The Student-Teacher Conference:

Advancing Student Engagement and Reading Comprehension Through

Student-Teacher Goal-Setting

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Title: The Student Teacher Conference: Advancing Student Engagement and Reading Comprehension Through Teacher-Student Goal-Setting

Research Question(s): What effects do teacher-student conferences, which allow an opportunity for student self-evaluations as readers and individual goal setting for student reading processes, have on the reading comprehension and reading engagement of students placed in a Language Arts Tutorial reading class?

Research Activities:
This study occurred in an 8th grade Language Arts Tutorial class, composed of sixteen students identified as in need of additional Language Arts support through low CST scores and low GPAs. Students in this class included those in mainstream Language Arts classes, Resource Language Arts, and ELD Language Arts. The intervention included four individual teacher-student conferences over a period of four weeks, in which the knowledge of reading strategies were discussed and individual goals were set by each student. These goals focused on the acquisition of new reading strategies that the students thought they needed in order to become good readers. Data were collected in the form of attitude surveys, teacher-created reading strategy assessments, teacher-created reading comprehension assessments, reading logs, conference notes, and teacher observations based on time sampling during students' independent reading. The purpose of this intervention was to determine if goal-setting could be used as a tool to not only engage students, but to also improve their reading comprehension. Between the baseline and outcome data sets, reading comprehension scores increased for 75% of the student who could increase their scores (2 students maintained perfect scores). The number of reading strategies used, including visualization, connections, questioning, and synthesis, also increased between the baseline and outcome data. Through analysis of time-sampling data, students' engagement while silent reading did not improve; however, many students reported that they believed their quality of reading comprehension had improved. Teacher-student conferences can be used as a tool to identify strengths and weaknesses in individual readers. While such conferences may not increase reading engagement, they do encourage students to analyze their own reading practices, which encourages them to strive to become good readers.

Grade Level: Eighth Grade
Data Collection Methods: Reading logs, Attitude surveys, Observation-Student engagement/behavior tallies (time-sampling), Reading strategy Assessment (teacher created), Reading comprehension assessment (teacher created), Conference notes
Curriculum Areas: Reading
Instructional Approaches: Reading comprehension, Teacher-student conferences, Goal-setting, Student engagement

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Introduction

The day before the first day of school, my Literacy Coach handed me a set of workbooks entitled *Corrective Reading* and said that was my curriculum for Language Arts Tutorial. Although she hadn't read through the workbooks yet, she assured me they were "research-based" and all I had to do was follow the scripted instructions. Having no idea what exactly Tutorial was, and already feeling overwhelmed planning my mainstream Language Arts classes, I embraced the texts as my lifeline. I led the students through the first lesson, which involved a lot of teacher-guided oral repetition, verb conjugations, underlining of subjects and circling of predicates. As the lesson bore on and students one-by-one checked out, I realized that this mere class of fifteen would soon become my most challenging and dreaded class, even more so than my class of 35.

My next approach was to get to know and engage my students through an informal conversation about school. I asked them what they thought Tutorial was and why they thought they were placed in Tutorial. Zach[1] and Todd blurted out that they were dumb, Robert said he filled in random bubbles on the standardized test, and Summer, the rational one, said they needed extra help in Language Arts. I tried to explain to them that Tutorial was a privilege; not every 8th grader who needed it was receiving the extra attention. But whom was I kidding? Tutorial *was* punishment. Other kids got to take art, band, current events or another elective, and these kids had to sit and read out of a workbook on their least favorite subject.

It was obvious to me that my students felt punished by being enrolled in Tutorial because of their classroom behavior. They are often very disruptive and complain about boredom. Even when I have created activities that are not part of the prescribed

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[1] All names are pseudonyms

curriculum and that I consider fun, my students are still disruptive. They talk over each other and talk back to each other. This student behavior exudes disengagement. Skinner & Belmont (as cited in Chapman, 2003) state that engaged students "show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest" (p. 2). Skinner & Belmont state that disengaged students are "disaffected," meaning they can "be bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry…even rebellious towards teacher and classmates" (p. 2). In passing observation, my students seem very disaffected.

The real reason why these students were enrolled in Tutorial is still a bit elusive to me. Some say students' enrollment was determined by their CST score, some say GPA, some say they were referred by former teachers. I still don't know what Tutorial is meant to be and what the purpose of the *Corrective Reading* workbooks is, but I knew that these kids needed and deserved more than what they were getting. If they were being deprived of an elective in middle school, they needed to at least be given an opportunity to learn something valuable and helpful. This class screamed out to me that it was in need of an intervention and I knew it would be ideal to work with such a small class. Because of this small class size, and the large variety of individual backgrounds and needs of these struggling students, I considered the possibility of meeting one-on-one with each of these students. I thought that not only would these meetings address their varying needs, it may also increase their engagement to have such individualized attention. Further addressing my concern with engagement, I considered the possibility of goal setting for these students. What better way to encourage them to succeed than have them create their own goals? Goal setting sounded perfect to me; however, one must meet my students in order to understand how reluctant they were to take on this daunting task.

Context

Class

The fifteen students enrolled in my 8th grade Language Arts Tutorial class were selectively identified as low performing and were placed in Tutorial in lieu of an elective, such as art and music. The mere fact that these students were "punished" for being low achieving lends insight into why they have such negative opinions of themselves and school.

The purpose of Tutorial is to provide additional instructional time for students struggling in Language Arts. Tutorial is a supplement to each student's regular Language Arts class. Therefore, my students receive almost twice as many instructional hours in their least favorite subject. I asked my students what their favorite subjects were in school and the most astounding answers were Math and Science.

The curriculum of Language Arts Tutorial was largely left up to me, so long as I used the *Corrective Reading* workbooks. I immediately integrated silent reading into my lesson plans, because all of our students are involved in the Accelerated Reader (AR) program. This program tests students' reading comprehension and generates a reading score and range. All of the books in the school library are coded with Accelerated Reader reading ranges, so students can easily find a book at their level. Once students read a book, they can take an AR quiz and find a new book. After they have passed a certain amount of quizzes, they can move to a higher reading level. The goal of the AR program is to catch lower level readers up to grade reading level.

Other activities in my class include reading *Time for Kids* and *Current Events* magazines, playing grammar games and allowing additional time for homework. The silent reading element of my class is what led me to begin teaching reading strategies and is what ultimately led to this study's intervention.

Although all fifteen of my students were lumped together and identified as "low-performing" they all have such diverse backgrounds and needs, which is why simply instructing using a packaged reading program is so difficult and worthy of caution. Creating a curriculum for any course requires differentiated instruction and scaffolding, so this one should be no different. One need only look at the table below to notice the diverse range of ethnicity, language, and academic achievement.

Table 1 – Class Demographics

Student Name	Ethnicity	CST Score	Language	ELD Level	Reading Level	CELDT
Steven	White	1	English	N/A	5.6	N/A
Mary	Indian	1	Hindi	3	?	4
Caitlin	Filipino	2	Filipino	Redesignated	6.2	4
Zach	Hispanic	1	Spanish	Redesignated	6	4
Peter	Hispanic	2	Spanish	3	?	5
Paul	Chinese	3	Cantonese	2	2	2
Lynn	Hispanic	2	Spanish	3	?	4
Mark	African American	1	English	N/A	5	N/A
Todd	White	1	English	N/A	5	N/A
Claire	Hispanic	1	Spanish	3	?	4
Aaron	White	2	English	N/A	~4	N/A
Diana	African American	2	English	N/A	4	N/A
Karen	Hispanic	3	Spanish	3	?	4
Summer	Hispanic	3	Spanish	Redesignated	?	4
Robert	White	2	English	N/A	7.1	N/A

Of the fifteen students, nine are English Language Learners. Three of them are Re-designated English Learners and are enrolled in a mainstreamed Language Arts classroom. All three re-designated students have a CELDT score of 4 (1=Beginning, 2=Early Intermediate, 3=Intermediate, 4=Early Advanced, 5=Advanced). The rest are enrolled in ELD level 3, which is the highest ELD level (four scored a 4 on the CELDT and one scored a 5), save one student who is in level 2 (who scored a 2 on the CELDT). One native English speaker is a Resource student and is enrolled in an RSP Language

Arts class. Six of my students scored a 1 on the 7th grade CST, six scored a 2, and three scored a 3 (1=Far Below Basic, 2=Below Basic, 3=Basic, 4=Proficient, 5=Advanced). Of the fifteen students, three have a GPA of 1.9 and below, eight have a GPA between 2.0 and 2.9, and four have a GPA of 3.0 and above.

To provide a more in depth look at the range of abilities and motivations of my students I have chosen the following focal students:

- Robert (White male) – I often wonder why Robert is enrolled in Tutorial. Yes, he scored a 2 on the CST, but he has a 7th grade reading level and a 7th grade cumulative GPA of 2.44. Robert is always the first one finished with the workbook assignment of the day and is never reluctant to speak aloud in class. He is usually one of the first to begin reading upon entering the class and does not complain or look for excuses from reading like the majority of his classmates. Robert received a D+ in Language Arts on his most recent report card. According to his teacher, he did not turn in many homework assignments. Strangely, Robert received an A in 7th grade Language Arts. It seems to me that Robert's achievement directly relates to his interest in the assignment. He does not see an importance in completing work that he does not find interesting.

- Diana (African American female) – Diana received a D in Language Arts on her most recent report card. She has a 7th grade cumulative GPA of 1.54. She scored a 2 on the CST and has a 4th grade reading level. Diana has a very negative attitude toward the class and toward me, her teacher. She expresses her negative attitude through loud sighing, muttering "this is stupid" under her breath, and consistently shuffling her supplies and backpack to prevent her from working. I have sent her out of class for telling me to "get out of my face" and she has been suspended

twice so far this year. Diana does seem to shine in Language Arts when art is integrated into the assignment. She takes great care in adding detail and producing her art projects. I assume that it only enrages her more that she cannot take Art as an elective because she is in Tutorial instead.

- Paul (Chinese male) –Paul has a 7th grade cumulative GPA of 3.88 and a CST score of 3 (highest in the class); however Paul's CELDT score was 2 (lowest in the class) and has a 3rd grade reading level. Paul is a very friendly and smart student, but has very poor speaking and reading skills. When working in the class workbooks, Paul diligently completes his assignments, although they are difficult. When the class begins reading, Paul becomes disengaged and often shuts down. I am curious as to how he almost had a straight A average in 7th grade with such low reading skills. I have heard rumors that Paul is a champion badminton player and hope to see him playing on the school team sometime.

- Mark (African American male) – Mark has a 7th grade cumulative GPA of 2.26. He scored a 1 on the CST and has a 5th grade reading level. Mark received an F in Language Arts on the last report card for missing many assignments. Mark displays very poor academic skills and seems as though he has difficulty processing information. As I watch him work and speak with him one on one, he seems to have a lot of trouble transferring information from one area of study to the next. Mark is extremely amiable, always happy and never exudes signs of frustration. He simply checks out when he is disengaged.

- Zach (Hispanic male) – Zach is a Re-designated ELD (has a CELDT score of 4), with a 7th grade cumulative GPA of 1.93, a CST score of 1, and a 6th grade reading level. Zach is very friendly and outspoken; however, he causes a lot of

class disruption and is an instigator of off-task behavior. Zach does not like to do

his work unless he is motivated, either by a topic of interest or by incentives such

as candy. Zach likes to engage in conversation, academic or not, and is unable to

distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate time for talking.

In order to understand these students a bit further and to understand their placement in

Language Arts Tutorial, one must look at the community Shearwater lies within.

City

The city of Shearwater lies along the two sides of Highway 29, connecting Aurora

and Merryweather. It is located approximately 35 miles northeast of a major metropolitan

city at the southern end of Aurora County. The city is approximately 4 square miles, with

the Aurora River wetlands to the west, Wilderness Preserve to the east, the city of

Merryweather to the south and vineyards to the north.

Shearwater was incorporated in 1992 and is rapidly growing. At the beginning of

2005, 14,300 people lived in Shearwater and the expected growth population is 22,000

with the construction of two new residential areas - one expecting to build 743 single-

family homes, and the other expecting to build 190 housing units. Two more projects are

anticipated to include both rental and ownership units. The cost of a single-family home

in Shearwater can range between $300,000 to $700,000. New residents are likely

commuters to the San Francisco Bay Area; however, other residents work at the Green

Island Industrial Park, the Aurora County Airport, Union Pacific Railroad or the

agricultural and vineyard industries of Aurora County.

Commercial businesses are also expanding into Shearwater. Four hundred acres

have recently been annexed to expand development. Currently, a 100-acre Town Center

is in planning phase, while a 40-acre Junction, which includes a new Wal-Mart Super

center, Starbucks, Jamba Juice and Round Table Pizza, is being developed. A 134-room,

environmentally friendly hotel recently opened along the main highway and expects to

draw more tourists to the area.

School

Shearwater's location has had a unique impact on Shearwater Middle School's

demographics. As Shearwater is only three miles from Merryweather, SMS has a very

diverse population. The ethnic diversity of SMS is one of the things that set it apart from

the rest of the district (*see Figure 1*).

Figure 1 - Ethnic Diversity across school, district and state
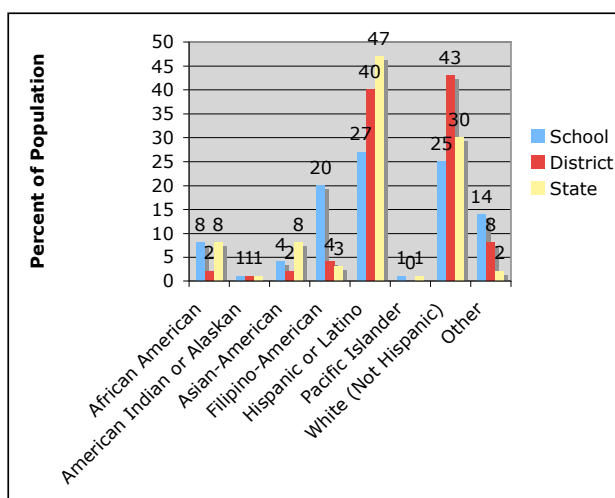
SMS is far more diverse than the district and the state. The most prominent

ethnicities are Hispanic and White across the three levels; however, Filipino-Americans

and students who classify themselves as Other are far more prominent at the school level.

At the school level, the number of African Americans is consistent with the state level

and is higher than the district level. The district, Aurora Valley Unified School District, is

based in Aurora, a rural community where the main industry is wine. The large percent of

Hispanics in this community is due to the large population of farm laborers. As the

neighborhood of Shearwater continues to grow and house prices increase, the diversity of the population is likely to fall.

Because Shearwater Middle School is the only middle school not in the city of Aurora, the district occasionally neglects SMS. However, this neglect only makes SMS more proud of its accomplishments. SMS has the highest Academic Performance Index of all the middle schools in the district. SMS's 2005 API was 716 with a Growth Target of 4 points. The actual growth was 52 points, reaching 768 in 2006. SMS currently has a higher API than the other middle schools in the district (722, 735, 746), the district average (745), and the state average (720). While so much growth was achieved, the district is still enrolled in Program Improvement because of low district-wide test scores, affecting course enrollment at SMS. All students who scored below Proficient on the CST (60%) must enroll in a Language Arts and Math Tutorial to satisfy the state mandated instructional time.

Of the students at SMS, 40% scored Proficient or above on the California Standards Test. This percentage corresponds with those of the district and state, which respectively scored 43% and 40% at Proficient or above. The AVUSD growth from 2005 to 2006 was 23 points, and the state's average growth was 11 points. Among similar schools SMS is ranked 5, which means its score is average with schools similar to it.

The statistically significant subgroups at SMS all improved on the CSTs from 2005 to 2006. The subgroup growth target was 3 points and each group grew as follows:

Table 2 – Statistically Significant Subgroup CST Scores at SMS

|	Filipino	Hispanic/Latino	White	Socio-Economically Disadvantaged
Growth Points	39	53	49	72
API	821	709	798	707

One reason given for the increase in CST scores from 2005-2006 is Advisory, a 20-minute combined 6th, 7th and 8th grade course focused on building literacy skills. The entire school reads the same book at the beginning of each school year and students continue to read their own AR book for the remainder of the year.

Currently, SMS enrolls 798 students in the 6th, 7th and 8th grade. SMS is a project-based school, in which students participate in an interdisciplinary project every trimester. This year, the project theme is Environmentalism and students are creating and implementing ways to protect the environment. These projects are conducted in their Advisory class, which is organized by dens consisting of five classrooms, a science lab, faculty office and workroom. Dens are organized to encourage collaborative learning amongst teachers and grade levels, as well as to encourage community pride amongst students.

The percent of students at SMS who qualify for Free or Reduced lunch is 30%. Along with ethnicity, this statistic is likely to reduce as Shearwater continues to grow. The district percentage of students who qualify for this program is 37.7% and the state percentage is 51.2%. Of the students who took the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) test, 93% responded to the Parent Education Level survey. Of those who responded, 13% stated that their parents were not high school graduates, thus qualifying them to be Socio-Economically Disadvantaged (SED).

Of all the students at SMS, 53.4% are English Learners, Fluent English Proficient or Redesignated English Language Students. Below is a chart that compares the school percentages to the district and state percentages.

Figure 2 – School, District and State EL Population

EL Population
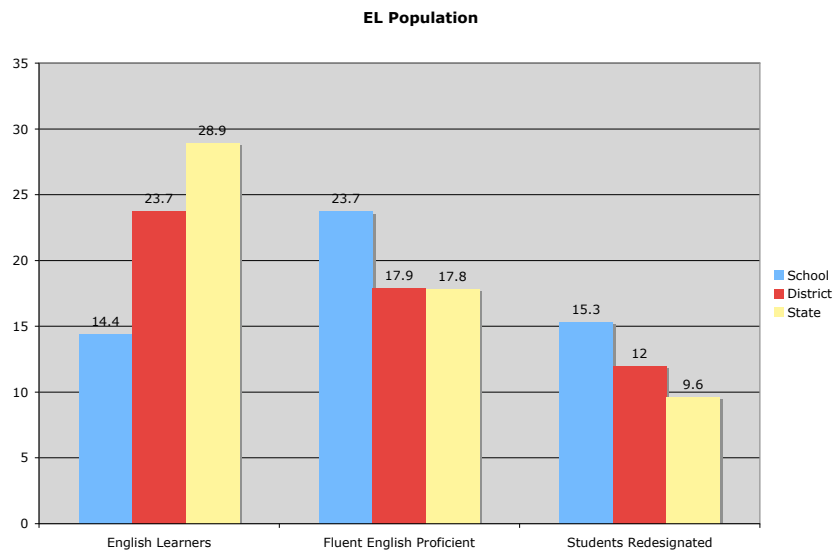
California has far more English Learners than the school or district; however, SMS has more FEP and Redesignated students than the state and the district. This is likely because Shearwater is a middle-class community, and newcomers are less likely to live in a neighborhood with residential housing ranging from $300,000 to $700,000.

Figure 3 – CELDT scores for school, district and state

CELDT: Total Tested
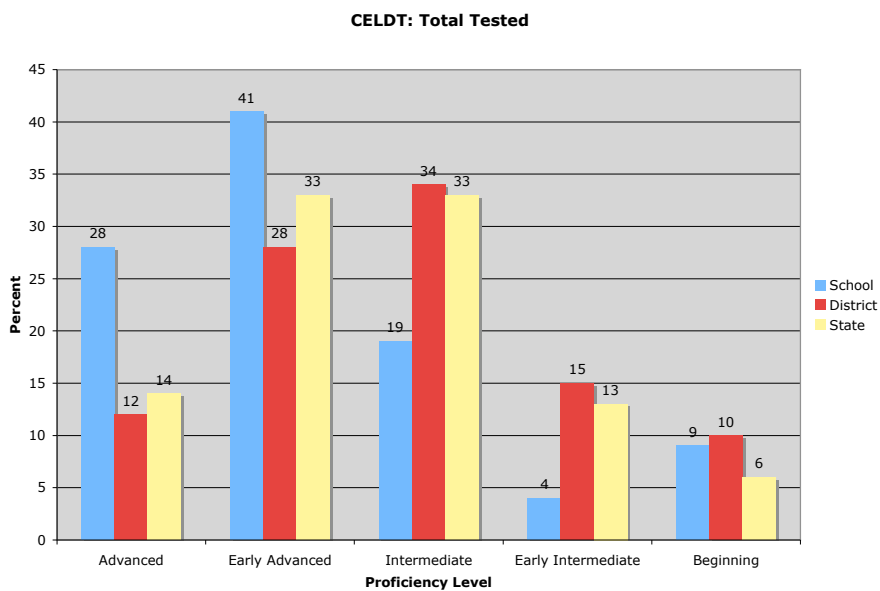
SMS has a higher percentage of Advanced and Early Advanced EL students than the district and state, and a lower percentage of Intermediate, Early Intermediate and Beginning.

Of the 115 English Learner students at SMS, 74% are native Spanish speakers, and 16% are native Pilipino or Tagalog speakers. Arabic and Punjabi both make up 2%, and Urdu, Lao, Mien, Cantonese, French, German and Hindi each make up 1%.

District

The Aurora Valley Unified School District serves the entire Aurora County with 32 schools and 17,408 K-12 students. A recent passed measure will allow the district to build a new high school in Shearwater. Currently, 1,000 Shearwater residents are being bussed to Aurora High School 20 minutes away in Aurora, which has a student population of 2,400. The projected high school student population of Shearwater in 2015 is 2,000; therefore, a new school is necessary.

AVUSD achievement scores are very consistent with the California state averages. The district and state scores for the 2005-2006 California High School Exit Exam are almost identical. Sixty-one percent of students passed in the district as well as the state. The mean score for the district was 362, and the mean score for the state was 363. Test scores across the board seem to be average with the state.

The AVUSD California Standards Tests (CSTs) scores are slightly higher than the state's, with 43% of students scoring at Proficient and above in English Language Arts. Forty percent of the entire state student population scored at Proficient and above.

Preliminary Diagnostic Data

As I explained in my introduction, my students struck me as very disengaged. Because of this, I immediately knew I wanted to focus my research on my Tutorial class,

as they needed the most help and I was at a loss of how to help them. I decided to test my assumptions and analyze student engagement through observational data and survey data. Because this class focuses on low-achieving students, I also decided to analyze how much they knew and how much they didn't know of reading strategies through the collection of reading logs.

Reading Logs

My first data set is a collection of reading log responses spanning September 5, 2006 to September 25, 2006. For the first 25 minutes of class, my students read silently from their personal reading books. After they read, they completed a reading log that asked them to answer one of the following prompts:

- I felt confused when…

- I started to think about…

- I got stuck when…

- The time went quickly because…

- I stopped because…

- I lost track when…

- I figured out that…

- I finally understood…

- I remembered…

- I predicted that…

- I really liked/disliked ___ because…

The purpose of these prompts was to encourage metacognition. These prompts require students to write more than a summary of what they read, as they ask the students what were they *thinking* about as they read. Thinking about reading is an active reading

strategy that helps engage the reader and improve their comprehension skills (Schoenbach et al, 1999).

After seven class sessions I collected all of my students' reading logs. I searched for which prompt they addressed, if they showed proof of thinking about reading, and if they kept their responses on topic.

The following pie chart shows what percentage of student responses were summaries of what they read, had no connection to what they read, or were appropriate metacognitive responses (responses in which the student gave some insight into what they were thinking about while they were reading) to the reading response prompt starters:

Figure 4 – Reading Log Responses
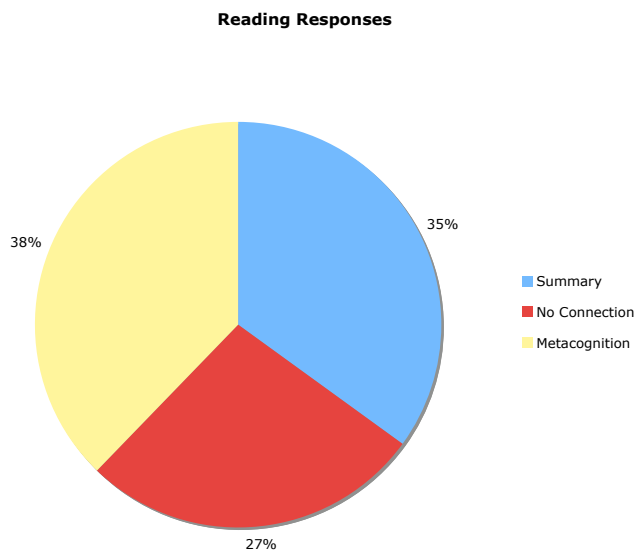
Thirty-eight percent of the student responses were metacognitive. Students were able to write a response that showed awareness of what they were thinking as they read their book. Thirty-five percent wrote only summaries of what they read and did not actively

interact with the text. Twenty-seven percent of the responses were unrelated to the text and were along the lines of "I lost track of time because I was hungry."

After determining how many students wrote an appropriate response, I also needed to determine what types of metacognitive responses were the most common. I organized the different prompts into different types of reading strategies, using P. David Pearson's seven strategies of successful readers as cited in Tovani (2000):

- Use prior knowledge to make sense of text

- Ask questions

- Draw inferences

- Monitor comprehension

- Use "fix-up" strategies

- Determine what is important

- Synthesize Information

Also added to the list of reading strategies are making mental images (Keene and Zimmerman as cited in Tovani, 2000), making predictions, and making a personal reaction or opinion (these strategies are discussed in Schoenbach et al (1999).

Table 3 – Analysis of Entire Class' Log Prompts for Reading Response Strategy Categories with Tallies for Number of Responses in Logs from September 5, 2006 to September 25, 2006.

Synthesize Information	9
• I figured out that…	7
• I finally understood…	2
Make Predictions	13
• I predicted	13
Make Connections/Use prior knowledge	3
• I remembered…	
	3
Ask Questions	6
• I wonder…	1
• Why…	5
Identify Problem Areas/Monitor Comprehension	7
• I got stuck when…	1
• I felt confused when…	6
Make a Personal Reaction/Opinion	11
• I couldn't stop because…	1
• The time went quickly because…	1
• I disliked/liked…	
• I felt…	8
	1

Most students made predictions and made personal reactions. Predictions imply comprehension and are part of the 5th level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Synthesis); so I was surprised to see them used so often. Personal reactions, however, are less complex and do not require much comprehension. While personal reactions do require the reader to pay attention to his or her thought processes, they do not require the reader to synthesize or make sense of his or her thought processes. The least used strategy was making connections/using prior knowledge. Along with predictions, connections are part of the 5th level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Unlike predictions, connections require engagement. As students are unengaged, they are less likely to link the text to their own lives.

The following student sample is from Mark, one of my focus students. All but one of Mark's responses was classified as "No Connection" because he did not use any

textual evidence to support his opinions. He did make one prediction, which does imply

some level of comprehension.

Figure 5 - Student Reading Log Sample – Mark

Each of Mark's responses uses one of the given response starters; however, only

one response (number 2) uses details from what Mark read to support his response. For

example, while in number one he wrote, "I finally understood because I reached the part

when it was getting to the good parts and I was finally enjoying the story and I didn't get

distracted by anything," he did write about what he was thinking while he was reading,

but did not write any specific details about the actual story. This would classify as a "no

connection" response. He did not write what it was that he had read that was good, or

what it was that he had read that made him understand. He needed to go into more detail

to actually use metacognition. Response number two, however, does use metacognition.

He states, "I predicted that Melissa mom gets help and they move to the apartment

building." Here he stated what happened in his head and what happened in the story. This

would be a "metacognitive" response. However, he could have gone into more detail and

said what caused the prediction. This student's data show me that he is lacking some of the higher-level comprehension and analysis skills that higher performing students have. He needs extra help to steer his thinking in the right direction.

For the whole class, this reading log data set shows that there is a general lack of higher-level comprehension skills. When only 38% of the students responded with metacognitive answers, even after being instructed and prompted to do so, there is a strong implication that the general knowledge of reading comprehension strategies is very low.

Survey Data

I gave my students a survey on September 25, 2006, in order to identify their personal opinions of their strengths and weaknesses in Language Arts. I asked their opinions about school, their opinions on reading and writing, where they think their areas of weakness are and what they want to improve upon this year.

The following table is a collection of student responses to the question: What is your favorite class in school? Why?

Table 4 – Favorite Class in School and Reasons Why and tally of Responses

Language Arts	4
• Want to learn more	1
• I get to read	1
• Fun class	1
• Nice teacher	1
Math	6
• Helpful teacher	2
• Good classmates	1
• I'm good at it	1
• Homework in class	1
• Makes me think more	1
Science	7
• Get to move around	1
• Teacher is fun	2
• No reason	2
• I'm good at it	1
• To learn how things work	1

Art	**1**
• Fun and cool	1
PE	**1**
• Like to exercise	1

The majority of my students enjoy math and science. The most common reasons given for liking a class were the teacher and how fun the class is. All of the reasons listed above contribute toward "engagement" of the student. Students are showing engagement in other classes; however, not in Language Arts. It is unlikely that a student would favor a class that he or she is struggling in, as my Tutorial students are in Language Arts.

The following table is a collection of answers to the question "What do you think makes a good reader?"

Table 5 – Responses to "What Do Good Readers Do?" and Tally of Responses

I don't know	**2**
Understanding	**9**
• Can comprehend	1
• Understanding	3
• Can answer questions	1
• Someone who pays attention	4
Practice	**6**
• Reading every day	1
• Trying their best	1
• Reading	1
Having a good book to want to read	**1**
Reading fast	**1**
Someone that reads good	**1**
• At a high level	1
Someone who re-reads	**1**
Think about reading	**1**
Makes predictions	**1**

Most students thought practice and a sense of understanding were what made good readers. Yes, understanding is what makes a good reader, but how does one create

understanding? Understanding reading is not an innate ability. My students must learn

that good readers use reading strategies. They did not seem to know any real reading

strategies that good readers use; however, in Table 6 they were able to list many reading

strategies that they themselves claimed to use.

Table 6 – Responses to "What strategies do you use to help you understand better what you are reading?" and Tallies for Responses

I Don't know	1
Sound out words	2
Ask for help/questions	2
Look in dictionary	1
Stop and think about what you're reading	1
Know what's happening in the story	1
Write what I read/summarize	2
Re-read	4
Trying hard	1
Reading with a friend or mom	1
Visualize	1
None	2
Make predictions	1
Read slowly	1
Whisper when read	1

The strategies in the chart above were all strategies my students came up with on

their own, although I do have a list of strategies good readers use on the wall of my

classroom that includes many of these items. These data indicate that my students are

aware of different types of reading comprehension strategies (even though they did not

state any in Table 5), but their transfer and use of this knowledge did not seem apparent

in their reading logs.

Because very few students gave any specific reading strategies for what good

readers use, as seen in Table 5, it seems that students were unable to understand that good

readers do use reading strategies – good readers do not just have an innate ability to read

well but instead use and practice good reading strategies. These data suggest that my

students do not think they *can* be good readers, because they assume good readers are innately born with the ability to read well.

This next table is a collection of student responses to the question "If I could improve up to three things about myself in Language Arts, I would choose…"

Table 7 – Responses to "What Would You Improve?" and Tallies for Responses

Reading	**17**
• Faster	1
• Understand what I am reading	5
• Read more	1
• Vocabulary	2
Writing	**18**
• Story writing	1
• Grammar	3
• Spelling	3
Grade	**3**
Speech	**2**
Paying attention	**1**
Turn in Homework	**1**
Work Harder	**1**
Similes/Metaphors	**1**

Writing and reading were the most common answers by far. Unfortunately, most students simply wrote "reading" and "writing" and were not specific as to what about these areas were the most challenging or that they wanted to improve the most. These answers imply that my students do not know *how* they can improve (i.e., they do not know reading comprehension strategies that would help them improve).

The following student sample is of my focus student, Mark, whose reading logs are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 6 – Survey Sample - Mark

Side A   Side B

Mark was able to explain why he found certain types of texts difficult to read (#6,

he didn't know how to understand poetry), but was unable to say what he thought made a

good reader (#8). Being aware of reading strategies makes a better reader, and Mark was

unable to write any of the strategies that good readers possess. He was unable to make a

connection between what he wasn't able to do (comprehend) and what a good reader

might be able to do (comprehend). When asked what strategies he used when reading,

he wrote that he whispered to himself when he read (#9). This was not a strategy

presented in class. This student scored himself lower in writing than reading because of

grammar (#12 and #7), and when asked what he wanted to improve he merely stated "reading" and "writing" (#17). Mark's survey is consistent with the rest of the class's surveys and illustrates the entire class's lack of knowledge of reading strategies that make understanding less stressful.

Observational Data

On September 27, 2006, while my students were reading their independent reading books for the first 25 minutes I took time sampling data. I took notes on how each student was behaving from the minute they sat down and every five minutes after until the 25 minutes were up. I was able to observe all of my students because I have a class of only 15 and I noted who needed encouragement to start reading, whom I found not reading at all and whom I found reading intently. I chose this data set to watch how engaged my students were with their reading and to see if there were any correlations with the survey data or achievement data.

Table 8 – Pre-Intervention Observational Data
Before Bell
Peter and Robert begin reading
After Bell
Aaron and Steven chatting Diana fidgets with backpack, stares at cover of book Mark and Claire fidget Todd and Mary ask questions loudly Everyone else is beginning to read
5 minutes
Mark playing with athletic bandage on arm Diana writing book reflection Everyone else is reading
10 minutes

Steven stares straight ahead Diana went to library Lynn and Karen return from library very loudly Everyone else is reading
15 minutes
Todd and Caitlin have heads down (still reading) Steven stares straight ahead Diana staring at desk Everyone else is reading
20 minutes
Todd and Caitlin have heads down (still reading) Claire and Steven both staring at desks Everyone else is reading
25 minutes
Zach and Caitlin have heads down (still reading) Steven tries to focus back on book Diana still at library Everyone else is reading

In the above chart there are 17 instances of a student being disruptive or off-task. These notes show me that the same people were consistently having trouble. The reasons may have been boredom, restlessness or books that were too challenging. This data collection led me to realize that some students whom I had not suspected were having difficulties reading. For example, Steven is very quiet and had not expressed disinterest in his book, so this was a good exercise for me to watch his behavior. On the other hand, I knew Diana and Mark were struggling because they are both in my mainstream Language Arts class and have had difficulty reading in there as well. I found it interesting that so many people needed to be encouraged to begin reading, although they knew it was expected of them every day. This observation shows the reluctance my students have to read in class.

After analyzing these three different data sets (reading logs, survey, and observations), I found some distinct correlations. There was a strong sense of disengagement in both the observational data, as many students were off-task, and in the survey data, as many students expressed a stronger interest in Math and Science. There was also a strong correlation in the lack of strategy use on the reading logs and the lack of strategy knowledge in the survey data. In the reading logs, students were unable to recall their thinking processes, and in the surveys, students were unable to describe what strategies good readers used, although they themselves listed many strategies they personally use. Students assumed that good readers do not need to use the same strategies they, struggling readers, use. While students listed their use of strategies on the survey, their reading logs did not show evidence of their ability to apply these strategies.

This student disengagement, lack of strategy use, and lack of strategy knowledge are what led me to form my research question. As I discussed in the introduction, I decided to meet in conferences with students one-on-one, in hopes that the teacher-student interaction would increase engagement. I decided that at these conferences the student and I would discuss their knowledge and use of reading strategies and together we would set a goal of one strategy that they hope to improve upon.

Research Question, Purpose & Rationale

Because engagement was such a strong concern with my Tutorial class and I knew the *Corrective Reading* workbooks were not going to suffice in engaging my students *or* teaching them transferable reading strategies, I chose to focus my intervention in a way that could engage and teach reading strategies. Seizing an opportunity to take advantage of such a small class size, I considered the effects of one-on-one conferences

as well as individualized goal setting. My research question finally formulated into the following:

What effects do teacher-student conferences, which allow an opportunity for student self-evaluations as readers and individual goal setting for student reading processes, have on the reading comprehension and reading engagement of students placed in a Language Arts Tutorial reading class?

I decided to focus my project on the silent reading portion of my class for two reasons: (1) my students need to become engaged in their personal reading (as evidenced in the preliminary observational data set examined above, in a 25 minute time sample, I noted eleven occurrences of disengagement in reading by the 15 students), and (2) my students do not work well together, so to focus my research on something that is completely independent will benefit them the most. I also chose to focus my project on reading because in the preliminary reading log data that I collected, only 38% of the log responses used metacognitive reading strategies. Although I discussed these strategies with my students, their work did not display understanding of them. As I considered the strategies I would use in my intervention, I considered how I could encourage the implementation of these strategies to improve reading comprehension.

In formulating my research question, I began to wonder what would create engagement in personal reading. My students chose their own books from the selection of Accelerated Reader books, so they are reading genres and topics of their choice, but are still disengaged. I think my students need assistance in using reading strategies; however, all of my students have different needs, as they are reading many different genres and levels of texts, and they have a range of reading levels from grade 2 to grade 7. Therefore, students must create their own goals to reach their own needs.

Madden (as cited in Bogolin, L., Harris, L., & Norris, L, 2003) defines goal setting as "the level of achievement that students establish for themselves to accomplish; whereas, academic expectations is defined as the level of achievement that students must reach in order to satisfy the standard established by the teacher. Unlike academic expectations, goal setting is a target to aim for rather than a standard which must be reached" (p. 35). More than once I have heard my students say that they did not take their standardized tests seriously. They dismiss the required state mandated curriculum as irrelevant to their lives. I like Madden's definition of goal setting because it shows how students may feel increased motivation to accomplish a standard they themselves have created, not the state or their teachers.

As I continued to consider the topic of my intervention I happened across a teacher inquiry study that examined the effects of goal setting on under-achieving students. In their paper, *Increasing Student Engagement through Goal-Setting, Cooperative Learning & Student Choice,* Kimberly Catlin, Germaine Lewan and Barbara Perignon (1999) successfully increased student engagement and ownership of student learning processes. The teachers measured their student engagement, or lack thereof, by looking at the quality of student work, and observing student behavior. To engage their students they implemented a plan that required students to set their own goals and allowed students a choice in learning activities. The results found that students became more engaged as they became more involved in choosing their own learning tasks and therefore completed their academic tasks with more depth than previously. Although this program was not implemented in a Language Arts class and was not meant for struggling students, it reinforces the importance of student engagement. This project affirms the suggestion that student-created goals will increase students' engagement. It seems that

students see their goals as an incentive for improving their learning. I did not create cooperative learning activities in my class as this study did (and as Freeman & Freeman suggest in their four keys for school success for English Learners [2002]); however, I did involve my students in creating goals in hope that they would feel encouraged to complete their assignments with more vigor.

An additional action research project that I found was entitled *Improving Academic Achievement of Underachieving Students in a Heterogeneous Classroom* (1999). Richard Thurman and Kenton Wolfe focused their study on underachieving students, as identified through surveys, test scores and teacher observations. They found that goal setting combined with improved teacher-student contact time had a strong impact on student engagement and responsibility. There is a difference, though, between underachieving students and struggling students. The students in this study were unmotivated, which is why they were characterized as underachieving. However, my students are a combination of unmotivated, disinterested students and students with learning disabilities or who are English Learners. Nonetheless, increased teacher-student contact time could have a profound effect on all of my students. This study suggests that sitting down one-on-one with each of my students to discuss their strengths and weaknesses and to create clear goals for each of their needs will have profound effects.

In order for a student to set his or her own goals, he or she must understand – through self-evaluation – his or her own abilities. In *Teaching Reading in Middle School*, Laura Robb (2000) gives three reasons as to why self-evaluation is important in teaching reading: (1) it increases student self-awareness, enabling students to confront and deal

with learning issues, (2) it develops a deeper understanding on an issue and empowers students to make decisions about their learning, and (3) it enables the teacher to review students' abilities with the students in order to create reasonable goals (p. 260). I hope to use conferences as a way to provide a means to accomplish these three things. Conferences will inform my students of their own reading processes, will allow me to review these processes with my students and provide opportunities to set goals, and hopefully, they will empower my students to achieve these goals.

My hypothesis is that if I meet with my students one-on-one (maximizing the benefits of the small class size), discuss their strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension (which is necessary for silent reading), and create individual goals with each of them that they accomplish within the scheduled timeframe (encouraging student ownership of their learning), students may show increased engagement and may show increased reading test scores. I hope that creating individual attainable goals will encourage my students to become more active in their learning.

Description of Planned Intervention

As I began to detail the process of my intervention, I made the following plans:

I began by scheduling individual conferences with each of my students. At the first conference I discussed the results of the reading assessment and their survey responses. I asked for clarification for any survey answers that were vague, and reviewed their answers for confirmation. I discussed with my students the areas of reading that they are strongest in, and the areas that they are weakest in. Next, we discussed a reasonable goal for the remainder of the trimester, which was planned to be approximately five weeks. Depending on reading level and skills, ideal goals were to read a certain number of books, identify and focus on vocabulary words, or practice summarizing and retelling

what was read. Because each of my students has individual needs (for example, ELD students need instruction in different reading strategies than do native English speakers), each of their goals would be very different. The goals should be aligned with the strategies or processes that students express the most need for and are not limited to a select list of reading strategies. I discussed with my students what areas they think they could improve in seven weeks and we created goals together. When the goals had been set, the student and I discussed the best way to accomplish these goals.

During the intervention, I continued allowing independent reading time and continued observing through time-sampling how engaged my students were. I continued collecting reading logs, as they were a measure of engagement because they gave me insight into what my students were thinking about while they were reading. I collected various assignments from my five focus students to see if they were making any improvements as they worked on their individual goals. I also created a schedule of teacher-student conferences so that I met with each student three times throughout the intervention. In these conferences we discussed student progress by discussing the work they generated so far and perhaps could create further goals. At the fourth and final conference, we discussed the improvement, or lack thereof, from the baseline data to the post-assessment data.

At the end of the intervention I provided a second short narrative for a post-intervention reading assessment. I also gave a post-intervention reading strategy assessment. I compared these two assessments with the baseline assessments, looking for improvements. I also gave my students a post-intervention survey, asking if they were more engaged or excited about reading because they set their own goals. I discussed both the post-intervention reading assessment and the survey with my students in individual

conferences to gauge how effective the goal setting was for their reading comprehension and their reading engagement.

Family-School Connection

   To engage the student's family, I sent the goals home with the students for their parents to read. I cannot assign homework for Tutorial because it is a supplement to my students' regular Language Arts class; therefore, I cannot create specific assignments for the students to complete at home with their parents. However, because my students have reading homework in their regular Language Arts class, I created a letter explaining the support Tutorial offers to their Language Arts class. I asked parents to continue offering this same support at home by discussing with their child the particular strategy the student and I have identified.

Research Plan with Timeline

Table 9 - Timeline

WHAT	HOW	WHEN
Plan for the intervention	*Tasks & Resources*	*Timeline*
Initial conference with each student about results of comprehension tests; strengths, weaknesses and interests in silent reading; use of reading strategies; and the creation of one goal they will independently focus on in six weeks. We will also discuss the ways they will focus on that goal. Second and third conference will discuss work done so far and ways to continue Final conference will discuss results of final comprehension test and a discussion of if students felt they improved.	Conference worksheet	Dec. 4-8 Dec. 11-Jan. 15 Jan. 15-19
Plans to collect data	*Tasks & Resources*	*Timeline*
Student Work/Achievement Data Post-intervention outcome achievement data: 1. Reading process/strategy/engagement assessment 2. Reading comprehension assessment	Using WestEd format, create post assessment	Jan. 17-19

	Find short passage and create comprehension questions	
Attitude Data		
Engagement Survey		
Focus Student Interview		
Post-intervention outcome attitude data:		
Engagement Survey		
In-the-Midst Process Data		
Observational data:		
Time-sampling		
Conference data	Take time-sampling data every week	Every week
Student work:		
Collect focus student goal-oriented work		
	Collect reading logs and strategy work	Every week
Plans to analyze the data	*Tasks & Resources*	*Timeline*
Achievement data:	Compare with pre-assessment	Jan. 19
post assessment reading strategy		
Reading comprehension assessment		
	Create spreadsheet	Dec. 11 – Jan. 15
Observational data throughout intervention:		
track who is improving/staying the same		
	Compile results	Jan. 19
Attitude data: Survey		
Conference data – In the midst	Compare conference notes after each conference	Each week

Pre-Intervention Baseline Data

I began my intervention with a reading assessment to discuss with students during

the first teacher-student conference. For the assessment, I provided a short narrative to

each student to read silently. I explained to my students that this assessment would

provide me with information about their strengths and needs as readers. I provided them

with pens and highlighters and allowed them to write on the texts. After they finished

reading the passage, I gave them a writing reflection response sheet, which asked them

about which strategies they used and when. As I assessed my students' responses, I

noted their areas of strength and weakness, based on their note taking on the text itself

and on their written responses. This assessment informed me of their reading processes and engagement. I have cross-examined the data I collected from this assessment with their pre-intervention survey data, a Likert scale attitudinal survey, and their strategy use on my second collection of reading logs, used for my baseline data, to determine students' areas of strength and weakness. I used all of these data to begin my individual student conferences.

As a second piece of baseline data, I gave my students a short text with open-ended comprehension questions that would test only their comprehension. This assessment was used to only monitor comprehension progress from the beginning of the intervention to the end.

As a final piece of baseline data, I took time-sampling data for a second time, and continued to do so throughout the intervention, to monitor student engagement.

Data Set #1 - Reading Strategy Assessment

I used two reading assessments created by The Strategic Literacy Initiative that were adapted from *Mosaic of Thought* by Keene & Zimmerman (1997) to create my baseline reading assessments. The first assessment involved a student read aloud and interview questions. The second involved students silently reading and responding with a written reflection. I adapted both of these assessments to create my own reading strategy assessment for my students.

On November 20, 2006 I gave all 15 of my students a non-fiction passage, "Left and Right Brain Power" with a 7th grade reading level and asked a series of questions about what strategies they used as they read. As I mentioned in my intervention plan, I compared this assessment with student's pre-intervention attitude survey, a Likert scale

attitudinal survey, and a second collection of reading logs to find correlations and identify strengths and weaknesses of each student.

To analyze these data I did the following:

1. Created a list of each student and his/her responses on the pre-assessment

2. Categorized each response as a specific reading strategy

3. Reorganized the list to see which strategies are most often used and which students are using them.

Figure 7 is a simple illustration of the reading strategies that were used by my students:

Figure 7 – Baseline Reading Strategy Assessment

Pre-Assessment Strategy Use
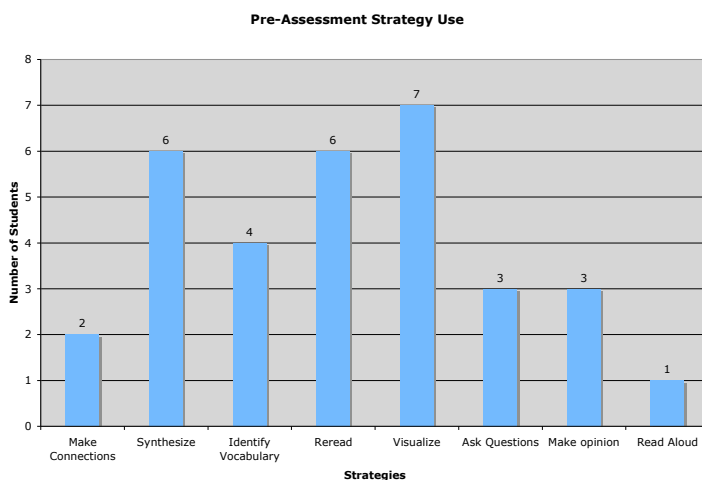
In this particular assessment, students reported seven instances of making a visualization, which was the most used strategy. The worksheet asked if they made a mental picture, and most responded that they visualized a brain. In my other three collections of student strategy use (reading logs and survey data) only one student mentioned creating a mental image. This is why it is important to analyze all three pieces of data to determine student strategy use. Visualization was used so often in this instance because a brain has such a recognizable image.

The second most commonly used strategies, with six indications each, are "synthesizing the information to form a main idea" and "re-reading." "Re-reading" is well represented in the other data sets of reading strategies and is overall one of the most used strategies. "Synthesizing the information for a main idea" was not used in the reading logs, but was mentioned often in the surveys. The absence of synthesizing in logs is likely because the books my students are reading for their logs are fiction, and people tend not to search for main ideas while reading fiction. Synthesis is a higher-level reading process, so I was a bit surprised to see that so many students were able to determine the main idea of this passage.

The strategy used the least, with only one student use, was "Read Aloud." Mark, one of my focal students, often reads aloud to himself and he finds this useful. On his initial survey when asked, "What strategies do you use?" he said that he whispered to himself.

The other strategy that was not used much, with only two student indications, was "Make connections." This finding is consistent with the pre-intervention reading logs, as connections and use of prior knowledge were the least used strategy for them also. Again, forming connections requires engagement, and as students continue to be disengaged, they will not be able to connect literature to their own lives or prior knowledge.

The following student sample illustrates the variety and type of responses received for this data collection.

Figure 8 – Student Sample of Reading Strategy Assessment - Mary

Assessment Side A   Assessment Side B

You can see on side 1 that this student highlighted words she did not understand and in answer to the question, "What kind of things were happening in your mind as you read?" she said, "The words I highlighted… what did they mean." I categorized this answer as vocabulary because it was obvious that she was paying attention to difficult vocabulary words. Additionally, on Side 1 she said she reread the passage to understand it better. Vocabulary and rereading were common strategies I saw being used.

On Side 2, she proves that she understands the main subject of the text, which is "that different parts of your brain works different ways," but she still circled the "Didn't understand" option for how well she understood the text. I think this is because of the unknown vocabulary words. In both question 3 and 4, she expressed her frustration in not knowing the difficult words. My initial reaction to this assessment was that this student

could benefit from learning good vocabulary strategies that will help her move past unknown vocabulary and still be able to understand the text. To understand this student's processes further I needed to look at her survey and her reading logs and discuss each with her in the initial conference.

Question 10 asked, "When you were reading this text did you make any pictures or images in your head?" and this student responded, "How does a brain look like when it's in your head working while your alive." This was a typical response from most students. Imagining a picture of a brain seemed to help them understand the text.

Data Set #2 – Reading Logs

I collected a second set of reading logs dating from October 20th – 30th. I changed the reading log format to ask two things: (1) summarize what you read and (2) what were you thinking as you were reading? I changed the format of the reading log because I wanted to make it clear to the students that all of their writing responses were not meant to be summaries. On this log, they must write a summary and then write about their metacognitive responses. Writing a summary will also refresh their memory of what they read and what they were thinking about as they read. In analyzing the data, I focused on question #2.

The purpose of these logs was to compare each students' strategy use on their reading logs with their strategy assessment and their personal assessment of strategy use. These three data sets were used to assist me in my conferences with each individual student. I analyzed these reading logs for individual student strategy use and created a table compiling all of the strategies. In Figure 9, the left column contains a scanned student sample (Mark, the same student represented in Figures 5 and 6) and the right

column contains each of Mark's metacognitive responses transcribed and categorized

under what type of reading strategy it is.

**Figure 9 – Student Sample Reading Log (left), and Transcription of Metacognitive Responses
Categorized by Strategy (right) – Collected October 20, 2006 – October 30, 2006**

Personal Reaction:
1. How this man has to fight for his freedom against the people how they know and live near. Which was dumb but they had to fight for there freedom so they could have good life.

Personal Reaction:
2. About this family is blaming there farther just because they moved to Michigan. They left Birmingham, Alabama where there rasises every you go and know there mad at him.

Question:
3. Why was he laughing when some kid made fun of his other friend those are the only good friends he got.

Connection:
4. A little because Bryon the oldest get's in trouble a lot and I'm the oldest and I get in trouble a lot to.

I categorized each of Mark's responses as personal reaction, question and

connection. I showed him these data in our conference and asked him if he thought these

were strategies he used often. He agreed that these were strategies he used, although as I

discuss later in my intervention, Mark, along with most other students, was hesitant to

provide me with any further input in our conferences. I was happy to see Mark making

these comments because on the pre-intervention reading log (Figure 5) only one of his

four responses was metacognitive. Responding first by summarizing, then by writing the

metacognitive response, makes the task more understandable to my students.

Figure 10 – Reading Log Strategy Use for the Whole Class, October 20, 2006 – October 30, 2006
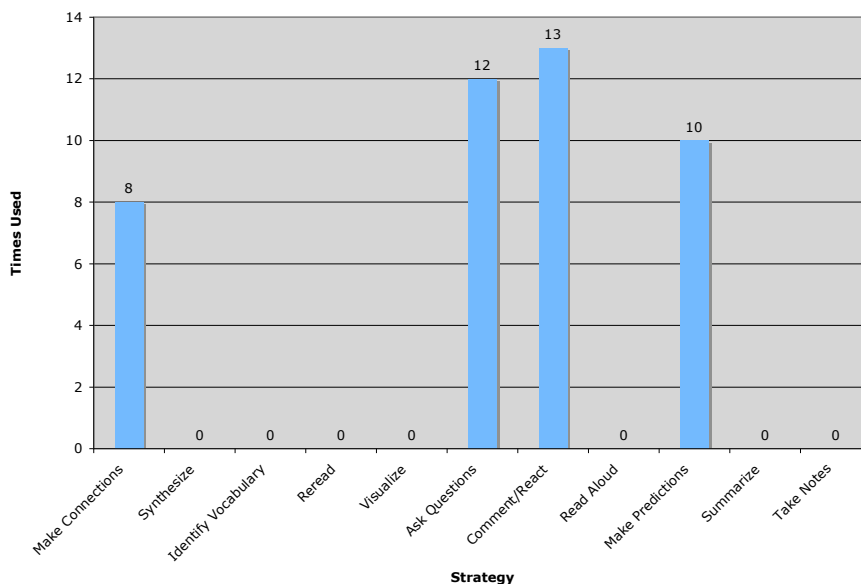
For the class as a whole, the only strategies used on the reading logs with this new format were connections (6 uses), questions (12 uses), personal comments or reactions (13 uses) and predictions (10 uses). Predictions and personal reactions were commonly used on the pre-intervention reading logs; however, questions and connections were used far more this time than last. No one used any synthesizing strategies and no one identified areas of confusion, as they did in the pre-intervention reading logs. These differences are likely because the reading logs were presented differently. For the pre-intervention reading logs, I gave students a list of prompts to choose to respond to. For the second reading log, I did not give my students this list, because I was hoping for more original and open-ended responses. Instead, I prompted them by instructing them to write about what they were thinking, if they made any questions, what they were wondering and if they had any opinions. Because of this, on the second reading log students tended to ask questions and give their opinions instead of forming their own thoughts completely on their own.

Data Set #3 – Self-Assessment Survey

Because I gave my initial survey two months ago (September 27, 2006), I decided

to give another survey to find out if my students had any new thoughts on their usage of

reading strategies. On November 20, 2006, I gave a Likert scale survey selected from

Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996) that

asked students to choose if they often used a strategy, or almost never used a strategy.

Figure 11 – Self-Assessment of Reading Strategies
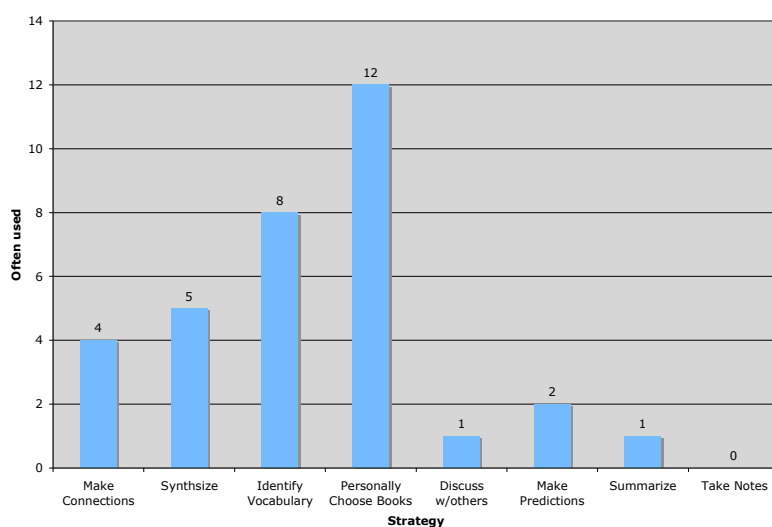
The above chart reflects the strategies students said they used often. Students said

they choose their own books most often (12 indications). Choosing books is a tool to

engage the student, so it was good to see that they acknowledged this strategy. The

second most commonly used strategy was identifying vocabulary (8 indications). This

number is interesting because my students do not comment on the vocabulary in their

own personal reading books, although they did focus on vocabulary in the non-fiction

reading passage used for the strategy assessment. Perhaps, they tend to focus more on

vocabulary when they are reading for information rather than enjoyment. Summarizing (1

indication) and taking notes (no indication) were said to be used the least. These are two

strategies that require not only comprehension (Level 2 of Bloom's Taxonomy), but they take more time to complete, as summarizing requires stopping to recall information and taking notes actually requires a pencil and paper. I think my students do not like to stop while they are reading. They are more interested in making it to the end. The sample that follows is from Mark's self-assessment.

Figure 12 – Self-Assessment Student Sample – Mark

Transcription of Checked Boxes:

1. Sometimes
2. Almost Never
3. Sometimes
4. Almost Never
5. Sometimes
6. Almost Never
7. Almost Never
8. Almost Never
9. Often
10. Almost Never

Mark checked "often" only for strategy #9: "I choose books from the library on my own." This survey is consistent with his initial survey, in which he stated that he did not know what good readers did and only said he "read aloud" as a strategy he used (*see Figure 6)*. His pre-intervention reading log reflected this lack of knowledge (*see Figure 5)*; however, his baseline reading log reflected his knowledge of making connections, which was one of the strategies that he listed in the "Sometimes" column. He also made predictions on his reading log; however, on this survey he stated that he "Almost Never"

made predictions. For each of my focus students I compared all of these data to determine

on what strategies my students should formulate their goals.

The following chart places each data set side by side to compare the strategies

used in each.

Figure 13 – Reading Strategies Used in 4 Pre-Assessments
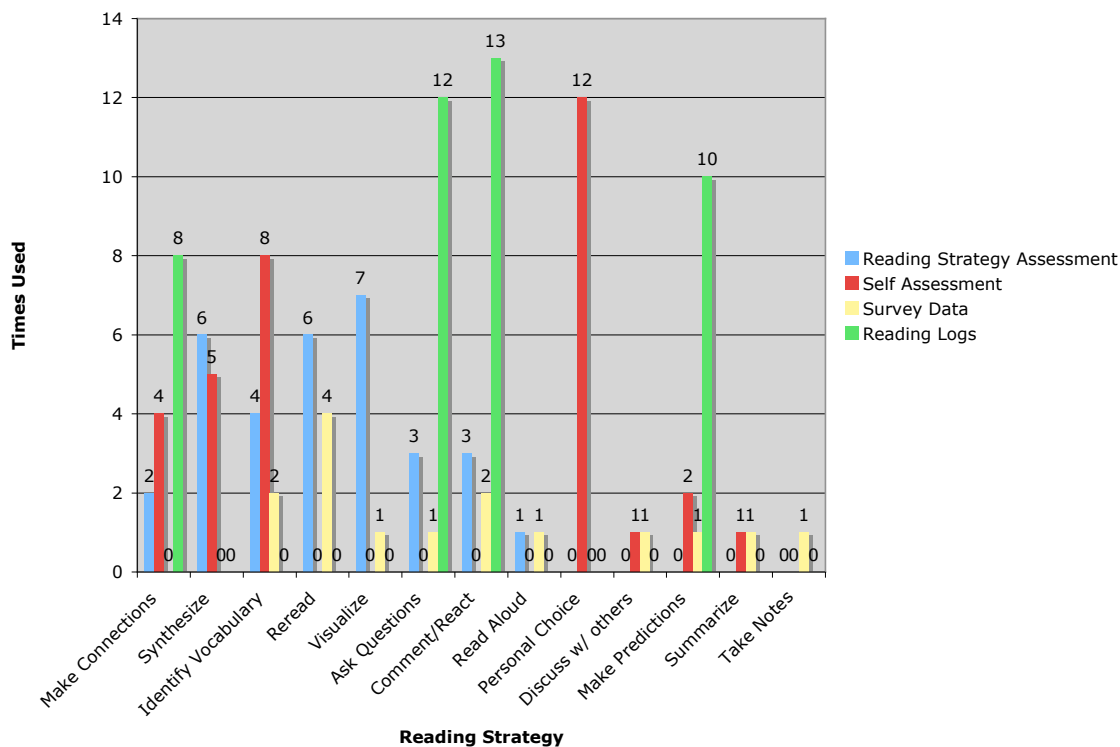
This chart does not show any consistency of reading strategy use from assessment

to assessment. It does show that students are repeatedly using the same strategies on their

reading logs. On the reading strategy assessment I prompted my students' responses,

which is why that data set is more evenly spread across the chart. The first survey given

showed very little strategy use. Again, I did not offer any prompters on that survey. The

second survey did offer prompters, and I received more positive responses, especially for

making connections, synthesizing and identifying vocabulary. I hope that at the end of

this intervention, I will see an increased number of all of these strategies.

Data Set #4 - Reading Comprehension Assessment

I gave two reading comprehension assessments. The first I gave on November 27, 2006, and allowed students to use the text as they answered the questions. I quickly realized that this was not testing comprehension, but was testing students' ability to find answers within the text. I gave the second assessment on December 5, 2006, and did not allow them to look at the text while answering the questions. This second assessment I found to be a more accurate test of their comprehension.

For the reading assessment, I gave a short narrative entitled "Back to School" and allowed students to use highlighters however they wanted on the text. I told them to read the text as many times as they wanted until they were ready for the questions. I gave five comprehension questions: 4 open-ended and one multiple choice. Figure 14 represents the score distribution of this assessment. See Appendix D for complete assessment.

Figure 14 – Reading Comprehension Assessment Scores from November, 27, 2006, Assessment
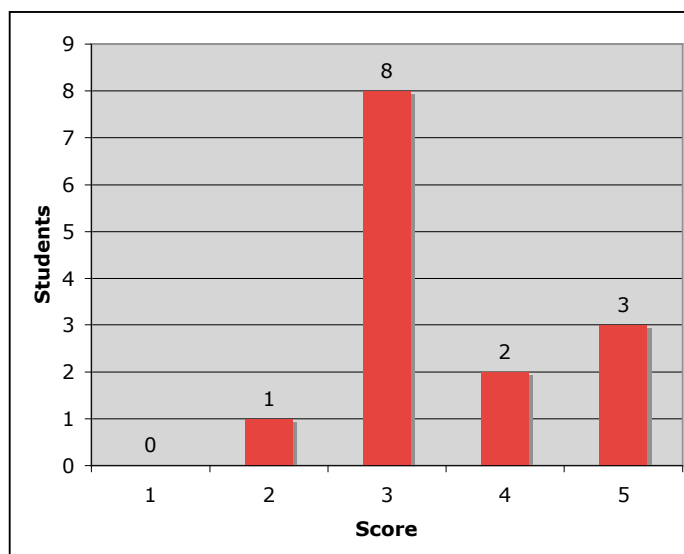
Eight of the fourteen students who took the assessment scored 70%. Three students scored a 5, two scored a 4 and one scored a 2. Figure 15 is a student sample from

the comprehension assessment. The most commonly missed response was question 1, as seen in the sample.

Figure 15 – Reading Comprehension Student Sample

Question 1 asks, "How does the author describe how her body is reacting to her uneasiness about returning to school?" Most students were unable to recall her description of anxiety and butterflies in her stomach. This student's answer, "That she doesn't want to go because she can't be herself and she feels something has changed," does not recall the physical pain the author felt. Interestingly enough, most students were able to understand the message of this text, which was to "be yourself." The moral of the story was an answer many students put for questions that were not asking for it. I found that my students were able to understand the overall meaning of a text, but were unable to recall small details. I hope that their basic comprehension will improve after the intervention.

Data Set #5 – Observational Data

On November 29, 2006, I took time-sampling data for the second time to use as baseline data. Students have new books and new reading logs, as discussed above. Again, I took time-sampling data of student behavior for 25 minutes during independent reading. I noticed that there was a strong correlation between signs of student stress and disengagement during silent reading and lack of reading strategies in their reading assessments and in their attitudinal surveys.

Table 10 – Baseline Time-Sampling Data, November 29, 2006. Focus students are highlighted.

10:56 – First Minute
Summer & Mary whisper to each other
Aaron has head on desk with no book
Mary begins making clucking noises
Claire is looking in bag for something
Summer is looking down at desk
Diana & Zach ask to go to the library
Mary is quiet, but staring directly in front of her
11:00 – 4 minutes
I discover that Mark does not have a book
Aaron still does not have a book out, takes one out but does not read
Summer asks to use the restroom
Claire still looking in bag
11:04 – 8 minutes
Mark found a book on the bookshelf
Claire found a book on the bookshelf (could not find book in her bag)
Aaron resting his head on his book
Todd whispers to Caitlin about something in his book
Summer returns from restroom & begins to talk to Todd and Caitlin
11:09 – 13 minutes
Mark not reading his book
Aaron not reading his book
Claire biting her nails
Todd whispers to Caitlin again
11:12 – 16 minutes
Karen asks to take AR quiz
Mary is staring at wall
Mark and Aaron *still* not reading
11:15 – 19 minutes
Todd begins reading Language Arts textbook that is on the desk
Peter begins playing with his water bottle
Mark and Aaron *still* not reading
Mary looking out window
11:20 – 24 minutes
Diana and Zach return from library
Diana and Summer begin talking, distracting Claire who was finally reading
Todd and Mark go to the library

This data set shows me that the students who are disengaged are repeatedly

represented in this table. For example, from looking at this table I can see that Mark and

Aaron *never* read the entire 25 minutes. Claire took a very long time to find something to

read before actually reading, which tells me that she is reluctant to begin. Because Todd stopped reading his book and then began reading the textbook, I can assume that he was disengaged with his reading as well. Diana and Zach spent the entire reading time in the library and came back just in time for the next activity, as if they intended to stay away the entire time. Mary and Peter also seemed to be a bit disengaged because I occasionally saw their eyes wander from their books. Ten of my fifteen students are represented on this table – eight of which show signs of disengagement. I hope that when my students begin working on individual reading strategies, they will become more engaged with their reading. Of my focus students, Mark's, Diana's and Zach's names were highlighted repeatedly. Their being off-task or disruptive during silent reading time correlates with their lower reading comprehension score. Both Paul and Robert scored a 5 on their reading assessment, and they were both reading the entire designated reading time.

This observational data set has shown me that my students would really benefit from having a specific strategy to work on during silent reading. They need a goal in mind and need a specific skill to work on to maintain their focus and determination to improve. Right now, they find reading to be boring and tedious and are not looking for ways to improve.

The pre-intervention reading strategy data, the attitudinal data, the comprehension data and the observational data all show me a level of frustration within my students. They find reading difficult and do not know how to make it manageable. The reading strategy data showed me that they are aware of some strategies when prompted (for example I asked, "What questions did you ask?" instead of, "What strategies did you use?"). I think that keeping them consistently aware of their use of reading strategies will make it easier for them to use them in the future. However, many students still said

"none" in response to my questions about strategy use. Other students found the text difficult to read because they lacked the prior knowledge or did not understand the vocabulary. These students could use instruction in how to access prior knowledge or how to tackle difficult vocabulary.

The attitudinal survey data showed that my students are basically apathetic toward reading and find reading difficult. I think they do not like reading and give up on it because it is difficult. They do not know how to make understanding of their reading through the use of reading strategies.

Finally, the observational data showed me how many of my students find reading to be painful. Many of them found other options to escape reading. I sympathize with them. If they do not know how to understand their reading, then what good is it to read? All of these data sets indicate that these students really need instruction in reading strategies.

Intervention

My intervention consisted of four teacher-student conferences, three collections of observational data, and the weekly collection of student reading logs from December 8, 2006, to January 22, 2007. My class met every other day, and each day began with silent reading. All of my students were using the same reading logs (those shown in my preliminary data in Figure 9) prior to the intervention. At the first conference with each student, we discussed the benefits of goal setting on academic success and set a reading strategy goal for him or her to focus on. I adapted each students' reading logs for his or her particular strategy. Each students' goal would be to practice and internalize a reading strategy. At each follow-up conference, I collected my students' reading logs, and

together we discussed their progress. I always held my conferences during silent

reading time, so that students would be working independently as they awaited

their conference. On the days that I did not conference with anyone, I observed

the class and collected time-sampling data, watching for number of times

students were off task. A timeline which overviews the intervention is in the

table below, and my detailed description of the intervention follows.

Table 10 - Intervention Timeline	
Student Conferences	12/8/06 1/10/07 1/17/07 1/23/07
Time Sampling Observational Data	12/11/06 1/8/07 1/16/07
Student reading logs collected each week	12/8/06 – 1/22/07

Reading Strategies

Before I begin my detailed description of the events that occurred during

my intervention, I need to explain how I determined which strategies students

should use and how I created specific reading logs for each strategy as well as

how I conducted the reading conferences. I used the following texts as reading

strategy resources for these two processes:

1) *Reading for Understanding* by Ruth Schoenbach and Cynthia Greenleaf

   (1999) – This text fully details metacognition and the importance of

   thinking about thinking. As I met with my students I was sure to explain

   to them *why* we were discussing what we were discussing, and I

encouraged them to examine their thought processes while they were reading. Students had not had much practice considering what was occurring in their head while reading, and I needed to probe them with questions such as, "Do you think you ask questions?" or "Do you make a mental picture of the story while you are reading?" As time progressed, students were able to tell me which strategies they were using.

2) *I Read it, But I Don't Get it* by Cris Tovani (2000) – This is a book written for middle school reading teachers. This book does a great job distinguishing between the text and the reader. While reading, the reader sees and comprehends the words, but also has a conversation with the text. This conversation includes questions, connections, and inferences. While this seems obvious to a teacher, students find it difficult to distinguish between the two. When asked to write a response to the text they are reading, many students simply write a summary. They must be able to summarize what they read *as well as* write about what they were thinking while reading. This text offers many strategies for encouraging student awareness of their thought processes while reading. Among the strategies I used, were templates for questioning and responding, templates for making inferences, and templates for making connections and visualizations

3) *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2000) – This is a text with detailed instructions in how to plan lessons using each reading strategy. Individual sections on questioning, making connections, visualizing, inferring, determining importance and synthesizing assisted me in providing detailed descriptions of how students use each of these

strategies. I used this text in combination with what I learned in *I Read it, But I Don't Get it* to create individualized reading logs.

First Conference

I began my intervention on December 8, 2006, by holding an initial conference with each of my students. I began by telling the class my purpose, which was to create and discuss individual goals for reading comprehension as each student has different needs for improvement. I met with each student in the back corner of the room, while the rest of the class was reading toward the front of the room. We talked quietly as to not distract the class, and to ensure that students were not worried about their classmates listening to our conversations. The conferences usually lasted ten minutes, and entailed a discussion of the reading strategies I observed each student use in his or her reading logs, baseline strategy assessment data and self-assessment surveys. I showed each of these assessments (see Conference Form, Figure 16) to each student so they could see for themselves how I analyzed each assignment. I then gave them an opportunity to tell me if they thought any strategies were missing or if they had any questions. In most cases, there were no additions; however, Zach and Mary both added strategies they thought they used to the list. The reason I began with a discussion of what strategies my students already were using was to show their strengths and to give them encouragement that they were already doing something right and they could still improve. Although most of my students did not seem to react either positively or negatively, I hoped they would be impressed that I had noted they were already asking questions, predicting, visualizing, or making connections.

I next asked each student what he or she thought made a good reader. This was an open-ended question on their initial survey; however, I wanted to ask it again in person because it had been some time since the first survey and I wanted to see if they had anything to add. On the initial survey, many of their answers did not include real reading strategies, but instead mentioned "practice, understanding, and trying hard," which are not specific reading strategies (See Table 5). At our first conference, students were more likely to mention real reading strategies, such as re-reading, predicting and visualizing. I will talk about this in more depth in my discussion section; but I do think it is important to note that my students not only already have an increased awareness of reading strategies, but they are also starting to realize that good readers practice these strategies just as much as poor readers trying to improve. As I moved through the conference I mentally noted if a student mentioned they thought good readers used strategies that they did *not* use themselves. If they did, I would suggest they choose that strategy to focus their reading logs on, so that they *could* become a good reader.

My third question was "What do you think is the most difficult part about reading for you?" The purpose of this question was to also help determine a good reading strategy to work on. For example, if a student said understanding difficult words was the hardest part about reading, then he or she could focus on vocabulary strategies. If a student said remembering what I read was the most difficult part, he or she could focus on note-taking.

My final question was "What reading strategy will be most useful for you to improve your reading?" In most cases I suggested a strategy, keeping in mind each students' answers to the above questions, but in a couple cases the student

knew what he or she wanted to focus on. For example, Mary wanted to focus on asking questions because she knew she did not ask any questions in her reading log, and she thought good readers must ask questions. All of the students' chosen strategies were based on their answers to questions two and three above.

After I completed the first conference with each student, I found that many of my students had similar strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension and many of them chose to focus on the same reading strategy. The strategy distributions are as follows:

Table 11 – Students' Goal Strategies

Reading Strategy	Student
Vocabulary	Paul Robert Lynn Zach
Note-Taking/Chunking	Mark Steven Peter Summer Aaron Diana
Spelling	Karen
Questioning	Todd Mary
Inference	Caitlin
Summarizing	Claire

Most students found understanding and remembering the text most difficult, so many of them chose note-taking as their strategy of choice. Interestingly, Mark, Steven, Aaron, and Diana are my lowest achieving students and they all found difficulty in understanding what they were reading. Knowledge and Comprehension are the two lowest levels of the Bloom's Taxonomy, so it makes sense that these students found understanding most difficult.

As I continue to discuss my intervention, I will provide student samples from dand discuss in-depth the conferences of two of my focus students, Diana and Zach. Zach and Diana are representative of the trends of the entire class, as Diana's strategy focuses on note-taking and Zach's strategy focuses on vocabulary, the second most popular reading strategy. At the end of this intervention discussion I will examine my other three focus students, Mark, Robert and Paul. Below are Zach's and Diana's conference forms from our first conference, in which we discussed their use of reading strategies.

Figure 16 – Conference #1 Forms

Zach   **Diana**

Zach's and Diana's conferences were very different. Zach is outspoken and talkative regardless of the situation, while Diana is outspoken in front of her peers but very reserved with only me. I have had behavior problems with both of these students – with Zach, I have trouble settling him down, and with Diana, her negative attitude has inhibited a relationship between the two of us. I have noticed a change in Diana recently, and I think she is trying to improve. In Language Arts class, each of my students anonymously completed the statement, "I wish…" and she wrote (because I recognized her handwriting), "I wish I had a better attitude." Although, her behavior has improved, we still did not have a positive relationship with each other, which is one of the reasons why I think her conference did not go very well.

To begin, Zach and I discussed his use of strategies, which include questioning, prediction, identifying difficult vocabulary and reading slowly. His

response to "What do you think makes a good reader?" was "someone who knows what words mean, someone who focuses, and who reads slowly." I asked him what he thought would help a person focus and he said, "they read what they like." His response to my next question, "What do you think is the most difficult part about reading for you?" was "reading assigned books because I can't focus and they're boring." These answers led us into a discussion of the book he is currently reading, which he enjoys because of the action, gang violence and teenage characters. My concern with his book was that it was at a too low reading level. I asked him if he found the book difficult at all and he said no. I then discovered the book was a 3.6 reading level and he tested at a 6.0 reading level. We then agreed that I would help him find a more challenging book that he would enjoy, and he would focus his reading log on developing vocabulary. I felt as though the conference went successfully and I wish I had caught his book selection earlier in the year.

Figure 17 – My reflection after my conference with Zach
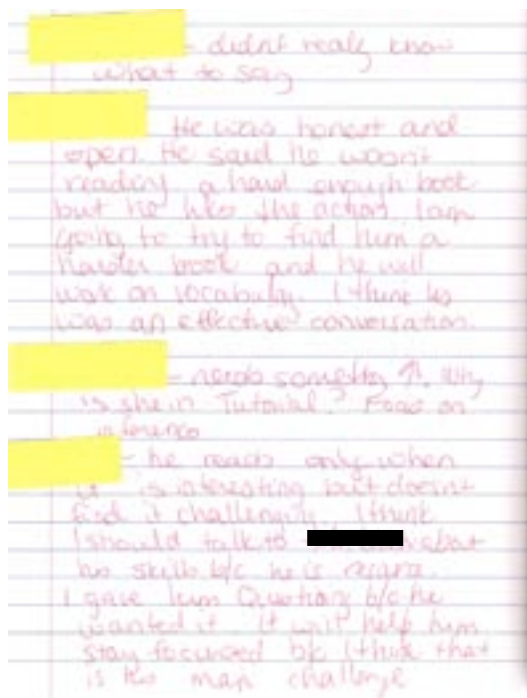
"He was honest and open. He said he wasn't reading a hard enough book but he likes the action. I am going to try to find him a harder book and he will work on vocabulary. I think his was an effective conversation."

My conference with Diana was much shorter. We discussed her reading use of strategies, which were not many. She did not use any strategies on her reading log, nor did she suggest she used any on her self-assessment. She did, however, search for the main idea and gave personal reactions on the pre-intervention assessment. I asked her if there were any strategies she thought she used that she wanted to add, and she said "Re-read." When I asked her what she thought made a good reader, she said "practice." I do not think Diana is aware of many reading strategies, even though we have discussed them thoroughly in class. For some reason she is not retaining that knowledge and I thought that perhaps it might be related to her answer to the next question. When I asked, "What do you think is the most difficult part about reading for you?" she responded, "understanding and remembering." Perhaps Diana's inability to comprehend well extends beyond reading, and she has difficulty listening and paying attention as well. She was unable to think of a response to the final

question, "What reading strategy will be most useful for you to improve your reading?" so I suggested note-taking because she was having difficulty recalling important information. With this strategy, instead of writing a response to her reading after the allotted reading time, she would take notes of important information as she read. She seemed to respond positively to this suggestion.

As I described with Diana, I found some students very reluctant to give any answers in these initial conferences. I believe this reluctance is because these students do not have much confidence in themselves as readers and do not have much experience in working one-on-one with teachers. These students do not think they can improve and are hesitant to work with a teacher who would really like to see them improve. It did help each student to see in their first conference that they are already practicing some good reader strategies, and they can actively try to work on new ones; and I also think it has helped them to realize that good readers must practice these strategies as well (making becoming a good reader more tangible); however, I don't think they have had this much personalized attention before and are reluctant to assume that it will have any benefit. They are already in the eighth grade and are enrolled in a Language Arts support class; these are low-level students with low self-confidence, and any interventions that they may have been a part of before likely did not work.

Because I did not discuss the idea of goal-setting with my students in our first conferences, I felt that I needed to back up a bit and use our second conferences to discuss any history they have had with setting goals or working one-on-one with teachers.

Second Conference

At my second conference, January 10, I discussed with each student his or her personal history in goal-setting and working with teachers and his or her completed first round of new reading logs. I did not create a conference form for these conferences because I wanted the conversation to flow naturally.

I began my conference with Diana asking if she had ever set goals in school before. She said she had not. I asked her what a good general goal could be for her this year and she said to have a better attitude. She has already lost enough disciplinary merits to prevent her from walking at the eighth grade graduation and has a behavior contract with the school principal. She is also being considered for eighth grade retention. I agreed that working on attitude would be a good idea for her, and then I asked if she had any goals for Language Arts. She said her goal was to raise her grade. I reminded her of our conversation at our previous conference in which we decided she would focus on note-taking to improve her comprehension. She agreed that this strategy might help her bring up her grades by becoming a better reader. She was more talkative than the last conference, but she still looked uncomfortable to be talking to me. Diana's continual negative attitude and her actions towards her friends (I often overhear her telling her friend, Summer, that her book is stupid or her artwork is ugly) strike me as signs of low confidence. I imagine this low confidence combined with teacher conferences that single her out cause her to feel very awkward. I asked her if she had ever talked to a teacher about her individual work before. She said, "not really," but did not elaborate. We then moved on to review her new reading log, as seen in the figure below.

Figure 18 - Diana's Reading Log Discussed at Conference #2 1/10/07

Language Arts Tutorial Reading Log

Reading Strategy: *Note-taking*

As you read, stop every two pages to write the *most important details* or *main idea* of what you just read. Use the chart below to organize your responses:

Text Title: <u>Charlie and the Chocolate factory</u>

Page # 6

Response
I just read how charlie is very poor and never gets to buy choloculate because thic co Door, and How 7 people live in thic flouce in as only two rooms.

Page # 8

Response
I just read about How charlie gocc in tic room everyday in hear store from thic 4 old grand parents and te fall aslpep with them and they cometime... forget their poor because they so Happy

---

Page # 23

Response
I Read about How Mr. wonka is giving away 5 goiden tickets. and the 1st one Has been found by augusta Bloop.

Page # 38

Response
To day I read that thic weather soon got cold in the family had nothing to keep them warm and no food to eat because charlies dad went out of work.

After you have completed reading for the day, write a brief description of what you were thinking about while you were reading (likes/dislikes, confusions, predictions, opinions, etc.) below: I like this book because its really good and it gives more details more than a Movie and its realy Magical.

My original directions for this log was to stop every two pages and write the most important details of what was just read. After the first day, I decided that two pages were too few because students were reading very low level books that they could read quickly, so I told each student to stop every four pages. On this particular log, Diana stopped to respond on pages 6, 8, 23, and 38. I asked

Diana if she forgot the directions and if she was only writing once each day she read. She said, "yes." I reminded her that the purpose of this log was to take notes *while* reading, not after. Once she finished reading for the day, she was to write a metacognitive response about what she was thinking while she read. On this log she wrote, "I like this book because its really good and it gives more details more than a movie and its really magical." I told Diana that this was a good response, but she should explain what in particular makes it magical and good for her. We ended our conversation setting particular goals for the next week, which were to focus on the quality and depth of her reading responses. Below is a transcription of my post-conference notes about Diana:

"Diana continuously seems to be faking or trying to do things the easy way. I do not think she has been completing her logs correctly and is just summarizing once each day as she finishes reading, instead of taking notes. Perhaps it's a communication issue. Maybe next week she will have more completed. She doesn't seem to have a history of teachers giving her special attention, and I really think she is struggling and has been left behind for a long time. It's almost as if her attitude is a defense, so teachers wont want to help her."

My second conference with Zach began the same way as with Diana. I asked him if he ever created goals before, and he said he had recently met with the PE teacher and they created a behavior contract together, much like Diana's. I asked if he has set academic goals, and he said no. He also said he had never discussed his individual abilities with teachers before, but he was less reluctant to speak with me than Diana. Zach is generally outgoing and friendly, strikes me as having strong self-confidence, and he did not seem put off by my attention.

Zach's reading log focused on vocabulary, as seen below.

Figure 19 - Zach's Reading Log Discussed at Conference #2 – 1/10/07

I had given Zach a vocabulary log and had instructed him to write down

any words he came across as he read that he did not know. The scan above is of

the first log he gave me. He was required to write the word, the page number,

the sentence copied from the book, a synonym, and a visual. In the above log,

Zach found only two unknown words in 76 pages of reading. I asked to see his

book and saw that he was still reading the low level book as before. I felt guilty

for not finding him a new book yet, so I accepted his log and we again agreed we

would work on finding a more difficult book for next time. My post-conference

notes with Zach are transcribed below:

"Although Zach hasn't set academic goals before, he seems more
interested in the idea than Diana was. Or at least he is more willing to try to
work with me. He asked me to sit next to him instead of him coming to my
designated conference area. This seems to me like he is a little uncomfortable
entering "my world". But Zach is talkative and doesn't outwardly look awkward

at all. He is still reading Drive By. I meant to talk to Mrs. B about finding a new book, but I didn't. Hopefully he will get a new book soon."

Third Conference

My third conference with each student began January 17, 2007. I used this conference to touch base with each student regarding the progress of their reading log strategies and if they thought working on these strategies was helping them improve their reading. My main focus was to discuss the following question: Do you think working on your strategy is making you a better reader?

When I sat down with Diana and asked to see her reading log, I was surprised when she pulled it out and showed me the reading log I made for the students working on the Questioning strategy. When I asked where she got this log, she said Mary gave it to her. When I asked *why* she had this reading log, she said she lost her other one and decided to use this one because she wanted to ask questions instead of take notes. I asked Diana *why* she wanted to change strategies and she said she didn't like stopping to summarize while she was reading. I acquiesced to this request because I noted that she was paying attention to her reading and was consciously making decisions about her note-taking. Perhaps the entire purpose of this intervention is not to focus on one reading strategy but to document and communicate about the process of becoming aware of how they are reading, using discussions with me as a check points. Diana's log follows:

Figure 20 – Diana's Reading Log

Language Arts Tutorial Reading Log

Reading Strategy: *Questioning*

As you read, use the chart below to write down questions as they come to mind. Write the
questions in the left column and write predictions or possible answers to your questions
in the right column.

Title of book: _The Chicken Pox Panic_

Question	Response
Why would abby not want to get the Chicken Pox?	Maybe because she is scared.
Why is she scared of them...	She might think that hurt...
When is her birthday is it --?	maybe its aug. or earlier
Why doe Stacey have to make a family tree?	Because its a school project.
If she dont have school then why could she do the work if she's not there?	She does the work even if she's not there to keep her grade from going down.
Why does Stacey want to go back to school.	Because she's bored at home... and there's nothing to do.

In this log, Diana asked three questions each day she read. In the left column she wrote her question about her reading, and in the right column she wrote a response to the question in the form of her own opinion. For example, her first question reads "Why would Abby not want to get the Chicken Pox?" and her response is "Maybe because she is scared." Her second question continues this thought with "Why is she scared of them?" and her response is "She might think they hurt." While these questions and responses don't seem to be very analytical, I think that just asking surface level questions is helpful for Diana because her challenges still lie in basic comprehension.

After reviewing the log with her, I asked if she thought the questions were helping her understand her reading better. She said, "I guess they help me slow down and remember everything." I asked if she thought talking with me was helping her understand her reading better, and she said, "I don't really get why you want to talk about it." I said that just as writing things down was helping her, that talking about it should help her as well. Even if I do not offer any insight into her book, as I have not read it, the simple act of talking it out with someone should help her remember and understand. She only nodded in response, so I asked if that made sense. She responded, "I guess." Because I can't seem to get much out of Diana, this response seemed sufficient enough for me. Below are my post-conference notes with Diana:

"Diana switched to questioning. Probably because Mary is doing questioning and it looks like less work. I don't really know. Her questions didn't seem very thorough, but she is doing a little more than just summarizing now. I told her it was good that she was asking "Why" questions, but they were still surface level "Why" questions. Overall, I think she is doing well, but she still doesn't understand why we are having teacher-student conferences. Didn't I explain this well enough? She is SO reluctant to talk to me."

At my third conference with Zach, I was happy to see he found a new reading book and he completed the entire vocabulary reading log. He didn't know the reading level of the book, but he thought it was a little harder. His reading log is in the figure below.

Figure 21 – Zach's conference #3 Reading Log

Language Arts Tutorial Reading Log

Reading Strategy: *Vocabulary*

As you read, use the chart below to write down vocabulary words that are unfamiliar to you. Keep a dictionary next to you so that y
can look the words up as you read your book.

Title of book: _____

Word	Page #	Sentence copied from book	Synonym	Visual
struggle	22	He struggled behind. Thinking.		
farewell	23	"Way farewell Wiglaf" said the next morning at dawn.		
vulture	24			
tunic	84			
scorch	69		to burn on the surface	

I complemented Zach on completing the entire log, and together we
reviewed words. I wondered if he really knew what these words meant, such as
"farewell," but he said he had never heard it before. He said he liked looking in
the dictionary and finding definitions because he felt like he wasn't missing out
on anything in the book anymore. I suggested that next time he try to create
synonyms for the words instead of only writing definitions, because synonyms
would help him understand the context of the word in the text.

After we finished discussing his log, I asked Zach if he thought his
reading was improving. He reiterated that the logs were helping him catch
everything he would normally skip over. I asked if he thought talking with me
about them was helpful, and he said, "No, because all I need to do is look in the

dictionary." I asked if he understood *why* I was talking to him, and he said it was so I could keep track of his work. I responded that yes, that was partly true, but I was also there to remind him of his goal, compliment him of his progress, and in doing that, keep him engaged and motivated. Below are my post-conference notes with Zach:

"Zach seems to be doing well. He finished his log. He likes doing his log. And he found a better, more challenging book. He doesn't seem to understand why we have having conferences, but he still doesn't seem to dislike the conferences. I think he just accepts it as another tool a teacher uses."

Final Conference

My final conference with each student began January 23, 2007. I did not collect reading logs, but used these conferences as interviews to readdress the issue of goal-setting and discuss the following questions:

(1) Do you think it has helped to talk to me about your reading over the past few weeks?

(2) Do you think your reading has improved since the beginning of the year?

(3) Do you think you have met your goal of acquiring a new reading strategy?

(4) Has working on this one reading strategy helped you to focus better on your reading?

I have summed up the responses of all of my students in the following table:

Table 12 – Final Conference Responses

Student	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Mark*	Yes, it's helped me understand better	Yes	Yes, I'm a better note taker	I know what to write in my logs
Paul*	Yes, it's helped me to talk about it	Yes, I've never read this much before	Yes, I can focus on vocabulary	It's easier
Mary	No, I don't really know why you did that	Yes	I know how to ask questions	No, I could do more than ask questions

Todd	No, I talk to my other teacher	No	No	It makes more sense
Lynn	Yes	Yes	No, because I don't think I did a good job	Yes
Zach*	Yes, you help make it make sense	Yes	Yes, I can use the dictionary	It's more fun
Peter	No	Yes	Yes I know my strategy	Yes, because I know what to look for
Steven	Yes, it makes sense	No	Yes, I understand a little better when I write things down	Yes, because I know what to write in my log
Claire	Yes	Yes	I think I'm better at it	I don't know
Diana*	You helped me understand how to focus	Yes	Yes, I know more about what I can do to understand better	No, because I didn't like taking notes
Summer	Yes	Yes, I read more now	Yes	Yes, it was easy
Robert*	It was good to talk to you alone	No	I think I can look up more words	I liked it better because I got to focus on reading instead of writing
Caitlin	Yes, I understand how to take better notes	Yes	I know what inferencing means	Yes, because I learned about my thoughts
Karen	Yes, because you explain things	Yes	No, because none of my books have hard words	I don't think I learned much
Aaron	No	I don't read as much as I used to	I don't think they've helped me	No, I just like to read. That's it.

* focus student

Question 1: Do you think it has helped to talk to me about your reading over the past few weeks?

Eleven of the fifteen students (73%) said, yes, it has helped to talk to me. I think what helped the most was having an opportunity to vocalize what they were thinking while they were reading. While I could not discuss the books they were reading with them because I had not read them, I could ask probing questions, such as "What made you think that?" These sorts of probing questions helped students make sense of what they were reading even though I could not explain it to them.

Question 2: Do you think your reading has improved since the beginning of the year?

Eleven of the fifteen students (73%) think their reading has improved. Perhaps this is because they have been paying more attention to their reading this year than in past years. Aaron said he does not read as much as he used to. Aaron does not like to stop while he is reading and take notes. Aaron does not understand the purpose of reading strategies and only reads when he is truly interested in the material. Aaron has been difficult to work with all year because he is so selective when he reads. Sometimes he refuses to read even when faced with consequences, and sometimes he won't stop reading, even when he is supposed to be doing something else.

Question 3: Do you think you have met your goal of acquiring a new reading strategy?

Eleven of the fifteen students (73%) gave some sort of positive answer, whether is was "yes" or "I know how to ask questions." I think that because they have spent so much time on *one* strategy and have discussed that strategy and its importance with me, they really feel as though they have learned how to use that one strategy while reading.

Question 4: Has working with one reading strategy helped you focus on your reading better?

Ten of the fifteen students (67%) responded positively to this question. Usually when faced with only one task, students can complete their work more easily. When given a multitude of tasks, their work can become overwhelming. This seemed to be the reason why most students responded positively to this question. Some students thought they could do more than their one strategy, and some wanted to do more; but others liked that they only needed to focus on one area in their responses, so they knew what to think about while they were reading, and they knew exactly what to write down. Many students also did not

understand the purpose of reading logs. To have a more direct approach to the logs, and to be able to talk about them, seemed to make a lot more sense to many students.

Observational Data

Throughout my intervention, I continued to take time-sampling notes of my students while they were silent reading. I took these notes on days I did not conference with any students. I have three sets of time-sampling data from the following dates: December 11, 2006; January 8, 2007; and January 16, 2007. All three sets are shown below and my focus students are highlighted in each set.

Table 13 – Time Sampling Observational data – 12/11/06
10:56 – Tardy bell rings
==Zach== and Todd out of seat Mary asks if she can sit in purple chair Aaron playing with zipper on backpack ==Diana== and Summer chatting about book
10:58 – 2 minutes
Caitlin asks to go to library ==Robert== asks to go to bathroom Aaron has head rested on book Steven staring at front of room
11:03 – 7 minutes
Aaron still has head down Steven and Peter whisper to each other ==Diana== grabbed Summer's book from her Todd flapping book like a fan in his face ==Mark== stopped reading, is staring at the wall
11:08 – 12 minutes
==Mark== still staring at the wall Aaron still has his head down (I've already tried to get him up once) Steven is still not reading
11:13 – 17 minutes
Steven, ==Mark== and Aaron still not reading Caitlin came back from library and distracted Zach, who distracted entire class by making a joke about how long she was gone
11:18 – 22 minutes
==Mark== is back reading his book Steven is staring at the wall ==Diana== asked to go to the library ==Zach== is whispering to Caitlin
11:21 – 25 minutes

Everyone is reading except Steven and Aaron
Total Times Off Task: 26

Table 14 – Time Sampling Observational data – 1/8/07
10:56 – Tardy bell rings
Todd complains about having to read again
Paul, Peter, Steven, Claire, Robert, Caitlin, and Karen all begin reading right away
Zach is out of seat looking in backpack
Summer and Diana talking
Aaron not doing anything
11:01 – 5 minutes
Summer, Diana, Zach and Todd begin reading
Steven not looking at book
Claire is searching through backpack
Aaron not doing anything
11:06 – 10 minutes
Claire took reading log out of backpack and is writing on it
Steven is not reading
Mark has stopped reading
Aaron took out book!
11:11 – 15 minutes
Diana points at something in book to Summer
Zach asks to take AR quiz
Aaron is actually reading (Maximum Ride)
Steven and Mark not reading
Karen asks to go to bathroom
11:16 – 20 minutes
Steven and Mark not reading (not doing anything)
Claire still writing
Todd begins talking to Zach when he returns to his seat
11:21 – 25 minutes
Everyone reading except Steven
Total Times Off Task: 17

Table 15 – Time Sampling Observational data – 1/16/07
10:56 – Tardy bell rings
Karen and Lynn ask to go to library
Mark asks to take AR quiz
Zach and Todd making fun of each other (Todd laughed at Zach's book)
Diana and Summer talking
Aaron has book on desk but not reading
Everyone else begins reading
11:01 – 5 minutes
Diana and Summer still talking (Already warned once)
Aaron not reading
Peter playing with pencil on desk

11:06 – 10 minutes
Diana is digging through her backpack (very slowly)
Aaron still not reading
Mark completes quiz and asks to go to library
Todd and Caitlin whisper
Mary asks to sit in the back
11:11 – 15 minutes
Aaron decides to begin reading
Diana still not reading, she found a pencil and is drawing on her bookmark
Peter and Steven are passing a note
Karen and Lynn return, show books to Claire
11:16 – 20 minutes
Diana has started reading
Steven not reading (note was confiscated)
Robert asks to go to bathroom
Todd has head on desk
11:21 – 25 minutes
Everyone reading except Mark, who returned empty-handed from library, and Steven, who is staring at the wall
Total Times Off Task: 21

As seen in the three above charts, time off task decreased only slightly throughout the intervention. There were still many disruptions and students off task. Although students knew that at the beginning of class, they would be reading silently, they still made it difficult every single day. There was often commotion between Todd and Zach, two very loud boys, who would argue with each other to arouse a reaction from the class. Diana and Summer were also two girls who were very difficult to get started reading every day. They enjoy their books, as evidenced when they talk about their books to each other, but they enjoy chatting even more. Robert, Paul, Peter, Caitlin, Karen and Lynn were the students who always began reading right away without argument. It is apparent from my observational notes that the same students are consistently off task: Zach, Todd, Diana and Summer talk most often; and Steven and Aaron read least often. Steven and Aaron are two very low level students (CSTs scores are 1 and 2 respectively; Revel Levels are between 4th and 5th grade), which may be a reason

why they do not want to read in class; and Zach, Todd, Diana, and Summer are four very social teenagers who love to talk and joke around. The rest of the class does include low-performing and social students; however, I think the rest of the class is more motivated to improve than these six students.

Family-School Connection

My attempt to connect my students and their families was not successful. I wrote a letter to each of my students' parents (See Appendix D) introducing them to my intervention. I informed them that I would be talking with each of my students individually to set a plan for the next two months of independent reading. I wrote that each student would identify and select a reading strategy to focus on based upon what they think good readers need to do in order to read well and based upon what their areas of strength and weaknesses are. The ultimate goal was for each student to become a better reader and to have a higher confidence of their reading. I asked each parent to discuss with their child what reading strategies they use when they read at home, whether they read books, newspapers, magazines, or manuals. I created an interview worksheet for each student to bring back to class once they had this discussion with their parents, because I wanted my students to see that even adults use reading strategies in their daily lives. Unfortunately, not a single student returned the assignment. Tutorial is meant to be a no homework class, so I think my students did not take the assignment seriously, and many of my students' parents do not speak English well, so it was difficult to communicate the assignment.

Focus Students

I have already described in depth the intervention process of two of my focus students, Zach and Diana, but I want to briefly discuss the progress of the other three focus students:

Mark – When I first sat down with Mark we discussed his strengths: making connections, asking questions and making personal reactions. I asked if there were any other strategies he thought he used and he said no. On his strategy assessment, Mark looked for the main idea, read aloud, and visualized. On his self-assessment, Mark said he whispered to himself and sometimes re-read. When I asked him what he thought made a good reader, he said he didn't know. After some probing, he suggested that a good reader re-reads, reads slowly, and writes down any questions he or she has. To Mark, the most difficult part of reading is remembering what he has read and staying focused. This is obvious in my observational data, when I often found Mark looking around the room, eyes avoiding his book. I also have Mark in my Language Arts class, and he consistently needs to be redirected to continue his work because he often becomes unfocused. I suggested to Mark that he work on taking notes and chunking the text; this way he can stay focused. Despite his academic weaknesses, Mark is a social and good-natured person. Whenever we met, he responded positively. Mark is a student who I thought would really benefit from this one-on-one attention and an isolated reading strategy because of his inability to focus. I enjoy talking to Mark, and I thought he would respond better to this direct approach. Mark responded positively to all of the questions asked at the final conference; stating that talking to me has helped him understand what he is

reading, he is a better note-taker, and he now knows what he should write on his reading logs.

Paul – Paul is an English Language Learner who excels in math, but is very far behind in Language Arts. He is in ELD level 2, the lowest in the class, and has a 2nd grade reading level. Paul was another student I thought could really benefit from the one-on-one attention and isolated reading activities. His strengths shown on his reading logs were asking questions, making connections, and forming reactions. On his strategy assessment, he looked for the main idea, used prior knowledge, and asked questions. On his self-assessment he said he used prior knowledge, re-read and looked for the main idea. In our first conference, he reiterated that he re-read most often. When asked what he thought made a good reader, he said someone who asks questions and makes connections – both strategies which he uses and knows he uses. When asked what he thought was most difficult about reading, he said understanding vocabulary words. Even in his 3rd grade level Accelerated Reader books, he struggled with vocabulary. When I asked if there was a strategy he wanted to focus on, he knew he wanted to work on his vocabulary. At each meeting Paul and I discussed the words he found, and he said it was helping him with his overall comprehension. He liked being able to use the dictionary and not have to focus on the other reading strategies that I was asking him to do at the beginning of the year. All of Paul's responses to the final conference questions were positive, as he said it helped to talk about his vocabulary words, he has never read this much before, he likes to be able to focus on vocabulary alone, and it is easier to focus with just one strategy. Paul strikes me as a student who knows his areas of weaknesses and

knows what he needs to do to improve. He is highly intelligent and motivated, so I am happy that this intervention helped him take charge of his reading.

Robert – Robert is the student who did not need to be in Tutorial based on academics. He is an unmotivated student who did not see the point in taking tests, so he did not take the CST seriously last year and scored low because of that. When I ask for oral responses in class, Robert is always able to answer my question and he enjoys reading books that are not in the Accelerated Reader system. Although Robert is not in my Language Arts class and each teacher has different guidelines for using Accelerated Reader, I did not require Robert to read an AR book if he found a different one that interested him. Based on observations and conferences, Robert seemed to enjoy reading. I often found him reading Stephen King and Michael Crighton. When I asked him what he found most difficult about reading, he said, "nothing." This is what led to our conversation about standardized testing and motivation. I asked him why he had a D in his Language Arts class and he said it was because he did not do the homework. I tried to engage him in a conversation about the personal importance of success in school, but he did not give much of a response on his side. I then turned the conversation back to reading strategies, and we decided that he would focus on vocabulary because his comprehension was good, but there were some words in these more difficult books that he did not know. Throughout the intervention he seemed to be pleased that I not only refrained from asking him to do anything he didn't want to do, but I also acknowledged the fact that he was smart and tried to find ways for him to improve at his own level because he was higher than the rest of the class. In our final conference, when I asked if he thought talking to me alone was helpful, he said he thought it

was good that I was paying attention to him alone. Unfortunately, he did not think his reading has improved over the past year because he already thought of himself as a pretty good reader. He said he didn't like writing as much, so he enjoyed having the time to read on his own.

Outcome Data

Once I completed all of my conferences and collected data from my final conference interviews, I began collected outcome data. I gave my students a post-assessment survey (which was the same survey as the baseline survey), a reading strategy assessment, and a reading comprehension assessment. Both assessments were exactly the same as the first except with a different reading passage for each.

Data Set #1 – Self-Assessment Survey

On January 23, 2007, I gave my students a post-intervention survey. The survey was almost exactly the same as the preliminary survey, except I did not ask as many questions about writing, as this intervention was about reading. In analyzing this data, I looked specifically at their personal rating of themselves as readers, what strategies they think they use the most, and what goals they would like to set for themselves. Because this intervention focused on individual goal setting, I hoped that my students have become more comfortable in creating goals for themselves.

I created a table that compared student responses from pre- to post-intervention survey data. I typed up all of the student responses for the 3 questions I was interested in:

(1) How do you rate yourself as a reader?

(2) What makes a good reader?, and

(3) What reading strategies do you use?

I then highlighted the cells in different colors according to positive change, negative change, or no change. I determined the degree of change by the following: (1) if students' self-assessment score increased or decreased, (2) if students displayed a greater understanding of good reader strategies, and (3) if students listed more or fewer reading strategies that they use themselves.

Table 16 - Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Survey Data
Pink – Positive Change; Yellow – No Change; Blue – negative change; Green – Change, neither positive or negative
* focus student

	How do you rate yourself (scale of 1-10) as a reader? Why?		What makes a good reader?		What strategies do you use?	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Caitlin	5, because sometimes I'm good at reading, sometimes I'm not	5, because I'm not fond of reading	Having a good book to read so you would want to read	Having a good idea of what you're reading	Know what's happening in the story	Think over what I just read, ask questions.
Summer	7, because I'm good, but sometimes I struggle	8, because I can struggle at some points.	Reading everyday	Practice reading every day.	Asking questions and write what I read	Take notes.
Karen	5, because I could read good but not hard books	8, because I could read well but I get stuck sometimes	I don't know	I don't know	I don't know	Visualize, make connections, re-read
Lynn	7, I need help with hard words	6, because some words are hard to read but I try my best.	Trying their best	By practicing a lot	Trying my best and pronouncing words	Try my best to read
Steven	5, because I'm an okay reader	5, because I'm an okay reader	Someone who understands what they're reading	Picturing, taking notes	Re-read, make a picture	Make a picture in my head of what's going on in the book
Peter	6, because I am not good at reading	8	A good reader has to understand what he reads and will be able to answer and questions	Someone who understands what they read and asks for help when needed	I write a summary	Understanding what I'm reading
Zach*	7	5, I'm not good at it. Only books I like.	Some who can read at a high level and someone who rereads what they read	Someone who reads something they don't understand twice	When I predict what is going to happen	Reading something twice
Mark*	6, because I'm kind of a slow reader and if its like a poem and it rhymes I don't get it	8, I read pretty fast if I like the book I can understand it pretty well	I don't know	I read very fluently	I kind of whisper when I read	I don't use strategies
Claire	7, because I read kind of	7, because I read kind	Practice and practice	Practicing reading	Stop and think about	Stop and think about what

It was important to see the pre and post data sets right next to each other. It was very interesting to see that some students wrote the same exact answer on both surveys, some students improved across the board, some students improved in some areas and some students did not improve at all. I later compared these survey findings with my conference data, to see if there is a relationship between improvement in self-assessment and willingness to discuss reading skills and set goals with me one-on-one in conferences.

For the first question, five of the 13 students surveyed gave themselves a higher rating in reading: Summer, Karen, Peter, Mark, and Diana. Karen increased her score by three points, Diana, Peter and Mark by two points, and Summer by one point. One of the most dramatic changes was Mark, who rated himself a six on the pre-intervention survey because he was a slow reader, and rated him as an eight on the post-intervention survey because he is now a fast reader! Five of the 13 students gave themselves the same rating, and three of the 13 students gave themselves a lower rating: Lynn, Zach, and Mary. Lynn and Mary only decreased by one point, and Zach decreased by two points.

For the second question, all of the students except Mary either increased their knowledge of what good readers do, or gave the same answer as to what good readers do. Seven out of the 13 students surveyed gave the same answer in the pre- and post-intervention surveys. Five of the thirteen students gave an answer on the post-intervention survey that showed their knowledge of good reading strategies had increased, as they gave a more thorough response with real reading strategies. Only Mary's response implied that her knowledge of reading strategies had decreased. On the pre-intervention survey, she stated that

good readers made predictions and thought about what they were reading, and on the post-intervention survey, she stated that good readers visualized what they read. I marked this as a negative change because instead of writing two strategies, she wrote only one. Perhaps her idea of what a good reader does changed throughout the intervention. As for the strategies she thought she used herself, she wrote that she re-read on both surveys.

For the third question, three students wrote that they use more strategies now than before. Karen and Diana both improved from saying they did not know what they used, to stating specific strategies. Five of the 13 students wrote the same exact strategies on both surveys, and three students decreased in their knowledge of how they read. On her pre-intervention survey, Summer said she asked questions and wrote down what she read. On her post intervention survey, she said she only took notes. Perhaps she has realized that this is what she does most now, as taking notes is what she focused on during this intervention. Steven said he re-reads and made a mental picture before the intervention, and after only said that he made a mental picture. Peter changed his response from writing a summary to understanding what he was reading. Summarizing is a real reading strategy, while merely understanding what he is reading is not a strategy; therefore his answers were marked as a negative change. Finally, Mark wrote on his post-intervention survey that he did not use any strategies, even though his self-rating increased from 6 to 8 and he said he was a fluent reader. Interestingly, Zach's idea of the strategies he used changed from making predictions to re-reading. Although Zach's selected reading strategy for the intervention was to build vocabulary skills, perhaps after he looked up the meaning of a word, he went back and re-read the passage

containing the word. Zach's shift in reading strategy usage is not necessarily a positive or a negative change because he may have realized after the intervention that he was not doing what he thought he was doing and he was re-reading more often than other times. This shift shows that Zach has been paying attention to his own strategies and is aware of his thought processes.

The student who had the most profound change was my focus student Diana, who improved across the board. Her self-assessment as a reader increased two points (even though she stated that she still does not like reading), her knowledge of good reading strategies has improved and her knowledge of her own reading strategies has improved. At the beginning of the year, she did not know any reading strategies and did not show that she used any. Now, not only has her self-perception as a reader improved, she has opened up in discussions with me, and I have found her deeply engaged in her reading books, even asking to borrow one of my personal books over her vacation. I do not think Diana would have requested this book from me before I attempted to engage her in the conferences. After I have discussed each of my outcome data sets, I will compare Diana's achievement data with her attitude data (Table 22).

The following student sample is of my focus student Mark. Mark's survey results were promising but also strange. His attitude towards himself as a reader changed dramatically, from thinking he was a poor reader to thinking he was a good reader; however, he still did not list knowledge or use of any reading strategies. Later (In Table 22), I will compare these data with his post-intervention strategy use data.

Figure 22 - Post-Intervention Student Survey Sample – 1/23/07

Name: _____   Language Arts Tutorial Reading/Writing Survey

1. What is your favorite class in school? Why?

PE you can never get board.

2. What do you want to do after you graduate high school?

Go to collge

3. Do you like reading...

a. Newspapers?	Yes/No
b. Magazines?	Yes/No
c. Novels?	Yes/No
d. Websites?	Yes/No
e. Poems?	Yes/No
f. Reference Books?	Yes/No
g. Inspirational Books?	Yes/No
h. Essays?	Yes/No
i. Plays?	Yes/No
j. History Books?	Yes/No
k. Comics?	Yes/No
l. Biographies?	Yes/No
m. Email?	Yes/No
n. Text-messages?	Yes/No

4. Which of the above types of reading is the most difficult for you? Why?

Poems I just don't understand them that well.

5. I would rate myself as a ___8___ on a scale of 1-10 as a reader. Why?

I read pretty fast If I like the book I can understo pretty well.

6. What do you think makes a good reader?

I read very fluently

7. What strategies do you use to help you understand better what you are reading?

I don't use strageist.

As I mentioned above, Mark's self-assessment changed dramatically.

Question 5 asks, "I would rate myself as a _____ on a scale of 1-10 as a reader.

Why?" Mark responded, "8, I read pretty fast if I like the book I can understand

pretty well." This showed a two-point increase from his initial survey, in which

he gave himself a six and said he was a slow reader.

Question 6 asks, "What do you think makes a good reader?" I am a little

confused by Mark's answer: "I read very fluently." Mark obviously thinks his

reading has improved but still does not show signs of knowing any reading strategies in his survey. This inability to specify reading strategies is apparent in question 7, which asks, "What strategies do you use to help you understand better what you are reading?" Mark responded with "I don't use strategies." I do not understand why Mark still is unaware of his reading strategies, as we have discussed them together. In our conferences we have discussed re-reading, note taking and writing down questions. Even at our final conference he felt as though he had gained a few learning strategies. It is interesting that when asked on his survey about what he thought good readers did, he wrote about himself. I think he really does think of himself now as a good reader. The strategies we have discussed together and as a class have encouraged Mark to "take charge" of his reading; and although he does not think he uses strategies, he does, and he feels more confident in himself as a reader.

As my research question asks about student engagement and self-evaluation as readers, these are positive results. Five of the 13 surveyed students have improved in their images of themselves as readers and are more aware of strategies they use, whether these strategies were what we discussed together or not. I was surprised by some of the responses, especially those by Mark and Zach, but I think both of them are now more aware of themselves as readers, whether they realize it or not. I think this self-awareness is due to our conversations together and my urging about the importance of paying attention to what is happening in our minds as we read.

In the following chart, I have compiled my students' self-assessment scores for both the baseline and outcome surveys. A score of 1 is the lowest self-assessment score and a 10 is the highest.

Table 17 – Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Self-Assessment Scores

Pre- Self-Assessment Score		Post- Self-Assessment Score	
Score	**Number of Students**	**Score**	**Number of Students**
5	3	5	3
6	3	6	2
7	8	7	2
8	0	8	6
9	1	NA	2

On the post-intervention survey, students scored themselves higher in self-assessment. On the pre-intervention survey, most students scored themselves a seven, and on the post-intervention survey, most students scored themselves an eight. The lowest score on both surveys was a five, and three students scored themselves a five on both surveys.

In the following chart, I have compiled my students' answers to the question, "What strategies do good readers use?" in order to determine if after the intervention, students have a greater knowledge of good reader strategies.

Table 18 – Pre- and Post-Intervention comparisons of student survey responses to "what strategies do good readers use?"

Pre-Intervention Good Reader Strategies	
Reading what interests you	1
Practice	4
Trying your best	1
Understanding	2
Re-reads	1
Predict	1
Think about reading	1
Reads	1
Don't know	2

Post-Intervention Good Reader Strategies	
Understanding	3
Practice	3
Visualizing	3
Takes notes	1
Asks for help	1
Re-reads	3
Reads fluently	1
Don't know	1
Enjoys reading	1

The data in Figure 18 is best discussed along with the data that results from my students' responses to the question "What strategies do you use?" The following chart is a compilation of pre- and post-intervention answers to this survey question.

Table 19 - Pre- and Post-Intervention comparisons of student survey responses to "what strategies do you use?"

Pre-Intervention Strategies I Use	
Understanding	1
Ask Questions	2
Take notes	1
Try my best	1
Re-reads	4
Visualize	1
Summarize	1
Predict	1
Don't know	1
Whisper to self	1
Stop and think	1
Read slowly	1
Use dictionary	1
Nothing	1

Post-Intervention Strategies I Use	
Stop and think	2
Ask Questions	1
Take notes	1
Visualize	2
Make Connections	1
Re-read	6
Try my best	1
Understanding	1
Don't use strategies	1

In analyzing Tables 18 and 19, one sees that students' knowledge of good readers strategies greatly increased. While students did not state many good reader strategies, they claimed to use many of them. In Table 19, 12 good reader strategies were listed on the pre-intervention survey, and 17 good reader strategies were listed on the post-intervention survey. When asked which strategies they used, they were more likely to say they used the same strategies they thought good readers used. As I concluded after I analyzed the pre-intervention survey data, students seemed to think that good readers did not need to use reading strategies because they were good readers. Now students

seem to realize that good readers do, in fact, use these strategies, and they too can become good readers by practicing the same strategies.

I think the reason for the change in student self-assessment scores and strategy use is the knowledge that good readers must practice good reading strategies. Becoming a good reader seems more tangible to my students because they know that all readers must practice at becoming a good reader. Before they seemed to be self-defeating, and now they believe they can practice the same strategies as good readers and can improve. I think this knowledge that they can improve has caused my students to believe they are better readers. In our one-on-one conferences, I discussed with each student his or her strengths and weaknesses and discussed ways each could become better readers, based upon what each of them thought good readers did. For example, if a student thought that a good reader was someone who had a thorough understanding of vocabulary, we discussed ways they could increase their vocabulary. This allowed each student to realize that they could become a better reader.

Because I had a class of varying abilities, these conferences allowed me a chance to focus on different skills. I saw that many of the English Language Learners had trouble with understanding vocabulary and we focused on developing their own. Other students who had attention concerns focused on note taking, predicting and asking questions. These individualized plans allowed each student to work on his or her varying academic strengths and weaknesses.

I think the conferences helped students become more aware of their skills and aware of how they could improve themselves. In relation to my research question in which I asked if these conferences would impact student engagement, I think these conferences allowed my students to realize they could

become better readers. They scored themselves higher on the self-assessment survey and listed more good reader strategies that they used themselves, implying they were more engaged or motivated to succeed.

Another important question is "What is a good goal for you to set this year in Language Arts?" Unfortunately, the outcome of this question did not prove to be positive. All of the responses referred to getting good grades or learning to read or write better. I was hoping that students would be able to set more tangible goals because we had discussed how to set reading goals in our conferences; however, these conversations did not transfer onto their survey responses.

Table 20 - Survey Results for "What is a good goal?" – 1/23/07

	Pre	Post
Caitlin	Doing all the work	Getting a better grade
Summer	Do homework, better grades and read!	Get good grades.
Karen	Reading, writing and speaking English better	To learn how to read and write well.
Lynn	Trying my best in all subjects	Doing all of my homework and classwork in class
Steven	To practice reading and writing	To get a better grade
Peter	n/a	Improve in Language Arts
Zach	To get a B in the class	To get a B or an A in this class
Mark	To get an A	To get anything higher than a C
Claire	n/a	To be a good reader and also a good speller
Paul	Understand more vocabulary	Reading and writing more
Mary	To pass and get close to getting to high school	To do better in reading and writing
Todd	To read better	Did not take survey
Diana	To be able to write a good story	To get an A
Robert	To become a better student	To get an A and maintain it
Aaron	Get good grades	Did not take survey

Data Set #2 - Reading Comprehension Assessment

On January 25, 2007, I gave my class a short narrative, entitled "Making the Team." This passage is a 6th grade reading level text. I told my students to take as long as they needed to read the passage and highlight or make any notes they wanted. When they were ready, I collected the reading passage and gave them a list of eight comprehension questions about the text. These questions were in the same format as my pre-intervention reading assessment, in that some were multiple choice and some were open ended. Some questions required students to recall facts, and other questions required students to make inferences about the text. The purpose of this assessment was to give each student a quantitative

reading assessment score and to determine if any students' reading comprehension increased throughout the intervention.

To analyze this data set, I scored each student's responses, then created a table depicting each student's scores on the pre- and post-intervention reading comprehension test. I then color-coded using the same colors as on the survey data to highlight how many students' scores increased, decreased, or stayed the same. It was important to lay the scores side by side to determine if any progress was made from the beginning to the end of the intervention.

Table 21 – Pre- and Post-Intervention Reading Comprehension Scores

	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Mark	60	100
Paul	100	87
Mary	60	87
Todd	60	100
Lynn	60	50
Zach	60	100
Peter	80	100
Steven	40	100
Claire	60	75
Diana	60	75
Summer	60	100
Robert	100	100
Caitlin	100	100
Karen	80	75
Aaron	N/A	N/A

The pink represents the students whose scores improved. Nine of the twelve students (75%) who could show measurable improvement improved from the pre- to the post-assessment, which looks very successful to me. Five students increased their scores by 40 points; and while only two students scored 100% on the pre-assessment, eight students scored 100% on the post-assessment. Only three of the fifteen students decreased their scores. Unfortunately, Aaron did not take either assessment. I found Aaron to be very difficult to work with, as he was very reluctant to try anything; so my intervention with him was not a success. The largest increase was Steven, who scored 40% on his first assessment, and 100% on his post assessment. Interestingly, Steven's self-assessment score on his survey remained the same.

As my research question asks about student comprehension, these are very good results. It is definitely good to see so many of my students increase their scores. I am not sure if it has to do with the conferences or with reading practice, as I stated with my first data set; however, I will compare these scores with my conference notes to see if I find any relationships. Hopefully the same students who made progress in our conferences made progress in their reading assessment.

The three students whose scores decreased were Paul, Lynn and Karen. All three of these students are English Language Learners, so they may have struggled with some of the vocabulary in the text. However, all three of these students pre and post scores were very close, so I think there are many external circumstances that could account for the lower score, such as having a bad day or not being able to focus. The most dramatic changes were made by students

whose scores increased. Steven's score changed from a 40% to 100%, and Mark, Todd, Zach and Summer all improved from a 60% to 100%.

My students' overall comprehension has increased and I think this is due to the consistent practice of keeping reading logs and taking notes. In our conferences, we discussed the best way for each student to write in their reading logs based on their strengths and weaknesses as a reader, and I think this approach has benefited most of them. The goal setting that I state in my research question refers to students individually determining which reading strategy they want to focus their attention on. These reading strategies were meant to improve their comprehension, and in these assessment data sets, their comprehension has improved. In Figure 23 I have included one student's reading comprehension assessment as a sample.

Figure 23 – Reading Comprehension Assessment Student Sample

The above scan is of Claire's reading comprehension assessment. She missed questions 4 and 8, which were the most commonly missed questions, and required the reader to make inferences. Question 4 asked "why do you think the girl was so nervous?" Students were expected to explain that she was nervous because she was waiting for the results to be posted of the people who made the team, although she was very confident that she would make it. I marked Claire's response wrong because it implied the girl thought she would not make the team. Question 8 asked "The girl is in the sixth grade. What grade is her brother probably in?" The correct answer was 9th grade and required the reader to recall

that the brother was three years older than the girl. Both of Claire's answers were very close, but I marked them wrong because they were not as exact as a correct answer should be.

Data Set #3 – Reading Strategy Assessment

On January 25, 2007, I gave my students a follow-up strategy assessment. As with my baseline strategy assessment, I gave my students a non-fiction reading passage, entitled "Ancient Rome," at the 7th grade reading level, and then asked a series of questions about what strategies they used as they read. I will compare this data set with the baseline strategy assessment to find if my students more actively used reading strategies while they read. In the following graph I have summed up the strategies used by the entire class on this post-intervention strategy assessment.

Figure 24 – Post Intervention Reading Strategy Assessment, 1/25/07

Post-Assessment Strategy Use
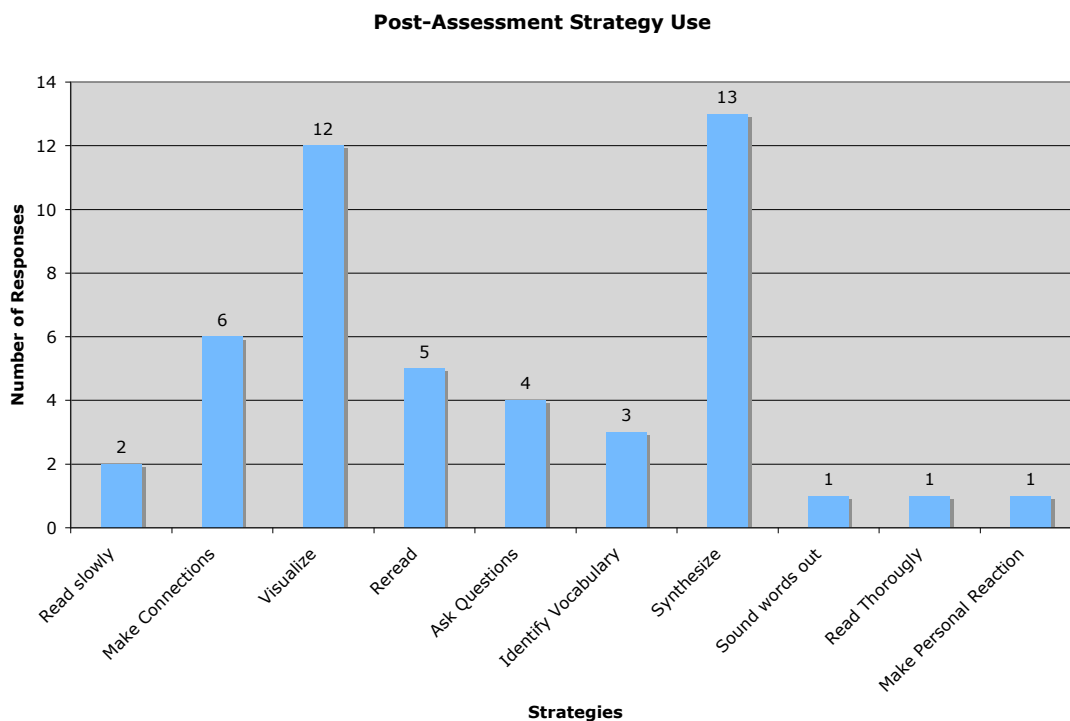
In this assessment, 13 (out of 15) students reported synthesizing the information to determine the main idea. The second most commonly used strategy was visualization, at 12 responses. Connections, rereading and asking questions were the next most commonly reported strategies (with 4-6 instances), and reading slowly, identifying vocabulary, sounding words out, reading thoroughly, and making personal reactions were reported only by one, two, or three students. The strategy assessment of one of my top students, Caitlin is displayed in the figure below.

Figure 25 – Student Sample of Reading Strategy Assessment

Caitlin's answers on this assessment were very similar to the class's answers. She stated that she used visualization (Questions 1 & 10), she did not make any connections (Question 9) and she was able to state the main idea of the

text (Questions 5 & 8). Two things that Caitlin did do that stood out from the majority of the class were that she asked questions (Question 3) and she identified vocabulary words that she did not understand (Question 4). Most students stated that they did not have any questions and did not identify any words they did not know, although I did wonder if many students knew what gladiators and amphitheaters were. Because Caitlin was able to identify when she was confused, she displays a higher level of reading comprehension than many other students in the class.

In the following chart I have placed the results of strategy usage from the pre-intervention assessment next to the results of strategy usage from the post-intervention assessment. In this graph, we can see what changes occurred throughout the intervention.

Figure 26 – Pre- and Post-Intervention Comparison of Strategy Assessment

Pre- and Post-Intervention Strategy Assessment
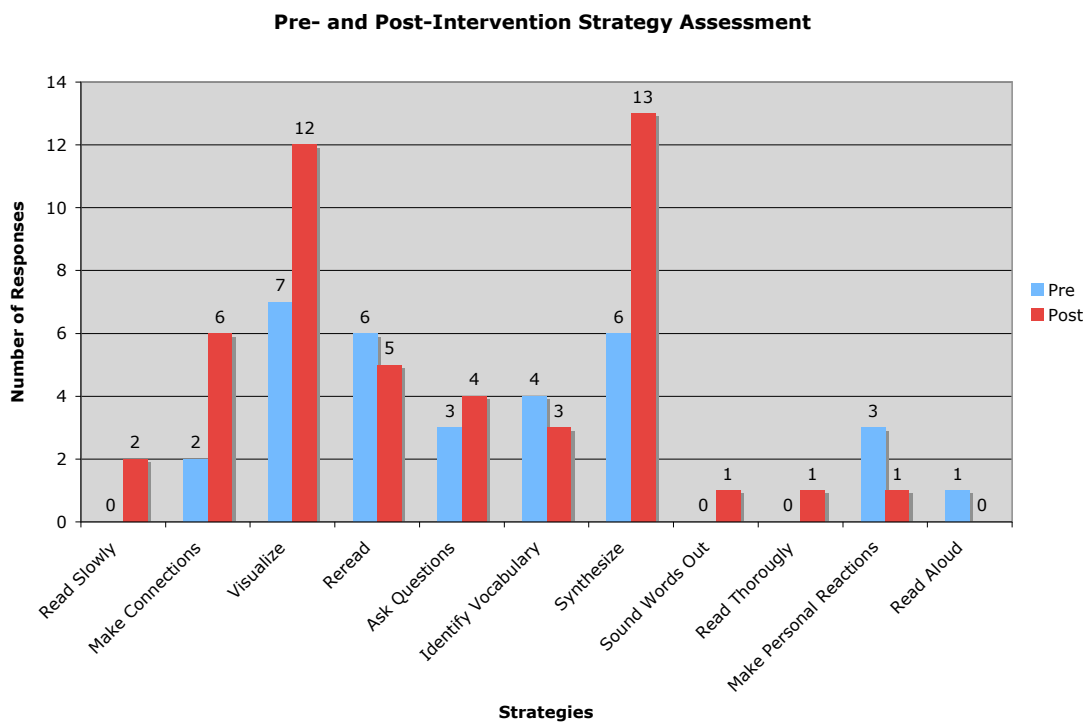
What is remarkable in this graph is that the number of people who were able to synthesize the information to find the main idea more than doubled. On the assessment (see Figure 25), students were asked to write what they thought the main idea of the text was. Thirteen students were able to respond to this question appropriately, while only six were able to before the intervention. Five more students were able to visualize on the post-intervention assessment, and four more students were able to make connections. One more student asked questions on the post-intervention assessment, and reading slowly, sounding words out, and reading thoroughly were new strategies that students did not use on the pre-intervention assessment. Interestingly, the number of students who reported re-reading decreased by one person, as did the number of students who identified unknown vocabulary words. Finally, no one reported reading aloud (Mark reported reading aloud on the pre-intervention assessment, and on the post-intervention assessment he wrote that he did not know what strategies helped him understand the text better).

Even though students' responses to the types of strategies they use may change based upon their interest in the text, the prior knowledge they have about the text, or even their mood the day of the assessment; the change in the number of students who can synthesize the information is dramatic (from 6 to 13). Synthesis is a higher level skill based on Bloom's Taxonomy, and this evidence implies that my students are better able to comprehend now than they were prior to the intervention. While students' knowledge of or use of strategies may change, their overall comprehension has improved.

Class Comparison of Outcome Data Sets and Conference Data

In order to determine what impact student conferences and goal setting

focusing on reading strategies had on the engagement and reading

comprehension of my students, I have compiled the collected data into the

Table 22 – Class Comparison of Outcome Data Sets and Conference Data
* focus student

Name	Self-Assessment			Strategy Assessment	Conference Data			Reading Comprehension Assessment
	Pre-/Post-Intervention Score Change (+/-)	Reading Strategies	Good Reader Strategies	Strategies Used	Goal Strategy	Were the conferences helpful?	Do I think my reading has improved?	Comprehension change (+/-)
Caitlin	+0	Think, Ask Questions	Knowing what you're reading	Visualize, Read Thoroughly, Ask Questions	Inference	Yes	Yes	could not improve (100%)
Summer	+1	Take Notes	Practice	Connection, Re-read, Visualize	Note-taking	Yes	Yes	+40%
Karen	+3	Visualize, Make Connections, Re-read	I don't know	Visualize	Spelling	Yes	Yes	-5%
Lynn	-1	Try my best	Practice	Sound words out, vocabulary, visualize	Vocabulary	Yes	Yes	-10%
Steven	+0	Visualize	Visualize, Take notes	Visualize, Re-read	Note-taking	Yes	No	+60%
Peter	+2	Understanding	Understands, asks for help	Re-read, Visualize, Connection	Note-taking	No	Yes	+20%
Zach*	-2	Re-read	Re-read	Read Slowly, Connection	Vocabulary	Yes	Yes	+40%
Mark*	+2	Don't use	Read fluently	Visualize	Note-taking	Yes	Yes	+40%
Claire	+0	Stop and think	Practice	Highlight, visualize	Summarizing	Yes	Yes	+15%
Paul*	+0	Re-read	Re-read	Visualize, take time, focus	Vocabulary	Yes	Yes	-13%
Mary	-1	Re-read	Visualize	Visualize, read slowly	Questioning	No	Yes	+27%
Todd	n/a	n/a	n/a	Comment, question, visualize	Questioning	No	No	+40%
Diana*	+2	Re-read	Re-read, visualize	Question, reread, vocabulary, connection	Note-taking	Yes	Yes	+15%
Robert*	+0	Re-read, use dictionary	Enjoy, re-read	Visualize, re-read, vocabulary, connection	Vocabulary	Yes	No	Could not improve (100%)
Aaron	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Note-taking	No	No	n/a

following table for my entire class:

As I examined the data in this table, I compiled the following list of questions:

1) *How many students who thought the conferences were helpful also increased their self-assessment reading score and their comprehension assessment score?*
2) *How many students displayed usage of their goal reading strategy on their self-assessment survey and their reading strategy assessment?*
3) *How many students used good reader strategies?*
4) *What is unique about the students who did not find the conferences helpful?*

After scrutinizing the data, I came up with the following answers.

1) How many students who thought the conferences were helpful also increased their self-assessment reading score and their comprehension assessment score?

Of the eleven students who thought the conferences were helpful for their reading comprehension development, four gave themselves a higher self-assessment reading score, five gave themselves the same score, and two gave themselves a lower score. Of these same eleven students, six increased their reading comprehension score, two could not improve because they scored 100% on both tests, and three decreased their reading comprehension score. Out of all of the students, seven thought the conferences were helpful, scored themselves the same or higher on the self-assessment survey, and kept the same or increased their comprehension score on the assessment. Thus, approximately half of the students show a positive correlation between self-perception of reading ability, reading comprehension, and student-teacher conferences. One student, Karen, increased her self-assessment score by three points (the most of all the students), but her comprehension score decreased by just 5%. Karen did find the conferences helpful and stated that she thought her reading had improved. Because her score decreased by only 5%, it can be assumed that her reading comprehension skills have remained the same. As opposed to Karen, Steven

showed the greatest increase in comprehension scores (60%), but did not increase his self-assessment rating and did not think his reading improved. He did, however, think the conferences were helpful. Perhaps Steven scored himself the same because he realized that reading was much more complex than he originally had thought.

2) How many students displayed usage of their goal reading strategy on their self-assessment survey and their reading strategy assessment?

Only one student, Robert, mentioned using his goal reading strategy on his self-assessment survey, and showed usage of this strategy on his strategy assessment. Robert focused on vocabulary throughout the intervention, and as I stated before, Robert enjoyed using the dictionary. On the survey, when asked what reading strategies he used, he mentioned using dictionaries, and on the reading strategy assessment, he searched for meaning in unknown vocabulary words. Five students listed their goal strategy on their survey, and three students used their goal strategy on their reading strategy assessment. I would have expected more students to at least list their goal strategy on their survey, as we had discussed them together so often, so I find these data disappointing. Although we spent time discussing why we use these reading strategies, students still do not act as though they "own" these strategies.

3) How many students used good reader strategies?

This question asks if students are using reading strategies that they think good readers use. Hopefully, students use the same strategies as they think good readers use because they hope to be good readers, and know they must practice these same skills that advanced readers do. Six students reported on their surveys that they use the same strategies that they think good readers use. As

two students did not take the survey, this number is out of thirteen. A little less than half of the class believed they use strategies that good readers use. Again, I had hoped that more students would try to use good reader strategies.

After I compared these two categories, I realized there were other categories that were worth comparing. Are there any connections between strategies used on the strategy assessment and strategies students think they use? Do students have a strong awareness of their own strategy use when put to the test? Five students wrote on their surveys that they used the same strategies that they showed usage of on the strategy assessment. I think five is a good number of students who show signs of metacognition, or awareness of their own thought process.

I also wondered how many students use strategies on the strategy assessment that they thought were good reader strategies on the survey. Four students did this. Three of these students also stated on their survey that they used these strategies. Of the thirteen students who took the survey and took the strategy assessment, three students wrote that they used a particular strategy, thought good readers used that particular strategy, and showed proof that they used that particular strategy on their assessment. These strategies were visualizing and re-reading – two of the most widely used strategies in this class.

4) What is unique about the students who did not find the conferences helpful?

I am surprised that Peter did not find the conferences helpful when his self-assessment score as a reader increased by two points, his comprehension score increased by 20 percentage points, and he thought his reading had improved. Perhaps the reason why he did not find the conferences helpful was that he did not understand the purpose of the conferences. Peter would often not

take our conversations seriously and would respond sarcastically to many of my questions. Mary, another student who did not find the conferences helpful, decreased her self-assessment score by one point. Mary stated that she did not understand the point of the conferences and said she thought she could do more than just ask questions. Perhaps Mary needed a bigger challenge; however, she did ask to focus on questioning. I did not force her to choose that strategy.

The other two students who did not find the conferences helpful, Todd and Aaron, did not take the survey; and Aaron did not take the comprehension assessment or the strategy assessment. Todd is a resource student who was often unwilling to focus, and who said that he already talked with his Language Arts teacher about reading; and Aaron was very difficult to encourage to get any work done. Aaron was often absent or refused to work. Aaron was a student who preferred to do things on his own time.

After analyzing all of the outcome data, and comparing it with the baseline data, I am able to make numerous conclusions about the effectiveness of this intervention. In the discussion section that follows, I will discuss the most important findings of this intervention.

Discussion

Conclusions

Teacher-student conferences based on goal setting allow students an opportunity to read with a purpose. Setting goals encouraged my students to focus on and complete their assignments with purpose. Based on data collected from my final conferences, ten of the fifteen target students believed their reading had improved after the intervention, and eleven of the fifteen target students thought the conferences were helpful. Additionally, eleven of the fifteen

target students increased their reading comprehension score (two scored 100%

before and after the intervention) on the final reading comprehension

assessment. These three findings tell me that this was a successful intervention.

Students valued the opportunity to independently discuss their strengths and

weaknesses, and most importantly, strategies to improve their reading skills.

Interestingly, only five students gave themselves a higher reading score on the

post-intervention survey; however, this may be because the students who gave

themselves a lower score now know what reading strategies they have yet to

master. All but one student exemplified some knowledge or exhibition of good

reader strategies. The conferences held during the intervention were to educate

students of what specific strategies they possessed or needed to learn to become

a good reader.

Of the eleven students who thought their reading had improved, eight did

exemplify improvement on their reading comprehension assessment. This strong

correlation implies that metacognition, or the knowledge of how one is learning,

is crucial to excel. According to Schoenbach et al (1999), in *Reading for*

Understanding, using metacognition "in a subject matter class helps students

access and more deeply process the content of the discipline and therefore

prepares them to retain more of the knowledge tested" (p. 146). As eight of

students exemplified, thinking about reading strategies allowed them to use

these strategies with greater ease on the comprehension test given. Additionally,

three students whose scores decreased on the post-intervention reading

comprehension assessment still thought their reading had improved and still

thought the conferences were helpful.

Implications for Future Teaching

This intervention is just a glimpse at what teacher-student conferences can do for students' self-perception. Students should always be aware of why they are learning certain things and what strategies work best for them. Once students are aware of what good skills they already possess, their confidence will increase and their motivation to learn more will increase. Student failure often has its roots in low self-confidence and low motivation. According to Bandura (as cited in Seifert, 2004), "self-efficacy is the person's belief that he/she is able (or unable) to perform the task at hand and is correlated with achievement-related behaviors, including cognitive processing, achievement performance, motivation, self-worth and choice of activities (p. 1)." Students with low self-confidence are less likely to attempt to complete a task, as they do not want to risk failure. Individual student-teacher conferences provide an opportunity for students to learn their strengths and to be encouraged to take risks without humiliation.

Differentiated instruction is crucial for struggling students. With new state mandates that require low achieving students to give up their electives (often in subjects they excel at) to spend more time in Language Arts, these extra hours must be worth the student's while. Otherwise, student confidence will continue to deteriorate, and the high-school drop out rate may increase. In a Tutorial class with such a large range of abilities and needs, small classes are ideal for teacher-student conferences to focus and engage students by identifying the root of the problem and determine *with the student* how best to remedy the problem. In these sorts of situations, scripted textbooks are not going to identify and remedy the concerns of each individual student.

Imperfections

As this intervention was only a glimpse at what teacher-student conferences can do, a successful intervention involving teacher-student conferences needs to be well managed, well planned and well researched. In this intervention I encountered many challenges along the way that prevented it from being as successful as it could have been. The first imperfection was that it was short. This intervention only lasted four weeks. Teachers and students need to build a rapport and trust with one another. These relationships take a while to grow. Many of my students were reluctant to speak with me one-on-one, and while they began to open up as the intervention progressed, we never reached the point of real trust between each other. I also needed more time to really assess my students' learning. I was only able to look at their work along the way twice. There were many glitches with these two conferences as well: students did not like and wanted to change the strategy they were working on, students were not reading an appropriate book, or students were not completing the assignments! I needed more conferences to establish a steady in-stream of student work to evaluate together. This intervention would ideally be a year-long project between myself and my students.

I would have liked to continue my intervention throughout the rest of the school year; however, a week after I completed my intervention, I lost eight of my students and gained seventeen more. I now have a new class with a new dynamic and must start fresh as if it were the beginning of a school year. I would have liked to work with my students to collect more data and analyze my outcome data further. Unfortunately, I could not do this.

Another glitch along the way was my attempt at establishing a family-school connection. I sent a letter home to the parents of my students and asked

them to discuss reading strategies with their child and return the paper to me. Not a single student brought this assignment back. As I wondered what I did wrong, I realized that I was teaching a class of low-achieving students who likely did not have much parental support or whose parents are used to not playing a large role in their student's academic lives, and eight of my students were English Language Learners whose parents probably either did not speak English or did not understand the academic language used in the letter. In the future, I will consider translating my letter into Spanish and discussing the assignment and purpose of the intervention at Back-to-School Night, which is usually the only time many parents step foot on school campus. Explaining the intervention fully in detail, stressing the implications of this sort of intervention, would encourage parents to participate. Although, I did not receive any active support from parents during the intervention, I still have valuable data that can be used a parent-teacher conferences. I can also use the pre- and post-assessment scores to show students and their parents the students' accomplishments.

English Language Learners

Freeman and Freeman (2002) discuss four keys for school success for older English Learners. One of the keys is the following: Organize collaborative activities and scaffold instruction to build students' academic English proficiency. English Language Learners need more scaffolding and more assistance. There is no better method to scaffold than to sit down one-on-one with a student and identify where they are struggling. So much insight can be gained in a private conference with a student, and English Learners can truly benefit. One of the strategies Freeman & Freeman suggest is to create "Instructional Conversations". For instructional conversations, the teacher

should organize the classroom so that each student may have conversations with his or her teacher and peers. In these conversations the focus should be on developing academic concepts and language (p. 57). Holding teacher-student conferences is one way these conversations can occur.

Of my six English Learners, four found the conferences to be helpful. Two students who gave reasons as to why they found the conferences helpful said, "It has helped me to talk about it," and, "Because you explain things." These students found it helpful to discuss their reading processes with me. In these conferences we were able to discuss what they understood and what they did not understand, and were able to talk through many of these obstacles. These conversations provided an opportunity for the student to discuss their reading processes, which they otherwise would not have had.

Many English Learners struggle in different areas than native English speakers. In *Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners*, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) stress that English Language Learners often require instruction in different forms of reading strategies than native English speakers. Often, EL students revert to poor reading strategies when they read English because they have not had proper instruction in decoding and other lower level strategies. Reading instructors often focus on higher-level comprehension, such as predicting meaning from contextual clues or using background knowledge for identifying the main idea or making inferences. Many second language students need instruction in word recognition, cohesive devices and syntax. As I met with my students in individual conferencing, I realized that some of my English Learners needed to focus their goals on acquiring these lower-level skills, such as

spelling and vocabulary. O'Malley and Pierce reinforce the need to have individualized instruction.

As I analyzed my outcome data, I found that three of my six English Learners increased their comprehension score, and all six used visualization as a reading strategy on their strategy assessment. I realized that visualization is a key strategy to use, as it allows students to understand what they are reading without syntax or phonics to impede on their comprehension. I found that this intervention was very helpful for them, as they could read at their own level and still realize what strategies would be helpful for themselves.

Reflection

I found the process of creating and implementing this intervention to be very educational. In my first year of teaching, when I have been completely overwhelmed with managing my time between lesson planning, attending BTSA workshops, and attending my Masters program meetings, it would have been easy to forget about the students I have been teaching. When I began the year with three mainstream Language Arts classes and a Tutorial class that was meant to be my "elective", I did not put much of my focus on lesson planning for Tutorial. I thought that all I needed to do was follow the scripted program and I would be fine. Although this intervention was difficult to carry out, I am pleased that I was able to identify the weaknesses of the Tutorial program and determined that the Tutorial class had the biggest need of an intervention. Had I chosen a different class to focus on, my Tutorial students would have been all but ignored, and that would have been a great disservice to these students who have already been ignored for far too long. I hope to take the data that I have collected, the research that I have conducted, and the information that I have

learned and create a new course syllabus for future Tutorial courses. At my school, which has been newly determined to be in Program Improvement, more Tutorial courses will be sprouting, and more students will be removed from electives to enroll in Tutorial. As teachers, we must find a way to tackle this ever-growing need for advanced, research-based interventions that will not lose our students along the way. As I have learned so much about the struggles and needs of low-achieving students, I am proud of the work I have accomplished.

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Appendix A

Name: _____   Language Arts Tutorial Reading/Writing
                                                        Survey

1.What is your favorite class in school? Why?

2. What do you want to do after you graduate high school?

3. Do you like reading…

a. Newspapers?	Yes/No
b. Magazines?	Yes/No
c. Novels?	Yes/No
d. Websites?	Yes/No
e. Poems?	Yes/No
f. Reference Books?	Yes/No
g. Inspirational Books?	Yes/No
h. Essays?	Yes/No
i. Plays?	Yes/No
j. History Books?	Yes/No
k. Comics?	Yes/No
l. Biographies?	Yes/No
m. Email?	Yes/No
n. Text-messages?	Yes/No

4. Which of the above types of reading is the most difficult for you? Why?

5. I would rate myself as a _____ on a scale of 1-10 as a reader. Why?

6. What do you think makes a good reader?

7. What strategies do you use to help you understand better what you are reading?

8. Do you like writing…

a. Letters?	Yes/No
b. Journals?	Yes/No
c. Email?	Yes/No
d. Poems?	Yes/No
e. Essays?	Yes/No
f. Fictional Stories?	Yes/No
g. Text-messages	Yes/No

9. I would rate myself as a _____ on a scale of 1-10 as a writer. Why?

10. What do you think makes a good writer?

11. What factors interfere the most with your reading or writing (distractions/language/boredom)?

12. If I could improve up to three things about myself in Language Arts, I would choose (try to be specific, do not just write "reading" or "writing":

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

13. What is a good goal for you to reach this year in Language Arts (not just in Tutorial)?

14. Is there anything in school related to reading or writing that you have really wanted to do, but never had the opportunity to do so?

Appendix B

Name:

Reading Strategy Assessment

Read the following passage to yourself. Use your pen and highlighter to take notes, ask questions, make connections or any write other comments in the margins as you read. After you have finished, answer the questions that follow.

Left and Right Brain Power

Scientists describe the brain as having two halves - a left side and a right side. Each half performs special functions. The left side appears to do a better job with some activities; however, the right side is superior with other tasks.

The left brain works on details, so it is used in reasoning, mathematics, and writing. The right brain is in charge of processing the entire picture instead of separate parts. For example, when you distinguish a person's face, the left half of your brain focuses on separate features such as eye color, shape of the nose or the presence of glasses. The right side of the brain looks at the whole face for recognition.

Some people are left brain dominant and are better at work that involves details. Others are right brain dominant and are good at activities such as art, music, and poetry.

Although people often use one half of the brain more than the other, both sides are important. People need to exercise both halves of the brain as much as possible.

Respond to the following questions:

1.   What kind of things were happening in your mind as you read?

2.   What did you do that helped you to understand the reading?

3.   What questions or problems did you have while reading this text?

4.   What questions or problems do you still have with this piece?

5.   In your own words, write one or two sentences that tell the most important ideas in this piece.

6.   This piece was (Circle one):
          Easy   OK   too hard

7.   How well would you say you understood this piece (circle one):
          Very   OK   didn't understand

8.   In your own words, write what you think the author's point is. What is the author saying to the reader?

9. When you read the text did it remind you of anything you know about? Why did it remind you of that?

10. When you were reading this text did you make any pictures or images in your head?

Appendix C

Name:

Reading Comprehension Assessment

Directions: Read the following fictional passage and answer the reading comprehension questions on the reverse side of this sheet.

A Bad Day at Magic Land

Many people like to go to amusement parks to have fun, but I don't! Last year, a group of my friends decided to spend the whole day at Magic Land, an amusement park in my city. I thought I would have a very good time, but I was wrong. I had the worst time ever.

We went on too many roller coasters. At first, they were all very exciting and I screamed until my lungs hurt on all of them. My friends wanted to ride more of them, and so for three hours we didn't stop to rest. We went on the Head Knocker, the Crazy Coaster, and the Monster Masher before I started feeling really sick. I finally threw up on the Tooth Rattler roller coaster. I was very embarrassed.

That was when my friends decided that we needed a lunch break if they wanted me to survive the whole day. My stomach was still feeling awful, but they insisted that I needed to eat if I was going to have enough energy for the rest of the day. When I went to one of the food stands, however, I saw that the prices were outrageous. I spent six dollars on a large order of fries. I picked up the saltshaker, and to my surprise the top fell off, spilling a pile of salt on my food. My fries were ruined!

By now I was really upset and my face was red, so my friends suggested we go on a water ride so I could cool down. I thought it was a good idea, but when we rode it, I forgot to take my glasses off. At one point, they fell off and into the water. I watched helplessly as they sank to the bottom while we kept rushing forward in our raft. I had to go through the rest of the day practically blind.

I have decided that I will never go to Magic Land again, even if someone offered me a million dollars to do it!

1. Why did the narrator think she would have a good time at Magic Land?

2. How many hours did the narrator and her friends ride the roller coasters for before she started feeling sick?

3. Why did the narrator's friends insist that she needed to eat?

4. How did the narrator ruin her fries?

5. Why was the narrator so upset that her face was red?

6. Why did the narrator's friends suggest they go on a water ride?

7. What happened to the narrator's glasses?

Appendix D

To the parents of 8th grade Language Arts Tutorial students,

I am writing to inform you of the curriculum of Language Arts Tutorial at ACMS. Your child has been placed in this class to receive intensive Language Arts assistance. In addition to each student's daily mainstream Language Arts class, he or she is enrolled in an additional Language Arts class that meets every other day. The purpose of this class is to provide additional assistance in the reading curriculum.

This year, I am providing individualized assistance to each student. Each student has identified an area of weakness in their reading and has created a reading goal for him or herself. These goals identify specific strategies to use while reading. Some strategies are asking questions, writing summaries, identifying unknown vocabulary words and making predictions. Each student has chosen one strategy to improve upon this year. I have given each student a reading log to record his or her reading strategy use.

For homework, students are required to read a minimum of twenty minutes each night. I have asked them to discuss their reading strategies with you. I am asking you to ask your child about his or her goal, and to discuss his or her strategy use together with them. The purpose of this at-home discussion is to recognize improvements in your child and to encourage him or her to continue reading and practice using reading strategies. Knowledge of what they are thinking about while they are reading and having the opportunity to discuss these thoughts with others will allow students to improve upon their reading comprehension.

In addition, my students and I have created the following questions for you, so that they can learn more about the reading strategies you use while you read, whether you read magazines, novels, or newspapers. Please discuss your own ability to comprehend reading with your child, so they may understand that all people, not just struggling readers, use reading strategies.

1. What do you enjoy reading the most?
2. What are you currently reading?
3. What do you think it means to use reading strategies while you read?
4. What do you think about while you are reading?
5. Do you make any mental images while you read?
6. Does what you are reading sometimes remind you of other things you have read before or of past experiences you have had?
7. Why do you enjoy reading?
8. Do you sometimes need to re-read over something you have already read in order to understand it?
9. Do you think you are a good reader?
10. What other things do you do that you think help you read or understand what you read?
11. Do you have any problems while you are reading?

I appreciate your assistance and active participation in your child's education. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Miriam Kaufman

Appendix E

Name:

Reading Strategy Assessment

Read the following passage to yourself. Use your pen and highlighter to take notes, ask questions, make connections or any write other comments in the margins as you read. After you have finished, answer the questions that follow.

Ancient Rome

In ancient Rome some of the strongest slaves or prisoners were forced to become professional fighters. They were sent to harsh training schools to learn sword fighting. As gladiators they then fought in circuses and amphitheatres, performing armed combat in pairs for public entertainment. After each combat the audience gave a life-or-death verdict. If the loser had fought bravely, they might wave a handkerchief, and he was spared to fight another day. If not, a 'thumbs-down' sign meant he was killed immediately by the winner. Successful gladiators could become very famous and popular. They could win their freedom. One famous gladiator was called Spartacus.

Respond to the following questions:

11. What kind of things were happening in your mind as you read?

12. What did you do that helped you to understand the reading?

13. What questions or problems did you have while reading this text?

14. What questions or problems do you still have with this piece?

15. In your own words, write one or two sentences that tell the most important ideas in this piece.

16. This piece was (Circle one):
    Easy   OK   too hard

17. How well would you say you understood this piece (circle one):
    Very   OK   didn't understand

18. In your own words, write what you think the author's point is. What is the author saying to the reader?

19. When you read the text did it remind you of anything you know about? Why did it remind you of that?

20.   When you were reading this text did you make any pictures or images in your head?

Appendix F

Name:

Reading Comprehension Assessment

Directions: Read the following fictional passage. Make any notes in the margins and take as long as you need. When you are finished, raise your hand and I will give you a list of reading comprehension questions to answer about this passage.

Making the Team

It has been my lifelong dream to play on the middle school softball team. I began playing softball when I was in the second grade. My older brother taught me to play. He is three years older than I am. He practices with me every afternoon and always attends my games with my parents.

This year, I started sixth grade. The middle school softball team tryouts were announced last month. Every day since the announcement, my brother has helped me prepare for the team tryouts. The tryouts were held last Saturday morning. Twenty-three students from my grade tried out for the team. The team only has spaces for five sixth grade students. I know I worked as hard as I could to prepare for the tryouts. I felt like I had done a good job at the tryouts, but I was still nervous on Saturday night and Sunday morning, waiting for the team list to be posted. On Sunday afternoon, my parents took me to the school to see who had made the team. I was so happy when I saw my name on the list. It is so exciting to be a part of the team.

When we left the school, my parents said we should go out for pizza. It would just be a little family celebration in my honor. They called my brother, and he met us at the restaurant. He walked in with a big smile on his face. He was really proud of me. My parents were very proud too, although they warned me about keeping my grades up and making sure I did all my homework every day. They do not need to worry about those things. I'll work very hard to stay on the team.

Name:

Answer the following questions based on what you read from <u>Making the Team</u>.

1. What is this story mainly about?

2. This student is in the ____ grade.
a. seventh
b. fourth
c. sixth
d. eighth

3. The first paragraph mainly discusses _____.
a. eating pizza
b. playing softball
c. doing homework
d. finding her name on the list

4. Why do you think the girl was so nervous?

5. How would you describe the way the girl felt when she saw her name on the list?

6. Which of the following IS true?
a. Her father taught her to play softball.
b. She has played softball since she was two.
c. Her older brother taught her to play softball.
d. Her brother took her to the school to check the team list.

7. Why did the family go out for pizza?

8. The girl is in the sixth grade. What grade is her brother probably in?