007). He began the year on a DRA level 18, approximately one year below grade level. After six weeks of guided reading intervention, he made no assessed growth. His DRA remained the same, an 18 (see Figure 1). In fact, his third grade Reading Curriculum Based Measurement (R-CBM) indicated a decline in reading rate (WPM). His early third grade, baseline, R-CBM score was 54 WPM, but after six weeks of intervention his score had decreased to 36 WPM (as shown in Figure 2).

Fortunately, due to the school’s restructuring to implement the RtI framework, the reading coach’s schedule was more dedicated to tier 2-3 students and Lightning’s needs could be addressed individually. With a tier-3 designation, he qualified for 30 minutes per day, three days per week with the reading coach.

Although Lightning was reading at a DRA level 18, this designation does not adequately inform instruction. It was time to figure out what was holding him back. Lightning was asked to read a passage that was deemed to be two levels above his independent reading level and the results were analyzed to inform his need for instruction. The common practice of using passages

slightly above a reader's independent level allows the teacher to observe the kinds of reading skills and strategies that students employ with text that slightly challenge them (R. L. Allington, 2006; Krashen, 2004).

Lightning read the Level 20 passage with 93% accuracy, with poor fluency, and at a slow, laborious pace (55 WPM). Most of his miscues were classified as visual; he knew that letters made certain sounds, and words read aloud should match them. Interestingly, Lightning's comprehension was adequate according to the DRA comprehension rubric (Beaver, 1991). But, the DRA requires at least 95% reading accuracy, so this passage was deemed to be at Lightning's instructional level.

This assessment revealed extremely valuable information. His comprehension was adequate, but his accuracy and fluency seemed to be holding him back. Lightning needed greater automaticity--reading words effortlessly and rapidly (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). There are various methods used to increase automaticity; all of which could be easily employed in this situation because of the one-on-one environment. The reading coach initially chose repeated readings (Samuels, 1979) because repeated readings is a relatively easy way to increase word recognition. It helps readers become more automatic as they work towards fluent reading. According to research, the selected texts can be brief and the number of repetitions is optimal at four (Samuels, 1979).

The intervention began in mid October. Lightning entered the room and seemed excited to have the reading coach's full attention. The coach explained the method of repeated readings. Lightning was to read the passage aloud four times, and chart his growth on four graphs that were drawn on the board. (See Appendix A for a completed example.) After the readings, the reading coach would tell Lightning the level of comprehension, number of errors,

the rate at which the passage was read, and the amount of expression observed. (Comprehension was only measured on the first and last reading.)

The role of the reading coach was a bit more demanding. The coach timed the reading to determine the read words-per-minute rate. As the student read, the coach verbally corrected errors made by the student, and marked them on the teacher copy of the passage. Expression was measured on a 1-4 scale rubric adapted from fluency research (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). The coach used the DRA comprehension rubric (Beaver, 1991) to assess comprehension, based on the student's retelling of the story after the first and last readings.

Most of the passages that Lightning read were actually poems from GigglePoetry.com. The coach selected and copied poems and pasted them into Microsoft Word, then determined readability statistics to determine their approximate reading levels. Lightning's passages ranged from 2.1 to 4.9 on the Flesch-Kincaid (Flesch, 1948; Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers, & Chissom, 1975) readability formula. For example, *How to Torture Your Teacher* (Lansky, 2010) was calculated to be a lower second-grade level text consisting of 201 words (see Table 1). On Lightning's first reading of this poem, his comprehension was (50%) 12 of 24; on the last reading he was scored 100% on the comprehension check. His beginning reading rate was 63 WPM. At this school, typically, the expectation for a second grader is to be reading at approximately 90 WPM. Lightning had almost achieved this by his third reading at 85 WPM. However, by his fourth, Lightning read at an impressive 108 WPM. His reading errors decreased from 16 to 8 over the four readings, thus achieving a 96% accuracy. Finally, his prosody, based on the rubric (see Table 1), increased from a 2 to a 3.

Table 1

Reading	Text	Level	Comprehension	Rate (WPM)	Errors	Prosody
1	How to	2.1	12	63.43	16 (92%)	2

2	Torture Your Teacher (Lansky, 2010)		X	68.73	12 (94%)	2
3			X	84.76	9 (96%)	3
4			24	107.79	8 (96%)	3

The reading coach continued to use the repeated reading technique with Lightning, but with more complicated texts. One selected poem, entitled *Ish* (Lansky, 2010) was more appropriate for third grade, which was Lightning's current grade level. On the first reading, he read at 34 WPM, but he increased to 95 WPM. Across the four readings, his oral reading errors decreased greatly from 21 to 2. Additionally, his prosody increased from a 1 to a 3. Importantly, after the initial reading, Lightning's comprehension was 38% (9 of 24). But, after the four readings, he scored a 100% (24 of 24). In this instance, there was a sizable decrease in errors between reading 1 and 2. After some speculation, the poem is quite unique in its structure and quite unpredictable. Therefore, much of his attention may have been consumed by it. However, after a first read, he became more comfortable with the text. After the second read, his rate jumped sizably as well—a testament to his acquired automaticity.

Table 2

Reading	Text	Level	Comprehension	Rate (WPM)	Errors	Prosody
1	Ish (Lansky, 2010)	3.2	9 (38%)	34.22	21 (77%)	1
2			X	56.84	4 (96%)	2
3			X	91.48	1 (99%)	2
4			24 (100%)	94.17	2 (98%)	3

It became evident while watching Lightning that he thoroughly enjoyed the method of repeated readings. The reading coach continued to use the graphs to chart Lightning's progress on four readings of a selected poem or text during the half-hour sessions. As is noted in research, the visual representation of progress can be motivational (Allington, 1983; Samuels, 1979).

Using Lansky’s humorous poetry mitigated the possibility of the passages becoming tedious. Also, allowing Lightning to choose his passages from a collection selected by the reading coach helped keep him engaged. During his intervention, Lightning chose passages on soccer, weather, holidays, and his favorite college football team, the Texas Longhorns. Some of these readings he chose were more difficult than the poems, ranging from a Flesch-Kincaid level 4.7 to 13.3. The 13.3 selection was far too difficult the first time he read it, but by the fourth reading, Lightning had very good comprehension, only seven errors, an expression score of 2, but a diminished rate of 40 WPM (Table 3). Of course, he was not always allowed to choose, mostly because Lightning occasionally picked college level material!

Table 3

Reading	Text	Level	Comprehension	Rate (WPM)	Errors	Prosody
1	Texas Longhorns (CBS Interactive, 2010)	13.3	6 (25%)	29.02	32 (64%)	1
2			X	34.29	20 (78%)	1
3			X	38.35	12 (87%)	2
4			16 (67%)	40	7 (92%)	2

Lightning was re-assessed after 8 weeks of the repeated readings intervention (24 sessions total). His DRA level increased from 18 to 24 (see Figure 1). Lightning was beginning to close the gap between his reading level and that associated with his grade level, a DRA 34. Although Lightning had previously made no progress in small groups; he made over half a year’s growth in two months using repeated readings. His fluency as measured on his next R-CBM showed an increase as well. He went from the previously recorded 36 to 80 WPM (see Figure 1). The one-on-one relationship with his reading coach and the use of repeated readings seemed to combine for an effective intervention for Lightning.

But, his story was not over yet. Again, determining an independent DRA reading level of 24 is important, but it does not diagnose needs for instruction. So, Lightning was again assessed with a higher-level passage to make his reading difficulties more transparent to the reading coach. Lightning, again, had difficulty with accuracy and rate. However, this time, it was noted that his expression only sometimes varied to match the meaning of the story. After administering a higher-level DRA, it was clear that not only was his automaticity holding him back, but prosody might be compounding the problem. Repeated readings were helping with his automaticity, but the coach needed to attend to his reading prosody (intonation, expression, stress, pause, volume (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010).

The coach did not want to sacrifice automaticity for prosody, so he chose the Neurological Impress Method (NIM; Heckelman, 1969) as a suitable technique for Lightning. When Lightning returned from winter break, the reading coach described the new intervention. The coach utilized a modified version of the method described by Heckelman. Indeed, it was more of a hybrid of NIM and repeated readings (Samuels, 1979). In this variation, the reading coach sat next to Lightning. The coach and student read their own copies of the book out loud. The coach read fluently into the dominant ear of the student, while Lightning “trailed” behind the coach. The coach read slightly ahead of Lightning, and with appropriate prosody. After each page was read using this NIM technique, the Lightning read the page back to the teacher—essentially a repeated reading of the page. It was amazing to hear how the coach’s voice had been “etched” into the mind of the student. After following the coach’s example, Lightning read with incredible expression. Page after page, Lightning varied his expression to match the meaning, paused for effect, and stressed particular words. With this modified NIM method, henceforth referred to as Chase Me-Show Me, Lightning read like a proficient reader.

The materials used for the Chase Me-Show Me sessions were texts approximately 4-8 levels above Lightning's DRA level. For example, *Scary Stories 3: More Tales to Chill Your Bones* by Alvin Swartz (1991) is a DRA level 38. The text was offered as an option by the reading coach, and Lightning expressed interest. Of course, choosing texts within the 10-level range did not necessarily work every time. In one case, *Bunnicula* (Howe, Howe, & Jacobi, 1982) was too difficult, and despite NIM's benefits, Lightning could not render a fluent reading of the text. Perhaps the difficulty was due to the use of frequent sarcasm in *Bunnicula*, making it a challenge for younger readers. Teachers need to be mindful of the text chosen. If the text cannot be read back to the teacher fluently with few errors, the text may be too difficult. The goal is to select high-interest texts, but using full trade books is difficult with repeated readings because of their length.

The Chase Me-Show Me intervention as developed by this reading coach was used for another 8 weeks. Lightning's DRA level increased from a 24 to a 30. Lightning was then only slightly behind the third grade expectation. Remarkably, he read a DRA-level 30 text with very good comprehension, 99% accuracy, at 99 WPM, and great expression—a score of 4 according to the rubric. Although his R-CBM reading rate did not increase as much as it had after the repeated readings segment, this time it increased from 80 to 85 WPM, but his expression had clearly improved (see description of score 4 in Appendix B).

Again, the story was not yet over. Given his new role, this reading coach continued to work with Lightning and support his reading progress. Lightning no longer entered the room defeated and strained. Instead he would practically bound into the room, ready to tackle anything laid before him. One day, for example, Lightning was entertaining the reading coach with an

extremely fluent production of *Skippyjon Jones and the Big Bones* (Schachner, 2007). He was all smiles, full of giggles, and bursting with confidence.

The giggles, however, turned somewhat bittersweet because in this case, the interventions worked. Lightning was reading on grade level, and in early spring achieved an impressive 80% on his mock state reading assessment. The reading coach had to inform him that, due to his success, the one-on-one instruction would be ending. Lightning was happy to know that he had exceeded the expectations, but was clearly upset about the end of the successful relationship. The coach, of course, promised to visit frequently, and made good on his promise. Letting Lightning go was both the saddest and happiest moments for the reading coach that year. It was a dream come true to see Lightning reading quietly with his classmates, so carefree and confident. Observations by the teacher and reading coach indicated that Lightning could now enjoy and understand his grade level reading. He would remind the reading coach, in his special Lightning way, “Now, don’t forget about your chubby little friend, Mr. X.” Obviously, the coach needs no reminder.

Figure 1: Lightning’s DRA Data

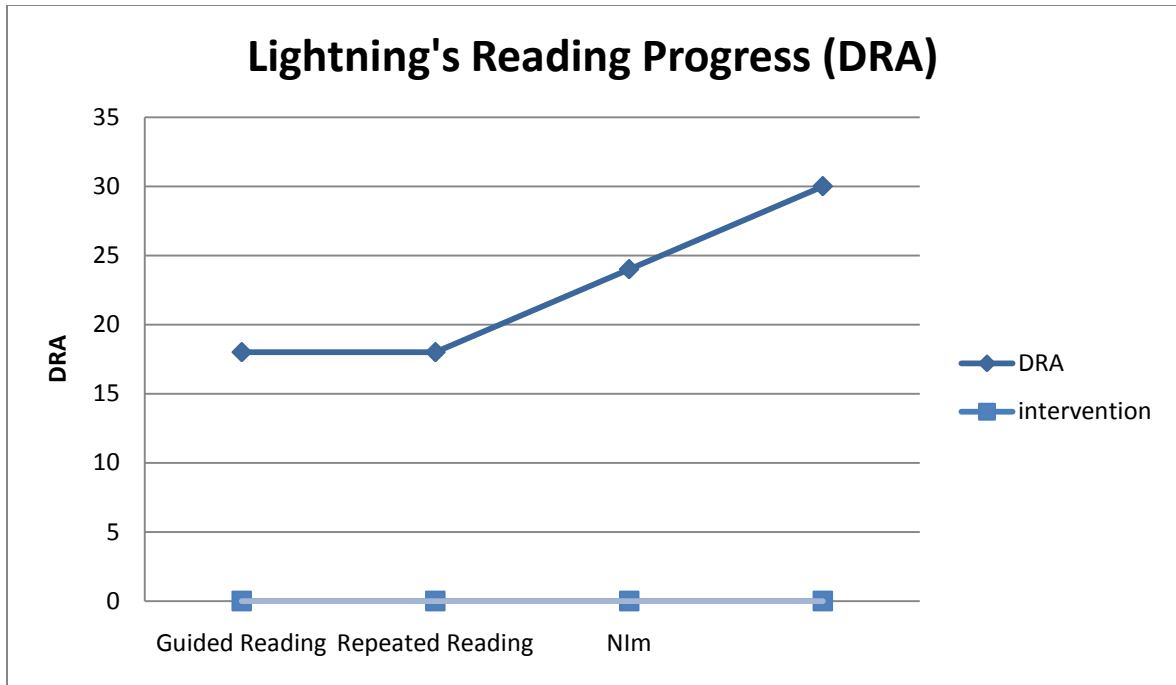
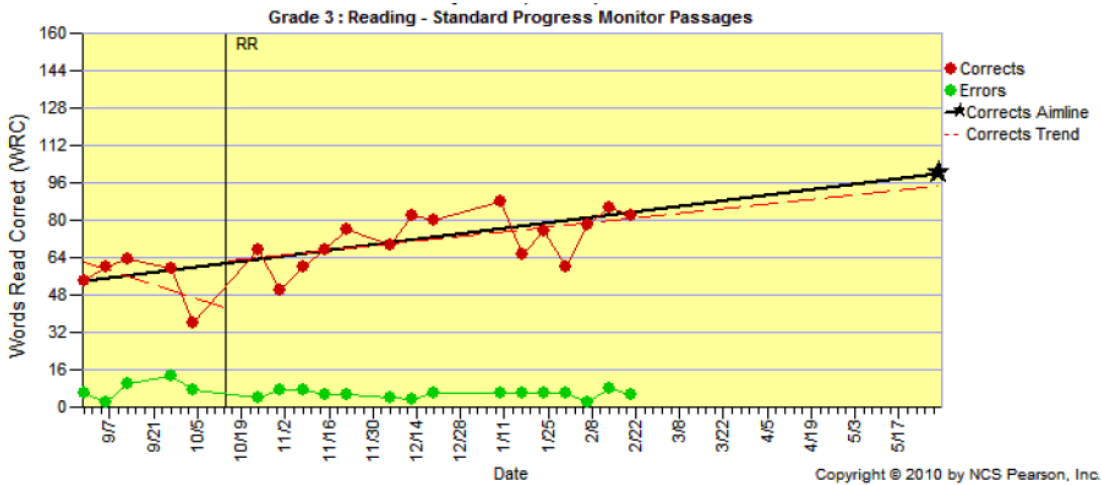


Figure 2 Lightning’s Reading-Curriculum Based Measurement (WPM)



Maria

In late 2009, Maria was a third-grade student with a history of reading difficulties. She was well aware of these difficulties and admitted to not reading frequently because of them. She especially feared reading aloud in any environment. This all changed, fortunately.

Maria was a quiet student. One might infer her shyness was due to her age or perhaps her home-culture or speech impairment. The reading coach originally attributed her quietness to those factors as well, but soon realized that her lack of proficiency in reading also contributed to her less-than-enthusiastic demeanor. Maria had trouble reading and was over a year behind her peers.

In the beginning of her intervention, Maria hardly spoke. In fact, this was the rare student who did not seem happy to visit the reading coach. Maria seemed immune to the novelty. She knew the reading coach was there for a more specific purpose than to jovially bounce around the school; he was a reading teacher, and Maria did not like to read. However, as her reading improved, she began to open up. She engaged in conversation, and even smiled occasionally.

Although her difficulties crossed the curriculum, this analysis will focus on her reading. Maria began her third-grade year on a DRA level 18. This again is considered as end-of-year, first-grade reading. According to Maria's beginning-of-the-year R-CBM (see Figure 3), she read grade-level passages at 60 WPM, some 40 words below expectation. She was seen initially four days a week by the reading coach in a group of four students on similar reading levels. The reading coach used guided reading as an intervention (Pinnell & Fountas, 2007). This method was chosen because of the number of students in the group, and the students' similar reading levels. Guided reading could accommodate all students in the small group, and the teacher could address individual teaching points as needed. This intervention lasted six weeks, when the reading coach revised Maria's instruction.

In an effort to make better use of the RtI model, Maria, a tier-3 student, was reassigned to the reading coach for individualized reading intervention three days per week for 40 minutes per day. At the beginning of the one-on-one intervention, her DRA level was a 20 and her R-CBM

reading rate was at 64 WPM, which indicated the previous intervention had yielded some gains. Again, the independent reading level portrays what a student does well, but not necessarily how she apply skills and strategies with more challenging text, so Maria was assessed using a level-24 passage in order to discern more specific reading behaviors.

The DRA measures word reading accuracy and comprehension. This school district also requires teachers to measure prosody and rate. According to the assessment, Maria struggled in every area measured. Because no area was significantly lower than the rest, the goals for Maria were more difficult to prioritize. In this case, the reading coach chose to address the most important process in reading--comprehension.

Based on the National Reading Panel's (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) report of research-based strategies, the reading coach selected graphic organizers as a means to support Maria's reading comprehension. Graphic organizers incorporate multiple strategies and integrate reading and writing (Author, 2005).

The first day entailed a quick preview of the intervention with the reading coach describing the Multiple Strategy graphic organizer (Appendix C) and the task to Maria. Initially, the coach selected *Alfie's Gift* (Hilton & Smith, 1992), a DRA-level 24 text, which was slightly above her independent level. However, Maria was not automatic in her reading; she struggled through only two pages and left the graphic organizer untouched. Apparently, Maria could not work far beyond her independent reading level. The DRA level 24 was obviously frustrating, so a lower-leveled book was selected for the next day.

The reading coach introduced a new book, a level 20, at the next session. He reviewed the graphic organizer and the coach and student engaged in the task. Again, the task was difficult, and again the student struggled through the text. As before, the graphic organizer was

overshadowed by the need for more efficient word recognition. Maria struggled with contractions, certain phonograms and affixes (often unread), irregularly spelled words, and blends (e.g., “black” would be pronounced “back”). Maria read in a monotone, word by word, and the process was laborious, thus taking its toll on the student and reading coach.

Comprehension can be difficult if a student cannot read fluently (Jenkins, Fuchs, van, Espin, & Deno, 2003; Klauda & Guthrie, 2008; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993), so the coach chose an easier text. On day three, the coach decided to use a DRA level 18 for the comprehension instruction. As Maria read *A Pot of Stone Soup* (O'Brien, 1996), she did not stop to fill out the graphic organizer without prompting. The coach had to remind her of the objective of completing the organizer. Maria, however, only stopped on her own when she came to an unknown word. In this case, there were fewer instances of difficulty decoding, and there was evidence of self-corrections, but completing the graphic organizer was not Maria's goal. The graphic organizer was completed only after great effort and guidance. Maria asked two questions, answered them both, made one prediction (which came true), and rendered the following summary:

there were a little boy walked day and night looking for food he tod (told) the lady to cook a stone

After careful reflection, the reading coach deemed this intervention a complete failure instructionally. Luckily, interventions that do not provide positive results can be abandoned for better ones. Subsequently, the coach revised the intervention with a strategy geared towards increasing automaticity. The reading coach decided to again employ the Neurological Impress Method (NIM; Heckelman, 1969) because it had shown potential with other students. However, the coach wanted to keep an emphasis on comprehension, so the NIM Plus was chosen (Flood,

Lapp, & Fisher, 2005). NIM Plus is the same echo reading method, but with a comprehension component. The “Plus” component requires the teacher to ask comprehension questions based on the reading after the teacher-led shared reading. Although the component is more accurately described as comprehension assessment rather than instruction, it ensures that students keep their eyes on the prize—comprehension.

Because Maria’s confidence in reading was very low, the coach wanted to provide immediate chance for success. Therefore, the NIM Plus method was again modified as a combination of NIM Plus with a repeated reading—referred to by the reading coach as Chase Me-Show Me with the coach sitting on the dominant side of the student, they read aloud from two copies of the same book. The coach read at an appropriate pace, and prosodically, slightly ahead of Maria, while she “chased” behind. At the conclusion of each page, the Maria immediately read the page again alone. In this way the Maria could see instant success of the strategy, and feel more confident about oral reading. In this NIM variation the student repeated the text and was able to replicate the “voice” of the teacher that had been impressed during the first reading. Maria noticed her increased proficiency, and clearly enjoyed reading aloud with this support.

After the first failed week of intervention, Chase Me-Show Me was implemented for Week 2, and was used consistently for the remainder of the eight-week intervention period. After seven weeks of Chase Me-Show Me, Maria was assessed at a DRA level 28. The results were so shocking that she was given an alternate DRA, to confirm her level 28 success. Her comprehension was adequate on both assessments. She read with 96% accuracy on the first story at 73 WPM and 99% accuracy at 88 WPM on the alternate story. In addition, her subsequent R-CBM reading rate was 89 WPM-- a 25 WPM gain in seven weeks. According to oral reading

fluency norms (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006), a rate of 89 WPM, indicates that the reader is making adequate progress in third grade and placing her above the 50th percentile.

The Chase Me-Show Me techniques was deemed successful as it increased her reading level by approximately one grade level (from DRA 20 to 28). In light of the growth, her intervention was not changed for the next 8 weeks. Similar to the first 8 weeks, Maria's reading level increased by almost another year. She ascended from DRA 28 to 34. A DRA 34 was the expectation for a third grader at the time of the assessment. At the end of 16 weeks, Maria's R-CBM reading rate was at 97 WPM, thus placing her at the 50th percentile for third grade readers (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006). Maria was reading and comprehending grade level material with a fluency rate commensurate with her peers. She had plenty to say about this in the follow-up interview.

During the interview, she sat across from her reading coach. She was delighted to find out that others wanted to know more about her. Following is the transcript from Maria's interview:

Reading Coach: What are you reading now?

Maria: *Arthur at Recess* and...umm..a biography about Sam Houston.

Reading Coach: How do you feel about reading?

Maria: Good because it helps me get smarter. I like it because I'm on a high level.

Reading Coach: Have your feelings about reading changed since last year?

Maria: Yes. Last year I did not read a lot of books. This year I am.

Reading Coach: Why do you read more books?

Maria: Because I am a good reader.

Reading Coach: How did you feel about our strategy for reading? The one where we read together and you read back to me Chase Me-Show Me.

Maria: It helped me with the book. Even if I got stuck, I can still understand the story. It helped me a lot.

Reading Coach: What will you read next?

Maria: Something. I don't know.

Reading Coach: What made reading difficult for you before?

Maria: No body helped me.

Surely, teachers had tried to help Maria. All of her previous teachers are well known to the reading coach and they no doubt gave her assistance. Perhaps the real answer is, “No one helped me in the right way.” Or, more academically phrased, “No one took the time to give me direct, intense, research-based, and assessment driven literacy instruction.”

It was interesting to note that Maria said she eventually liked reading because she was on a higher reading level. She had somehow assumed the teacher mentality—that reading well means reading on a higher level. This is a common downside of using overtly leveled-texts for reading instruction and assessment. But, she also mentioned reading more books and understanding them. Maria knew the goal of reading. She knew that it was not just about speed, or the amount of words she knew, or pleasing the teacher; it was about meaning.

The Chase Me-Show Me intervention for Maria was successful. But, fortunately (and unfortunately), the coach did not have to say goodbye to sweet Maria. Her mock reading standardized test score was only 57%. Her teacher feared that she might not pass the third grade reading TAKS test. This surprised the reading coach, as he had witnessed that Maria could read

and comprehend grade-level text. Therefore, the coach reverted to assessment analysis; a tool he had utilized as a part of his own restructuring for the school's new emphasis on RtI.

A careful analysis of her practice TAKS test revealed two patterns. The coach discussed each of these with Maria during her scheduled intervention time. First, Maria had missed every vocabulary-related question on the test. These questions were all similar in that they asked, "What word in the sentence helps the reader know the definition of..." Apparently, using context clues was a skill she had not yet developed. Although she could orally state the definitions, she was unable to identify the word in context that helped her define the vocabulary word in question. Therefore, the reading coach modified her intervention to include this skill specific to standardized testing.

Second, she had missed every question on the practice test that started with "The reader can tell..." These questions ask the reader to infer. After a brief discussion with Maria, she revealed she did not realize that she was "the reader". This question format completely confused her, so she guessed at answers. Again, these skills and phrasings using "the reader" are more specific to the TAKS test; arguably, no authentic reading experiences will likely require a reader to answer these types of questions. However, understanding this type of question was also added to her intervention. (The coach strongly disagrees with teaching to a test, but has a bigger problem sending students in unprepared for such test items.) The coach and Maria had worked too hard to boost her confidence and reading ability to see it shattered by test-question confusion. Therefore, instead of exiting her from the intervention as he had done with Lightning, Maria continued with the reading coach to augment her much deserved success in reading.

Figure 4: Maria's DRA Data

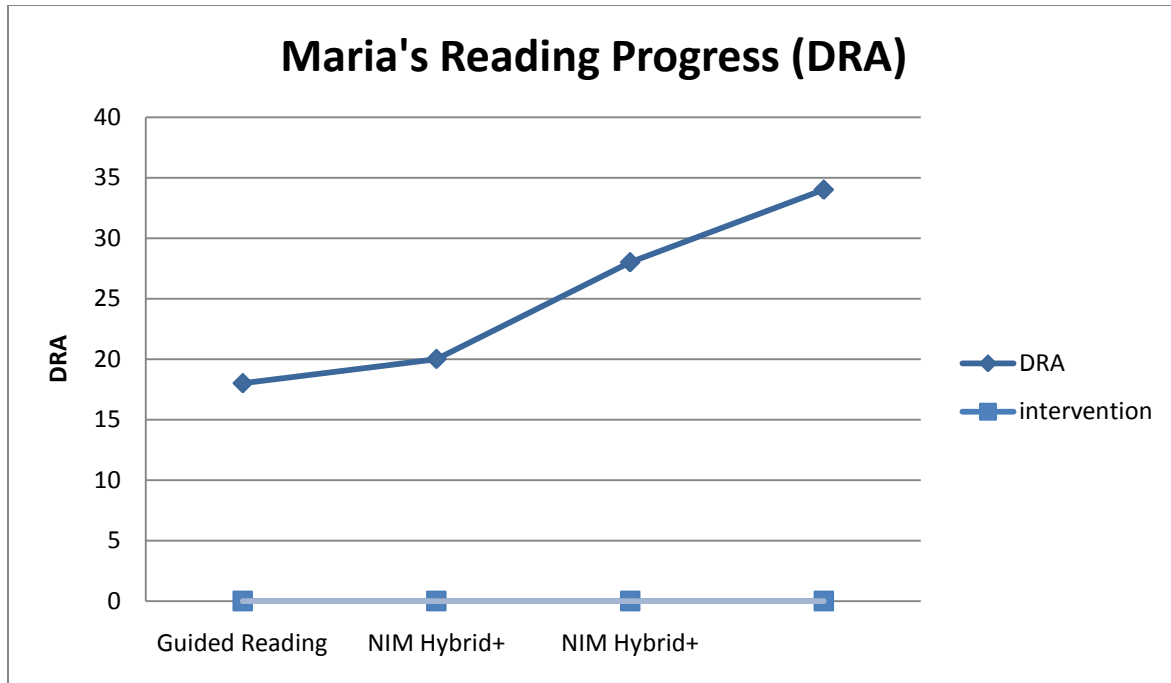
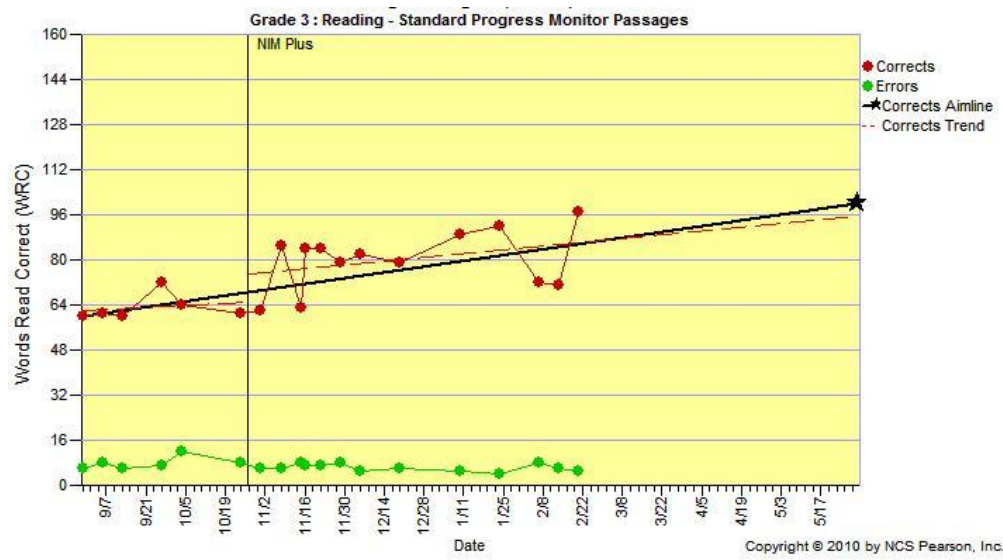


Figure 5 Maria's Figure X Reading-Curriculum Based Measurement (WPM)



Discussion

The Common Factor

Although Stake (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) argues against comparing across case studies, one common factor in these examples is the reading coach, who is completing his doctoral coursework under the supervision of the second author. The second author observed the reading

coach during limited whole-, small-, and one-on-one lessons with students. This reading coach is personable, dynamic, and very enthusiastic about reading and is very positive in his interactions with students. He excels at connecting with down-trodden readers, so any effect in attitude or achievement is likely due in part to his ability to relate to and motivate students. It is a special treat to be assigned to this reading coach and students, especially the many young male students, seemingly appreciate his instruction. The second author thinks it is important that the personality of the coach was a positive effect on student growth in these cases.

Other common factors and salient features in these cases are worth noting. First, the one-on-one context seemed to support more targeted instruction and intense practice. Research indicates the smaller the class, the higher the student achievement (Glass & Smith, 1979), especially in one-on-one situations (Baker & Others, 1990; Jenkins, Mayhall, Peschka, & Jenkins, 1974). In addition to personalized attention, these students met three times a week with the reading coach for at least 16 weeks. For some readers, this frequent individualization may be needed to make substantive gains in reading achievement (Gallant & Schwartz, 2010).

The focused attention that this reading coach provided selected students was the result of a school's intent to understand and implement RtI on behalf of struggling students. Key personnel held meetings and discussions and got input in order to revise the program. This reading coach embraced the notion that RtI emphasizes that students need to be monitored for their response to instruction and that modifications must be made if approaches do not yield the desired growth. This flexibility requires that those responsible know enough methods and techniques to provide varied and appropriate instruction. This coach also realized that methods need enough time work and provided sufficient time for students to learn and benefit from an

intervention. Knowing how long a student needs an intervention is not an elementary science, but the use of assessment can provide insight into the question of duration.

Although the use of assessment is often a double-edge sword, some evaluation is necessary to diagnose students' status and needs and to monitor the quality of an intervention. In this case, as with many, teachers are required to administer regularly scheduled assessments, in addition to those that might be used to monitor intervention effects. This reading coach used and compared the mandated assessment to confirm or inform his findings, rather than add unnecessary assessments to the instructional cycle.

The two cases described here both evidenced a need for fluency instruction, yet each had idiosyncratic elements. Certainly, not all struggling readers need to focus on their fluency, but these third graders had not been able to move beyond a beginning reader rate and increasing their fluency allowed them to sound and feel more proficient, which may have contributed to their ability to comprehend text.

Because of the students' initial lack of automaticity, this reading coach employed a combination of repeated readings and the Neurological Impress Method. In both cases he utilized or modified a variation of these approaches to accommodate his students. Lightning needed fluency and prosody development; Maria needed fluency with a focus on comprehension. So, while some of the processes were similar, the reading coach customized the sessions for each student, modifying methods as warranted. With data from Maria's mock state exam, the reading coach was also able to diagnose some language issues that were hampering her test-taking skills. This careful analysis of student data provided additional insight into Maria's need for instruction.

Finally, with his more comprehensive approach to remediation, this reading coach looked beyond any weakness initially diagnosed and targeted for instruction. Some teachers make the

mistake of zeroing in on one skill or proficiency to develop, without considering others that may be contributing to a student's deficiencies. With a diagnostic approach to the use of oral readings, this reading coach found several aspects of reading that he prioritized for instruction. He also looked for transfer of skills across texts and levels, and considered motivational aspects in his reading interventions. The interventions used here were appropriate for the given schedule and appealing to these third graders. It is hoped, however, that these are instructional characteristics that other educators can adopt as they seek to implement RtI plans with their students. These case descriptions are intended to encourage other educators to explore varied instructional options to support specific student needs in the hopes that many more youngsters will become proficient, confident readers.

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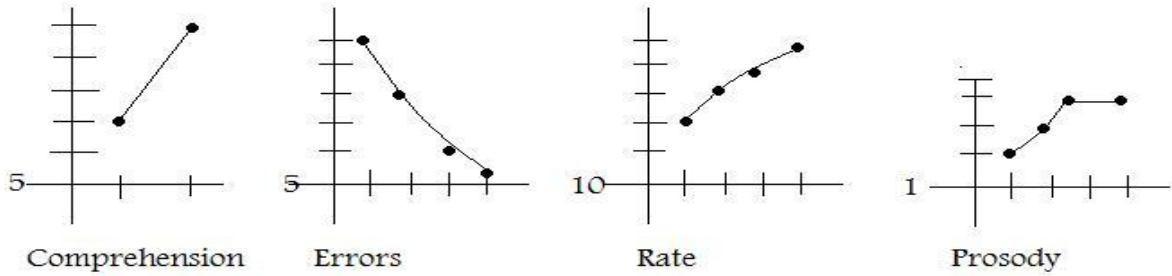
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Appendix A



Appendix B

Prosody Rubric

4	Consistently reads in meaningful phrases smooth reading self correcting difficulties are resolved quickly processing on the run Consistently reads punctuation appropriately Consistently conversational/sounds like natural language Consistently varies expression and volume to match the meaning of the passage
3	Mostly reads in meaningful phrases Mostly reads punctuation appropriately Mostly conversational/occasional breaks caused by specific words Mostly varies expression and volume to match the meaning of the passage
2	Sometimes reads in meaningful phrase groups but overall effect is choppy Sometimes reads punctuation but often fails to pay attention to punctuation Sometimes conversational, but moderately slow pacing Sometimes varies expression and volume, but student focus remains largely on reading word by word
1	Seldom/Never reads in meaningful phrases frequent pauses hesitations false starts repetition sound-outs multiple attempts

	inventing text Seldom/Never reads punctuation Seldom/Never conversational/slow and laborious pace Seldom/Never varies expression and volume little or no expression word calling monotone quiet voice or “trails off”
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Appendix C

Multiple Strategy Graphic Organizer

<p>Important Questions</p>	<p>Answer Questions with Inferences and Text Evidence</p>
<p>Make/Revise/Reject Predictions</p>	<p>Reflect</p>
<p>Summary:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	